



**Superintendent**  
Rex Wertz  
324-2001

**Business Manager**  
Janelle Mickelson  
324-2040

## **Board of Trustees Meeting**

Lincoln Center  
1325 Poplar St., Helena, MT 59601  
And on TEAMS

**Tuesday, February 8th, 2022**  
5:30 p.m.

### **MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.**

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair  
Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair  
Terry Beaver, Trustee  
John McEwen, Trustee  
Elizabeth “Libby” Goldes, Trustee  
Janet Armstrong, Trustee  
Jennifer McKee, Trustee  
Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative

Rex Wertz, Superintendent  
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent  
Brian Cummings, Assistant Superintendent  
Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager  
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff  
Gary Myers, Technology Administrator  
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator  
Karen Ogden, Communications Officer  
Jane Shawn, HEA President  
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Administrator  
Kaitlyn Hess, HSD TOSA

Many guests of the public

## **I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We have all but one Trustee joining us tonight. Trustee Walsh is not able to attend tonight. Trustee Goldes is attending online, everyone else is attending in person, and Student Representative Schoenfeld is attending senior night tonight, so she will be unable to join us.

## **II. REVIEW AGENDA**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We have some changes to the agenda tonight. We are going to pull one item for information and three action items. We are going to pull, “Items for Information 2. Strategic Priorities Update”, and we will present that at a future meeting. We are going to hear from Superintendent Weltz with his six-month update, and then also hear an Academic Data Review. We will get questions and comments from the Board and that will help Superintendent Weltz and his team revise those strategic priorities and present those to the Board at a later time. We will be pulling two items from the consent action items agenda, “Consent Action Item 3. Approval of Personnel Actions”, and “Consent Action Item 6. Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property-Facilities Surplus”. We will be pulling one individual item for action, “Items for Action 4. Kessler Sewer Easement”. After discussion with the Facilities and Maintenance Committee yesterday, the decision was made to have some further dialogue with the city over that and it will come before the Board at a future meeting. Mr. Muszkiewicz went over the protocol for giving public comment at tonight's meeting.

## **III. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

Superintendent Rex Weltz commented. In February we celebrate Black History Month, Valentine’s Day, and National School Counseling Week. This month my team visited Rossiter Elementary, Jefferson Elementary, and Ray Bjork Learning Center for Central Office Site Visits. I would like to thank those staff members for hosting us. I would like to recognize sophomore Annika Nehring from Helena High School who has been selected for the inaugural 2022 MHSA Student Advisory Council. Annika is a member of the wind Symphony and orchestra, varsity volleyball and track and field, and a member of the Science Olympiad team. Annika, along with students from around the state, will be a great addition to the MHSA’s activities. Our instructional coaches have done a lot of work in conjunction with our teaching staff, and they just completed in helping assist in our iReady benchmark assessments. I want to thank our instructional coaches for their support around that. We have had some comments around about that data and reporting the data. We are going to send out the fall and winter iReady assessment so parents can be able to see what that looks like for the fall and then the growth into the winter. We will also send out the SBAC data from last year. I would like to thank Stacy Collette and the Human Resources team for hosting a Volunteer and Guest Training Session. The State AA Speech and Debate finals were held here in Helena. Congratulations to all the participants. A Speech and Debate tournament is not easy to put together so I would like to thank our coaches, our Athletic Director, and over 207 volunteers that judged the competitions. Senator Daines and others visited CHS to honor the Veterans that were recently highlighted by the Big Hearts Under the Big Sky presentation/knife ceremony held previously this year. John Quintrell was able to talk about the knife that students made

for him and to discuss what the program meant to him and his fellow veterans. Senator Daines wrote a Congressional Record for John and he presented it to him right there in the machining classroom. I appreciate Mr. Weber and the work he does with our students at Capital. Congratulations to students who participated in the HHS Weld-off. First place was awarded to HHS students Jackson Cosgrove, Jake Keller, Byren Stoner, and Trey Waid. Third place was awarded to HHS students Conner McDaniel, Connor Rispen, Sabrina Braden, and Tithen FritzGerlad. Fourth place was awarded to CHS students Nate Banker, Andrew Witter, Ethan Frear, and Brinton McFadden. Under new business, we have already passed the 100<sup>th</sup> day of school. We have had PAX training for Administrators and HEA negotiations. We will have a transportation report at our February Work Session at Central Elementary.

Superintendent Weltz discussed his various outreach and meetings within the community, and upcoming parent teacher conferences. Mr. Weltz congratulated Laura Brayko, teacher at Capital High, who was awarded Montana Theater Teacher of the Year. Mr. Weltz thanked Ms. Barb Ridgway for securing COVID-19 tests and mentioned that there would be drive up COVID testing here at the Lincoln Center Monday through Thursday from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Mr. Weltz congratulated Christopher Nevinski from C. R. Anderson Middle School who was named KMTX and Lithia January Teacher of the Month.

Superintendent Weltz discussed his Helena Public Schools 2021-22 Mid-Year Report to the Community. Helena Public Schools has a total of 7,600 students, 1,079 full-and part-time employees (including 49 athletic coaches), 11 elementary schools, Ray Bjork Learning Center, 2 middle schools, 2 high schools, Project for Alternative Learning (PAL), Access to Success (reengagement program), and Adult Basic Education. Mr. Weltz commented. There's a District priority that was established several years ago about operations and teaching and learning. We're working heavily around academics, building great relationships, and good communication. What we are doing is working around great communication and academics and building those positive, respectful relationships around the academic side. We knew that coming out of a pandemic it was going to require additional focus and we already had through our literacy grant a pilot program with two schools that were working with academic coaches, and it had proven to be successful. So, with our ability to obtain additional coaches you'll see we have 19 all together now. We have focused on providing much more attention to curriculum, consistency within our programs, and a connectivity across the District. We are also working on providing an opportunity for students to recover credits. We had Camp Ascension Summer Academic Support, classes during school hours to support students with identified learning gaps in specific areas, after-school credit recovery courses to help seniors complete coursework needed for graduation, and after-school tutoring. In fall 2021, Helena Public Schools introduced the Edgenuity online learning platform to provide distance-and-remote-learning courses for credit recovery or regular credit toward graduation requirements. Edgenuity is also used for remote learning by a small number of elementary students. We also have the Montana Digital Academy which offers distance/remote learning courses for credit recovery or original credit toward graduation requirements. Among the District's new tools for academic interventions are daily WIN groups. WIN stands for What I Need. As the name implies, the groups give students time to focus on specific concepts in math, reading, or other areas where they need extra support or, conversely, would benefit from enrichment activities. All elementary schools are in the process of implementing WIN sessions on reading and math. Students will work in small, staff-guided groups alongside peers with similar learning needs. WIN groups began at Bryant and Central schools a few years ago. Based on their success, the District introduced the program to all elementary schools in fall 2021. WIN groups are at the heart of the District's strategy to support academic excellence and provide targeted instruction to meet individual student needs. Helena Public Schools uses multiple

assessment tools and data sources to provide a complete picture of student progress, ranging from daily teacher assessments in the classroom to state and national testing. Over the past 18 months, the District has added two powerful new tools to enhance measurement and reporting of student progress: standards-based reporting for grades K-5 and the iReady online assessment and learning platform for reading and math at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Supporting staff with high-quality, ongoing professional development opportunities is an essential part of fostering student academic growth and success. Since June, the District has offered more than 325 professional development sessions, ranging from *Teaching Welding in the Virtual World* to *The Science of Reading*. Students are released early every Monday, allowing educators time to team up together to review student progress and make adjustments to meet student learning needs. These weekly sessions focus on four questions: What do we want all students to know and be able to do? How will we know if they learn it? How will we respond when some students do not learn? How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

There are a lot of conversations around mental health. I'm encouraged by the work that's been done around mental health services in the Helena School District. Can we do more? Absolutely. I will say the services that we do provide is really remarkable. We have the Second Step Program which teaches K-5 students skills for resolving conflicts, working with others, forming healthy relationships, and making good decisions—all designed to help students be more successful emotionally, socially, and academically. Helena Public Schools uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), working together with families to provide students with timely and targeted emotional and behavioral health support, as well as academic support. The goal is to enable every student to fully engage in learning. Screening assessments are administered to students in grades 6-12 twice a year. When a student's score indicates they may need specialized social or emotional intervention, their parents are contacted. The District uses two screening tools at the middle and high school level: BASC-BESS and GAIN. These research-based screening tools strengthen the District's efforts to provide support measures as early as possible when they can have the greatest impact. I appreciate the partnership that we have with Intermountain, Shodair Children's Hospital, and A.W.A.R.E in helping us with those mental health teams that are associated throughout our District. Helena Public Schools implemented the Good Behavior Game (PAX) program at elementary schools District-wide during the pandemic. In middle school students participate in the SOS Signs of Suicide program. In high school, students participate in the Youth Aware of Mental Health Program (YAM).

Another foundation of student social-emotional health is the ability to participate in sports, music, student clubs, and other extracurricular activities. In fall 2021, middle school and high school facilities reopened to community groups providing dance lessons, club activities, and other opportunities. Helena High and Capital High resumed “near normal” club activity and sporting events in fall 2021. Fall 2021 saw the return of intramural sports programs as well as middle school music performances. Driver Education resumed a more normal classroom structure this school year.

Education technology has changed dramatically over the past decade. Today more than 9,000 students and staff rely on the District's computer network for learning, teaching, and operations with each of the team's 14 IT technicians supporting more than 600 users. 926 is the number of attempted cyber attacks stopped or mitigated by the HPS IT departments since the start of the school year. Looking ahead, technology is a key focus for the District.

Our school nurses are superheroes and work tirelessly to keep us in school. They have done a tremendous job with vaccination clinics. Not only our school nurses, but we also employ help from aspiring nurses. I believe that Montana Tech, Carroll, and Bozeman have had students that have helped us with vaccination clinics, and testing clinics. Thank you, Ms. Ridgeway, as well. The federal government eliminated the COVID Relief Act and we have staff members that may have COVID and need to be out or they have young ones that need to be taken care with a COVID situation. In September, HPS reached an agreement with all union leadership teams to provide 80 hours (10 days) of paid emergency COVID leave to all District employees (union and non-union).

Over the past year and a half, Helena Public Schools has adjusted the District's compensation structure for employee groups based on market analyses. In a tight hiring market, this allows HPS to competitively recruit and retain the talent and skill that our students and community deserve. In addition to hiring instructional coaches, the District contracted with 13 teachers in fall 2021 to be available full-time to support short-and long-term absences. Ensuring consistent staffing provides student with the stability they need for academic growth. The District also hired some para educators earlier than usual last fall to provide additional support for classroom management and to support individual student needs. Meanwhile, Helena Public Schools raised substitute teacher wages to help address a shortage of substitutes and provide critical backup for teachers.

In fall 2021, the Helena Public Schools Transportation Department found workable, temporary solutions to a shortage of bus drivers that is challenging Districts across Montana and the nation. While many Districts cancelled multiple routes for the entire school year, the HPS Transportation Department designed a new bus schedule with rolling route suspensions. This school year, Helena Public Schools parents began using an app to monitor when and where their student gets on and off the bus, in real time. The app also can track the progress of their child's bus route. These safety improvements were enabled by a new electronic swipe card system for school bus onboarding and offboarding. In addition, all District buses were outfitted this fall with eight new high-definition cameras with night vision. The upgrade includes bus stop arm cameras that enable transportation staff to identify drivers who fail to stop when the arms are extended, and lights are flashing.

Our Facilities Committee is working towards a master facility plan so that we know what it looks like in the future, and something that we update yearly. We are also working on a deferred maintenance plan so that we can know what's coming at us. Helena Public Schools manages 20 facility sites covering 1.3 million square feet of building space and 181 acres. With the average age of our facilities at 50 years, the Facilities Department focuses on doing the right maintenance at the right time to keep buildings and grounds cost-effective and functioning efficiently. To close out projects funded by the District's last voter-approved Elementary Bond, which included the construction of three new elementary schools, the Facilities team finished work to update and enhance the safety, security, and functionality of elementary schools across Helena. The Facilities team recently finished roof updates at Capital High, Four Georgians, and May Butler, as well as roof maintenance throughout the District to maintain the integrity of the buildings. Work also included major improvements to the HVAC system at Jefferson Elementary. To meet the indoor air quality needs necessitated by the pandemic, the Facilities Department enhanced air-handling systems, adding new cleaning protocols, filters, and other much-needed improvements throughout the District. In November, the Facilities Department finished converting the Lincoln Center to house the District's Central Office services. Meanwhile, the formal Central Office location-the May Butler Center-is the new home of the District's team of physical and occupational therapists, braillists,

adaptive physical education staff, and other professionals who support students with motor, vision, and hearing needs. In October, crews completed a one million dollar stadium renovation project to Vigilante Stadium which included a new track surface, an LED lighting system, ADA seating, new retaining walls, and other needed improvements. Students at Jim Darcy and Central elementary schools can now watch the sun power their buildings in real time, thanks to a coalition of public and private partners who funded the installation of 50-kilowatt solar panels at each school. The District is working to determine next steps to install solar panels at the new Bryant Elementary School.

Helena Public Schools has provided more than 1.6 million breakfasts and lunches to community children, free-of-charge, since March 2020, a service made possible by funding from the US Department of Agriculture. The Helena Public Schools also has a Wellness Committee that is comprised of teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, and Board of Trustees members who are dedicated to building a culture of wellness as a foundation for learning. They have two subcommittees: a Nutrition Subcommittee and a Physical Activity Subcommittee. The group's Nutrition Subcommittee is working on a "Harvest of the Month" pilot program. In partnership with St. Peter's Health, high school students visit fourth-grade classrooms each month to provide interactive nutrition lessons and host taste tests featuring Montana foods. Meanwhile, the Physical Activity Subcommittee is exploring opportunities for students to participate in movement outside of the Physical Education classroom during their school day. The subcommittee also is looking at ways to provide families with resources to promote physical activity at home.

The Helena Public Schools Business and Finance Department has realized significant cost savings already this school year by replacing paper-based systems with digital formats. Together with the Education Technology Department, the Business and Finance Office moved the District to a centralized print management system.

Communication and outreach are top priorities for the Board of Trustees and District Administration. In August, the District brought on a communications officer to support the District's Administrative team and schools with outreach to families, staff, and the broader community. Today's minute-by-minute news cycle, couples with the ever-changing demands of COVID-19, have dramatically elevated the need for prompt and consistent communications. This includes weekly updates to District families and enhanced social media outreach.

That concluded the Superintendent Report.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair, commented. I would like to say to you and your leadership team that I so appreciate your vision and your high expectations and all the work you put into this. I also want to say thank you to all the all the teachers, the paras, the coaches, and all the other support staff in our schools who are doing the innovative and hard work in our classrooms with our students. I think you are taking the strategic priorities process and making it your own. This is the important kind of updates that you want to present to the Board and the community, and I really appreciate you doing it with us tonight and setting a high bar. Thank you so much.

John McEwen, Trustee, thanked Superintendent Wertz for his update, and said it was nice to hear about what is going on in the schools.

#### IV. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We will now move on to general public comment. This is the time for comment on public matters that are not on the agenda. Public Matters do not include any pending legal matters, private personnel issues, or private student issues. Please do not attempt to address such issues at this time or you will be ruled out of order. The Board cannot enter into discussion during general public comment. So, as we discussed before, we'll go ahead and start with people who are here with us in person who would like to give public comment.

Ms. Jamie Bright commented. You decided to put my high school kids back in masks despite the science proving that simple paper and cloth masks do not stop virus transmission, and I'm back. I'm here advocating for my children. You are going to claim that you masked in order to keep the schools open and baloney, it's not true. The kids do not need to be forced to wear masks. Masks are harmful, and if someone wants to wear one because they believe it keeps them safe, then so be it. We're all for that. I'm all for that. On the first day of re-masking, I got some very concerning communication from my daughter. Let me read you a text from my 14-year-old. Remember she's 14 and her message will reflect that. This is her message. "OMG Mom I cannot even do this today. I'm like dying, and I can't breathe. There is snot on the inside of my mask. People keep yelling at me, and they said they're taking away our bathroom privileges. I think I'm going to die, and everyone is acting weird AF today." So that's from a 14-year-old. In her text she mentioned death and dying twice. That's a bit too uncomfortable for me as a Mom. Does that statement have you squirming in your chair? Many other kids feel the same about masking and yet they don't have an outlet to express their feelings. Some kids feel so isolated in masks that their mental health has taken a nosedive. Are you proud? Was this your goal? You know the masks don't work. Science and data have shown that schools without mask mandates do not have higher transmission rates. So why? Why? If I was you, I'd feel extremely culpable for the mental health decline of many children, and if I was in your shoes, I would feel extreme guilt if I'd been a Trustee who facilitated the masking mandates in schools. My conscience would lead me to resign my position on the school Board, but that may be where we differ. I have a conscience and I care about the wellbeing of our children more than I care about the optics of false protection. A large majority of our high school kids in Helena have gotten COVID and they've recovered. Ironically, almost every teen has at one time contracted COVID regardless of the drastic interruptions and restrictions that the school District placed on our children's learning. While the District was scrambling to prevent COVID infections, a vast majority of the kids contracted the virus anyways. I don't personally know more than 10 teens who have not contracted COVID, I do in fact know more than 10 teens who suffered emotionally, academically, and socially at the hands of our school District, our Board of Trustees, and Administrators. Strange, right? Is anyone else seeing how ironic this is? Let's protect the kids from COVID but cause permanent damage in other areas. Oh, but most kids contracted COVID anyways, even though we were trying to protect them. To help illustrate the absurdity of your masking mandates let me introduce a little bit of comic relief to finish up my conversation. Is there anybody in this room who's willing to wear a little bit of extra sunscreen for me so that I can stay safe from a sunburn when I go to Mexico in March? Oh right, your sunscreen will not protect me. If I want to be protected, I've got to wear sunscreen myself. That sounds familiar, right? Same with the masks, wear them if you want to keep yourself safe. One quick solution. The District could purchase cafeteria tables to be used in the classrooms. Your science says that they don't need masks at cafeteria tables. Problem solved.

Ms. Avra Branson commented. Good evening, Board of Trustees. My name is Avra Branson, and I have been a para educator for the Helena School District for 15 years. This evening I would like to thank Rex Weltz, Superintendent of the Helena Public Schools, and the staff who must make complex decisions and implement new processes to keep our kids learning and that's not easy. Also, Stacey Collette, Administrator of Human Resources, who has been involved in just about every aspect of the Helena Schools COVID response planning and implementation. To the Board of Trustees-I have never seen all of you work as diligently as you have since March 2020. Thank you for working with employees, students, and the Helena community as well as you have during these complex and challenging times. I really do appreciate all the time and energy the Board of Trustees has invested in Helena schools, and students' learning the best ways possible during quickly changing circumstances. Having to sort through science, facts, misinformation, and conspiracy theories must be incredibly challenging and even stressful and you're not even paid. Thank you for keeping our schools open and students learning in person. Truly, the Helena School District is a good place to have kids in during this time. Thank you.

John Foster is a parent of a child in the Helena School District. Mr. Foster commented. Who makes the decision to put the masks on the kids again? Where does that decision come from, because it's not coming from data and it's not coming from science. So, is it coming from a position of we want to feel like we're doing something? Superintendent, you mentioned mental health and all that is going on in the District for mental health. That's good, and it has never been more needed since we've been dealing with the COVID restrictions placed on our students. The students aren't getting deathly ill, and they are not dying from COVID. How many teachers in the Helena School District have died from COVID? So why are we continuing to put more mandates on our kids? Why are we putting more restrictions on them that we know causes mental distress and takes them out of what should be a normal childhood. There is no data to support it and yet you guys continue to do it. You mentioned Superintendent in your commentary earlier, "what else can we do?". Stop doing what you're doing. You don't need to figure out what else can you do. You keep bringing up over and over how much you want to help the kids and it's all about supporting the children in our District. You're doing the exact opposite by mandating the things that you're mandating. I'm a business owner, I cover 11 states and I talk to people in industry and business every day of the week, and the type of restrictions you're putting on our students are widely criticized and looked down on. You're making yourself look foolish in order to feel like you're doing something. Stop doing something and let the kids be normal. The CDC just came out with the fact that the lockdowns, the mandates, and the masking made virtually zero difference in the pandemic. Specifically with our children, it's making no difference, except their mental health and you are robbing them of their childhood and normal school years. That's not right. Thank you.

Andrew Boyd is a father of a junior at Capital High School. Mr. Boyd commented. Board and community, thank you for your time. I have concerns about the mask mandate. My concerns are along the lines of the school District making health decisions versus the household the students are in. I have concerns about the inconsistency of some of the masking policies. I oppose mandates in general and I think it is a slippery slope for all of us. I think it's very easy to start at one place and end up somewhere else entirely. Examples would be tobacco, obesity, and alcohol. Those all impact our community, they all can impact our health, they all impact what we pay in insurance premiums, both as an individual and a business. What are we going to mandate? How far am I going to step into your life and your business and your well-being? I'm not accusing anyone of anything, I'm just stating that I think it's a slippery slope and I think there can definitely be problems there. We can look at other developed countries and see how they're handling restrictions on their populace. Two examples are Sweden and Australia. They



are on polar opposites of how they're approaching things and look at how those populations are reacting, and what's going on there. We can't keep a mandate in place forever and all indicators show COVID is not going away. What science are we following? I went online today and according to the data on Montana's own DPHHS demographics and state OPI website they break it down by masks required versus masks optional in schools. I went through those cases and the numbers are identical. That's been tracked since September 21, 2021, through today's numbers. That's all I have.

Dawn Mahler is a Mother of five children. Ms. Mahler commented. I am fighting for my kids to get superior education. I am also a 27-year veteran nurse who is ready to quit my job in order to homeschool my kids to meet their needs. My girls in fifth grade and third grade-their grades have slipped. My third grader has D's. This is unacceptable. She returned a paper that was scored 100% with multiple spelling errors. Some of the words she couldn't even tell us what she had wrote. Yet that was acceptable to the teacher, and it was 100%. Now I know this may not have anything to do with the mask or it may. As a 27-year veteran nurse, I have been employed in different hospitals throughout the United States where I have tested people for the COVID virus. It all started with the CDC recommending the full garb-the face shield, and the N95-which as employee health personnel we know that we are fit tested for. If we taste saccharin, the mask is ineffective, therefore, we can catch whatever virus or infection or anything else we're exposed to with that mask. Having said that, the CDC has changed their mask requirements based on what PPE or personal protective equipment is available to the medical staff. This has been from day one. CDC has changed requirements for medical personnel on a day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute update. I don't believe these masks are necessary. Surgical masks prevent people from spreading infections onto the surgical field-hence the name surgical mask. That's what you're wearing. It doesn't prevent you from catching anything. It prevents your germs from contaminating that surgical field that is supposed to be sterile. Mask science is there. Let's study the anatomy of the mask and if we feel the need to wear a mask to protect ourselves, wear the appropriate mask, and be educated. Kids shouldn't have to wear masks. Our bodies were intended to fight bacteria and fight viruses. God did this to us. He produced us in these bodies that are wonderful, and they work.

Erik Martini is a father of three children in the Helena School District. Mr. Martini commented. I'm sure the Board recognizes me as I have been offering my two cents on the forced masking issue for the past seven or eight Board meetings. I called out the hypocrisy of the Board each time I've been up here and how the Board simply ignores science, any basic common-sense approaches to the pandemic, as well as ignoring the views of parents, teachers, students, and the general public. By far the majority of the commenters at the August Board meeting-in which this forced mask policy was initiated-were anti-mandate and anti-forced masking. The views of these commenters were flat out ignored because the Board had already made up its mind on the issue and the general public comment period was just a formality. An obstacle in the way of what was already being rolled out. Then at the December Board meeting, I recollect calling out the Superintendent and the Board on why January 4th would be the day to roll back the forced masking. It literally made no sense. I wondered out loud if the Superintendent could predict the future as more likely than not cases would continue to rise in the county as we went deeper in the winter. Lo and behold, cases went up. I'll be darned, it's almost like this happens every year around this time. As I recall, it used to be called cold and flu season. I also called out the Board on its blatant hypocrisy regarding its facility use agreements because apparently COVID doesn't exist after the school day ends. Yeah, I guess at 3:30 p.m. no one needs masks in our schools, but during the school day-by God it's mandatory for every soul walking through those doors. I missed the January Board meeting as I was visiting family in sunny and free Florida. I visited my brother who has two kids-my niece and

nephew-who attend schools in a District several times larger than our own here in Helena. He let me know that the schools there are mask optional. Indeed, this is the case for several much larger school Districts in many states except ours-as the Superintendent here in our District can simply unilaterally, on a whim, without the input of the parents, teachers or students wave his wand and declare forced masking that day. The Superintendent does not act without the blessing of the Board. That is very clear. The policy was supposed to be a compromise between the District and the parents regarding the District's response to the pandemic. I use the word compromise loosely because again, by far the majority of public commenters were not in favor of forced masking, but a mask optional approach. Why even have a policy if you're going to simply ignore the policy and do whatever you want anyways? Please parents I implore you that we don't compile our way out of this. We only continue to embolden people with views contrary to the majority of parents when we cave every time. Though the Superintendent said he anticipates lifting the mandate next week, what about next month? The District can just unilaterally make masking mandatory whenever it sees fit. A simple way to combat this is to just send your children without masks and tell teachers and faculty at your child's school that they will not be required to wear one. For the three weeks in which masks were optional, guess what, almost no one was wearing them. It's almost as if parents don't want it for their children. Honestly, do you really think the last couple of weeks forced masking has done anything? There's a whole string of these masks on the fences of Jim Darcy school that kids use and reuse because no one really cares anymore. It's a joke. I'll leave you with this last question. For the parents in this room and online, who gets to decide if your child wears a medical device for seven hours a day? Is it you? Or does a government bureaucrat who doesn't even know who your child is decide. Is it you who were there for your kid at 3 a.m. when they had a bad dream, or a stomachache? You who changed 1000s of their diapers, held them till they fell asleep when they were sick, taught them how to ride a bike, how to fish, or throw a football. You helped them through all the tough times. You helped through all the good times. Who decides? Them or you? I promise you this, if you give them an inch they're going to take a mile. Enough is enough.

Amanda Osborne is a parent of children in the Helena School District. Ms. Osborne commented. As I understand it, the Board's yielded the decision to the Superintendent as to whether or not we will or will not mask. So, I'll just turn my comments to you Mr. Weltz. I know you want to protect children and keep them in school, and I'm assuring you that your goal is the same as mine. I'm a Mom to three daughters and I'm experiencing firsthand the consequences of failing to return to in person learning last year, both emotionally and academically, and I'm staring it in the face every single night. I appreciate your regular email communication, but you've got to stop trying to convince me that masking is a solution to a staffing shortage. Masking students from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. could not possibly be your most effective tool to fix staffing shortages. I'm looking for leadership. If staff shortages are the issue, then how about you innovate some direct solutions. Don't play politics with my daughter's faces or don't use them as public approval strategy. My girls are more than just eyes, and masking is not free. It was heartbreaking to watch them return to school two weeks ago, faceless. Since that time, they've struggled emotionally, and they have experienced harassment by students and teachers who are self-imposed masking police acting in delusional and dangerous cult like behavior. My kids have always been diligent students, but they have developed a despondent attitude towards school, to the point that last week, they asked to stay home for the very first time ever. The CDC reported a 51% increase in ER visits due to suicide attempts by adolescent girls in 2021. Masks are not part of the solution to this grim crisis. They exacerbate it. I'm the one unpacking emotions at the dinner table for three adolescent girls every single night. The long-term consequences of this mask requirement are very real in my home. You're in the hot seat, Mr. Weltz and I don't envy you, but continuing to implement a mask mandate for these kids is

putting you, this Board, and ultimately all of us on the losing side of history. I've got a good memory. I remember the plexiglass policy. That was bad policy. I remember masking kids at outdoor recess, that was bad policy. I remember keeping them out of school last year and that was bad policy. So, I'm asking you now-not next Monday-I'm asking you today to step up the way other leaders have and end COVID restrictions to start making things right again.

Ms. Moffie Funk commented. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and members of the Board. I would just like to thank you so much for everything you have done, and that everything this school District has done over these past months to support this community and the students. Thank you to the paras, the teachers, the kids, the families, and the administration that have shown up day after day to support them. I am particularly grateful in your report the discussion about food because kids can't learn if they're hungry and what you have done to help feed them over this time is fabulous and I am truly grateful for that. Also, the mental health. You all have done so much, and I want to give a particular shout out to the Superintendent, Mr. McKay, and Mrs. Mickelson who have lost so much sleep over trying to get this funding for a very successful and important program that's in all your schools. Thank you so much. I know we're working with No Kid Hungry and with local food organizations, and that's a great thing. It's important, it helps our economy, and it helps kids know what a potato is like before it becomes a french fry. I'm so pleased and so grateful for all that you are doing. I'll just end with one thing; I had the honor of judging a statewide contest and the theme was, "what impact has the pandemic had on the mental health of youth". It was extraordinary because there were essays, there were videos, and artwork. Yes, it's been rough on them, there is no question, but several of them said they think they're going to come out of this stronger having learned resilience, that their relationships are going to be stronger, and that their sense of self is going to be stronger because they have had a rough time. I found that so heartening and so powerful because these are the kids that have had situations that have caused them stress and they are now going to be able to have the resilience and the knowledge to help other people. We are in tough times but I'm so grateful that we have your leadership and if there's anything I can do let me know. Thank you so much.

Christine Sorem is a parent of children in the Helena School District. You talk about having respect. I feel like I need respect from the school Board. I have written multiple emails and from what I understand, it's just a copy and paste response to other parents that have written into the school Board about mask mandates, and other things. Are you really reading what we're saying? Do you take into account what we're saying and how we feel? I feel like you've taken away my parental rights, and my son's physical and mental health, and you don't care. I even said that in my last email. There was no mention of my kid's physical or mental health, nothing. You need to focus on education. My second grader isn't doing spelling tests. They need to learn how to take tests. I don't think he's ever had a test and he's been in school for three years. That's not okay. Also, I understand that technology is a part of our life, I do, but my fourth grader is doing 45 minutes of math a week on a computer. How do you learn doing math on a computer? You need to have that physical touch of pencil to paper to be able to picture it in your head. How do you expect kids to learn math on a computer? He also does 45 minutes of reading on a computer. I don't understand it. I really feel like you took away my parental rights. We are there with them all the other hours of the day when they are not at school, and it's our choice if they're wearing a mask or not. It's not yours. I don't want my kids to be a pawn in this, so I tell them to go and to be respectful, but I'm done. I am done.

Howard DeRosier is a parent of two children in the school District. Mr. DeRosier commented. I didn't plan on talking tonight and the main reason why is because I don't think you hear me. Your eyes glaze over, and I can't see your face. What science are you using at this point? The CDC in their guidance for this variant said these masks don't work. The size of the micron of this variant hasn't changed since the first form of Coronavirus. At what point does common sense come into play? I was one of the only parents to speak to you for the very first time right after the shutdown. My concern was education. Tonight, we heard about roofs, cleaning airways, and masks. How much of this meeting came down to education? Not very much, and I asked for these scores. I saw one of the Trustees posted something this week, "our kids are doing so much better since the beginning of the school year". Well, there are many parents here that told you we need to be in school the year you shut down. When we started this school year, some of you acted like it was your novel idea that we need to be in school five days a week. We pleaded with you to get our kids in school. We have two Trustees that voted to still not have our kids in school. Two of the Trustees here voted for school being two days a week. No. I want my kids educated. I want the numbers. I want those scores. I actually already have them. You guys need to give it out and I don't care how many minutes sir. I came in here to be heard. You may not listen, but you will hear. I was very respectful for a very long time. At what point do you guys take culpability for the actions that you have taken? This is, I think, the sixth time I have spoken to you about the education of my children. I did not get a response from any of you. The only person that I've had a conversation with is sitting right there. And he's in a tough spot. Ms. Osborne is right; you are in the hot seat. Our numbers are very low. We had a steep incline and a steep decline. If that's the case, you put masks back on these kids with no criteria, none, and no criteria to take them off. The reason you took them off in the first place was because people had a chance to get vaccinated. What changed? Just because you decided? That's not acceptable to me. You set a criteria, you stick with it. Everybody had their chance to get vaccinated, and it didn't work did it. Please hear me. Listen to the words of these people and do what's best for kids. I believe it says that on the back of your name tags. Thank you.

Heidi Keaster is a parent of children in the Helena School District. Ms. Keaster commented. Good evening. Thank you all for being here. Do you all know why we are here? We are here because we want this to end. We want it all to end, and we don't trust you so we're just going to keep on coming. We are sad that the policies of this Board have caused so much division and so much turmoil within our community. The climate of this community is just terrible. I have a solution. I'm solution oriented. The solution is taking the masks off or mask your teachers. Mask the teachers with N95 masks. I think you could approach the teacher's union president here in Helena, the one that says she wants to recall Senator Daines, because it's not about politics. None of this is about politics, right? We even have a legislator here. I don't think the masking of the kids worked. I'm back to the staffing thing as well. Our problem that St. Peter's is having with staffing is they don't offer any sign on bonuses. This isn't our children's fault. The staffing at the hospital, that's not our fault, and we're not responsible for that. So, let's go back to politics. In New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut they're getting the masks off. I wish our Democratic legislator would have come without her mask on because maybe we would have gotten masks off. I don't know. I want to leave you with this. This is what my kids said to me. My kid came home, and he said, "I think they put masks on us to keep our mouths shut". I thought, you know what, I think that's what it is because we're having so many problems in our District. Maybe that's why my first-grade teacher used to tape our mouths shut. I grew up in a small town in the Midwest. She taped our mouths shut. So, is that what it is? I also want to talk about the effects of the policies that you had. My neighbor just turned 18 and he is in prison. He quit going to school when COVID happened and when schools closed, he stopped going to school. A lot of these policies really affect these underprivileged

kids. I just think that the more you push this, the more they push back. I would really like you guys to take off the masks and stop playing politics.

Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. Good evening, Chair and Board. I believe you all received an email, and I sent certified letters. I know that confirmation of the letters being received by Rex and Drenda came through. I don't know what happened to yours Luke, but you all received an email. Please pass those letters out-a hardcopy now. FOIA requests have been made for all financials, for all public comment emails, for any conversations with the Superintendent and any school Board members connected to health department and hospital resources-whoever is helping you decide or coercing you to decide to mask our kid's, for any financial information that pertains to COVID and the things you've done to these kids to protect yourselves, teachers, and adults from this pandemic. So that is in the process. You guys have some work to do on this. You're busy. I guess you asked for it. There is apparently a records custodian. I reviewed your Policy number 1075 which states that you have a reasonable period of time. It states 10 business days-my letter also says 10 school days, and I understand that there will be some lawyers that you will contact to ensure that this letter is proper. It does quote Montana law and we will do the best we can to communicate closely and quickly, because 10 days goes pretty quick. So, I look forward to that work. I also know that after I receive all those copies, I'll have work to do. I implore anybody to look with me because it's all public comment. It's all public record. I want to make sure that for the agenda tonight, the items of action-that's second reading, correct? So, there will be public comment on those? I have a couple comments I'll put on there. Thank you.

Joseph Culpon commented. Hi, my name is Joseph Culpon. I really liked going to my school once a week called Explorer School, but we decided to stop going because they wouldn't let you not wear a mask, and you would always have to wear a mask. It was super annoying, and I hated it.

Ms. Chelsea Culpon commented. I homeschool three of our children, but my boys had been in Explorer school for three years. When we went back in person this fall, I explained to them that they would have to wear masks and did they still want to go to Explorer School. They love Explorer School, so they said yes. Even before Christmas, the nine-year-old was crying and refusing to go to school in the morning, and so we made the decision to withdraw them starting this semester. That's obviously very hard for them because they loved it, but they hated the masks more. I want to thank the Superintendent for the report; I really appreciated it. I don't follow this as much as maybe some parents because we homeschool, but I have followed the PAX Good Behavior Game for several years. We've talked about it in various community health meetings that I've been a part of. So, I'm very happy to see the Helena School District tackle this. Schools have become a place where children receive food, counseling, and mental health services. I'm glad that we are doing that because as a society, we have come to a place where that is necessary, required, and most appropriate. So, I'm glad that we are doing those things and there will probably be more of a need to do those things as a result of the impacts of the pandemic and masks. I know the Superintendent got a mixed review tonight, but I know that Rex, as well as all the Trustees, are working very hard. I hope you continue to do the hard work that you get paid and not paid to do. I would leave with this, originally the Atlantic, Wall Street, New York Times, and Johns Hopkins, all encouraged us to mask and lockdown, but in the last week all those institutions and publications have said masking in schools had no effect and is not helpful. It is worthless. Thank you. You guys have a great night.

Melissa Kosena has been a teacher for 22 years in a neighboring school District and is a parent of a child in the Helena School District. I know that there are lots of parents who have talked about the emotional and mental effects of masks, which I completely agree with. I'm going to approach this from a different aspect. I have been a teacher for 22 years. I have taught kindergarten, first, and second grades. I have my Master's in Reading and Literacy Education. I have been told numerous times that I can teach a rock to read. I don't need to see the District's test scores to know that they have made a dramatic dip in the last few years. This is partly due to you spending only two shortened days a week for three fourths of the school year last year, but this is also due to masks. So, the very first step when the child is learning how to read or even before they are beginning to read is they have to learn something called phonemic awareness. In a nutshell, phonemic awareness is the ability to manipulate sounds in words. So, before they even see a letter, a word, or a sentence—they have to be able to hear and speak and change those sounds in a word. So, to be able to do that kids need to know two things. They have to be able to adequately hear the sounds that are being said and they have to see the sounds being modeled with mouths and lips. Masks impair both of these things. The masks muffle the sounds so that they cannot adequately hear them, and they cannot see the teachers' mouths move to see how that sound is represented. The teacher cannot see the child forming the sounds in the words either. This is greatly impacting kids' ability to breathe. You also should talk very closely with your speech pathologists and your speech therapists to see how their year is going because I have talked to several and many of them have said that the number of students who are qualifying for speech has increased threefold in the last year. These kids are not able to see and hear the words that are being said and it is affecting them with speech. So, masks are not only affecting our kids emotionally, but also academically. We don't have any data on the long-term effects of masks but there has been lots of data on long term effects of not being able to read and here's a scary one. Four fifths of all fourth graders who are not reading on grade level will end up incarcerated or on welfare if they are not reading on level by fourth grade. We need to get the masks off the children for their future. Thank you.

Ethan Heverly is a parent of three children. Mr. Heverly commented. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your time and your attention. It's greatly appreciated. I also want to say that these views are my own personal views and not that of my employer. The reason I'm reaching out today is primarily because I have school aged children. I have a seven-year-old, a four-year-old, a two-year-old, and baby number four on the way in a couple of months. None of them will go to the Helena School District and that is out of the current state of affairs specific to this situation. I mean no disrespect, but it's just a mess. The reality is I can't justify compromising my child's education, and my child's future because we're sitting here focusing on this. With all due respect, we have a vaccine and you can choose to get the vaccine. I want to also say I'm not one of these people who takes the pandemic lightly. I know personally three individuals who have passed away during the pandemic. So, I take it very seriously. That being said, the science does not support what is being done in the school District right now. If we wanted to actually follow the science and talk about actual effective masking, then we should be talking about what the previous speaker said which was the N95 masks. The science says that those are the only masks that are remotely effective and possibly not even then. I wear a mask to work. My employer requires that of me and that's fine. I do what's asked of me, but I am not going to subject my kids to eight hours of school a day, wearing a mask, and having a lack of oxygen. For all the reasons the previous speaker just mentioned, my kids will not go to the Helena School District.

Courtenay McAdams is a mother to two children in the Helena School District. Ms. McAdams commented. I have been very active over the last few years about what's been happening in our schools. I stood up here-I think it was January 12th of 2021-asking this Board to please open our school's full time. We were at two days a week. I was asking for a plan. I was asking for a timeframe. We were the only double A school not open full time at that point or without a plan. Bozeman opened in November for elementary, and we did not open until March, and I had asked the Board at that time as to what our learning loss is going to look like at that point. I was really concerned about it because my third grader at the time was really struggling in math, and we saw as those things all came in that I was correct to be worried about that. The teacher that spoke prior from Clancy spoke about fourth grade and how important it is to be able to read at grade level in fourth grade to avoid poverty and a criminal lifestyle. I look very carefully at the fourth-grade data because my son is in that. When somebody called me out today on Jennifer's Facebook posts, which seemed to incense me-so I apologize that I get so fired up about those-but I dumped every bit of data pictures that I had into that post so that parents can see what is going on because I don't really know how many parents read the agenda from the Board. There's a group of us that do, but I really hope that these iReady reports and the SBAC reports go out to parents in a way that they will be able to truly read them and have help interpreting them if they don't understand them. The SBAC reports, according to OPI when I called them, are supposed to come out in November at parent teacher conferences. I was told they didn't come out because they were very poor, which I would agree with, but I requested them and received them from my Principal and found out where my child was at that point. Same thing with the iReady, I've been really watching that as well too. When you look at our math proficiency in Lewis and Clark County, being 64% below proficiency, that's a serious problem for any kids that want to enter medicine, stem, engineering, or any other kind of technical or engineering job. So, I really am looking for solutions. I emailed Rex about that today. I don't feel like the District's been very transparent about what is happening to fix these situations. I don't know how many kids are going to be allowed to go to Mount Ascension this year, but if we have 65% of our kids not at grade level for math and about 50% not a grade level for reading, that's a massive number of kids that need to be at Mount Ascension in my opinion. So, I'm wondering how much money do we have left in our COVID coffers? How are we paying for this? What specific tools are we giving to our educators to be able to work on a daily basis to help all of the kids-especially the kids that are in the lower WIN groups right now. My son told me that 50% of his class goes out for WIN groups right now, and that there is a very small amount of them that are reading at grade level and are working at math at grade level. That's not the way that school is supposed to be. So, I really hope that in the coming months, we won't wait until February to give this data to parents. We need to know about it a lot sooner so that we can make interventions for our own kids. I also would like to really hear a strategic plan as to what we're going to do to bring our kids up to grade level. This has now been a year since I've been asking for this, and I still don't feel like we have an adequate answer. So, I appreciate the Board being here to listen to this report. I'm really looking forward to it and thank you for pulling all this together.

Paige Pfahler is a parent of four kids in the Helena School District. Ms. Pfahler commented. Mr. Weltz and Board of Trustees, I would like it once again documented that as parents of four kids in the school district, we would like the mask mandate to be removed. Again, we as parents, know our kids best. We should be the ones making decisions for their health. We know the emotional, mental, and physical state of our kids best, therefore we should be making the decision for each individual kid. The fact that you are masking all kids in response to catering to those who choose to wear masks is disheartening. I am interpreting that as you are putting our beliefs and feelings below those who mask. If there is an issue of

an uncomfortable environment due to those differences, we need to focus on creating an environment that is supportive of individual choice. As a family we have talked about those that wear masks and how that is their choice to do so, but we have also been on the receiving end of being bullied for choosing not to. It goes both ways and if that is the problem, we need to allow people to make their own choices and focus on creating an environment that is supportive and positive regarding allowing those to do so.

That concluded the public comment portion of the evening. The Board of Trustees moved on to discuss New Business-Items for Information: Academic Data Review.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Items For Information**

1. Academic Data Review
2. Policy 1020 School Board Elections
3. Policy 1085 Uniform Complaint Policy
4. Policy 5025 Employment and Assignment
5. Policy 7025 Extra and Co-Curricular Funds

#### **1. Academic Data Review**

Superintendent Weltz commented regarding the Academic Data Review. I had been looking forward to getting this information. It will show data that I think we can celebrate and there are always places to grow. I would like to introduce Ms. Davidson and Ms. Hess to give our Winter Benchmark 2021-2022 Assessment Data Overview presentation.

Ms. Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Administrator, commented. Thank you. I'd like to introduce Kaitlyn Hess. She is a teacher on special assignment, which means she's on a teaching contract, but she does all of our data assessment and manages our federal programs. She helps bring data to my office and back to schools to connect Curriculum and Instruction K-12 and helps facilitate coaches in the buildings, instructional framework that we're implementing in the buildings, intervention plans, and programs in our buildings, and helps with standards review and looking at data to make adjustments in all of our programming and all subject areas. So, with that I'm going to turn it over and she'll get started with the presentation.

Kaitlyn Hess, HSD TOSA, commented. I'm excited to present this data to the District. This is our midyear checkup. It allows us to gauge what we've implemented with curriculum and instruction thus far, see what's working, see what's not and then make adjustments. We don't want to get to the end of the year assessments and then say we should have done something different. So, there's a lot of exciting data in here. There's a lot to celebrate and there's also a lot for us to learn from this.

Ms. Hess proceeded to go through the slideshow which displayed information including: SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) Test Results in English Language Arts for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>



grade, SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) Test Results in Math for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, ACT Assessment Results, District Winter Benchmark Assessment Administration information, Kindergarten and First Grade-Acadience Reading Test Results, First through Fifth Grade iReady Data in Reading and Math, Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> Fall to Winter 2021-2022 iReady Data in Reading and Math, 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade iReady Data in Reading and Math, Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Fall to Winter 2021-2022 iReady Data in Reading and Math, Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Distribution Comparison, Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Distribution Comparison in Reading, Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Math, Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Reading, Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Math, Grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> iReady Data in Reading and Math, and Grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> iReady Data in Reading and Math by Grade Level.

In conclusion of the Academic Data Review, some celebrations that Ms. Hess shared in the presentation for Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Distribution Comparison the scores were above pre-pandemic norms in reading and above the national norm for fall-winter growth this year in math. For Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Distribution Comparison in Reading, all grade levels are at or above pre-pandemic levels in reading. For Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Math all grade levels are above the national norm for this year's growth from fall to winter. For Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Reading, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade is above the pre-pandemic national norm, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade is above the national norm in growth from fall to winter this year. For Grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Math, grades 6 and 8 are at or above the national norm for both '18-'19 and '21-'22, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade is above the national norm for '18-'19.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. I don't understand why at the high school the percentages for math and reading completion rate are not at 100%.

Ms. Hess commented. What we did for high school this year is we put together a block assessment schedule. So, students stay in their second period class for an additional 80 minutes afterwards to take that test in that class. The average finish time for the iReady assessment is 62 minutes but if you factor in you have a 50-minute class period, but by the time the students get to class, get their Chromebooks out, get logged in, you've got 10 minutes. So, really, they would need two class periods to do that. What we found was happening is if we said you're going to do this in two English class periods or two math class periods, that is a large burden on those teachers and classes to give those tests three times a year. That's six class periods of instruction that they're given up. The other thing that's happening is they would forget, or they would try to squeeze it in with some other lessons. So, it brought to question the standardization and the validity of our assessments and so we have tried out this block period, which also included a technology piece because you had all your kids logging on at once. So, the math was given on the first day. We had a little bit of a technology glitch there and fixed it rather quickly. You will see reading has a higher percentage completion right there. We also allow for a week of makeups afterwards, but our winter benchmark runs right up against semester tests. So, the message was to try to get our kids to finish their classwork first before making up the test. So, this is an issue we recognize and it's something that we're working on. How can we create a better system?

Ms. Davidson commented. There was one other mitigating factor in this. The week that we did this assessment in the high school and the week after when we did semester tests, were the two weeks we had really high absences with COVID. It was right in that window. We had record numbers of kids out consistently throughout that two-week period. I think that played a role in those completion rates for high school as well.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. Do you feel that there are too many standardized tests being given?

Ms. Davidson commented. No, but having taught at the high school, I would have wanted them to finish my semester test so that I could do grades before they did this. They still had time after the semester test to do it, but it was really tumultuous with all the absences trying to logistically pull together the kids to complete makeup tests. We've had higher completion rates in the past with our assessments and benchmarking because we haven't had those other mitigating factors.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair, commented. I think that it is great that we have so many people from our community that are interested in the academic data, and I think that it would be really great to let them know how these scores should correlate pretty closely with the SBAC scores at the end of this year.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. My understanding is when the school year begins there's a lot of review from the past year. How does that change with changing of the assessment regarding the standards because the new standards should now be implemented? Does the assessment address that, and how are the teachers addressing that?

Ms. Hess replied. So, the iReady assessment has different viewpoints you can look at. One is called a standard view, and that's where you're going to get the standards that the students should know for the year, and that's the view that we're using when we pull this data so that we have a consistent viewpoint that we're pulling for fall, winter, and for spring. Teachers can go in and change that to a beginning of the year viewpoint, a middle of the year, and an end of the year viewpoint. What that does is it adjusts the students' scores according to what standards they should know, during that point in time-whether it's the beginning of the year, the middle of the year, or the end of the year. That's going to help them understand how much the students know and what they should be working on next.

Ms. Davidson commented. From the academic standpoint they can drill down into those standards at the beginning of first grade and this is where that intervention component comes in; because it is criterion referenced, they can group students flexibly based on the "buckets" that need to be filled. So, you may have students who are deficient in some foundational skills in one area but not another, and so we're able to take this assessment and drill it down and know which students need this "bucket" filled, which need this "bucket" filled, and so on. That's what our WIN time is, essentially. Then they get those 15 to 20 minutes or longer sometimes of direct instruction on the "bucket" that they need filled. Then that's where that PDSA cycle comes in where you do a reevaluation every six weeks and then reorganize the students to move them up once they've learned the component that they need and their "bucket" is filled. That's where the intervention comes in. Thank you.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented regarding the Grades 1-5 Fall to Winter 2021-2022 iReady Data in Reading and Math. How do we determine the lag in fall-after summer- as opposed to there being no lag from fall to winter? It appears to me that there is always a fall lag so that the number of proficient readers in the fall are fewer than the number of proficient readers in the winter, because in the fall, there has been a three-month summer lag. Kids are not reading. So how do we differentiate the growth as opposed to the lag difference?

Ms. Hess replied. That is because you're looking at this based on grade level standards. So, say we have a current third grader. They finish second grade proficient-which means they have met those grade level standards for second grade to be considered proficient. When they go up to third grade, and they take this test, they're now going to be measured against third grade standards that they haven't seen before or practiced. So, they're going to be a little bit lower when they start. So, from that spring of second grade to fall of third grade, we're making two different comparisons, because we're comparing them against two different sets of standards. When we look at them from fall to winter here, we're comparing them against the same set of standards. So, we can tell that this growth is based just on the grade level standards that they've been exposed to this current school year. If we had the student take the second-grade test in the spring and then take the same second grade test in the fall, then we could measure that summer lag better; but we're not doing that because we're just looking at the growth that they're making within the year of the grade level they are in.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. We are clearly above the national norms pre-COVID in reading, and we are only one point away in math at every grade level.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented regarding the Grades 1-5 National Norms and National Placement Comparison by Grade Level in Math. Do we have any idea why the scores are lower in grade four? Is there something specific happening in that year?

Ms. Davidson replied. Third grade in math is a pretty big year. This is when we really start introducing geometry and fractions, and it's pretty critical. We've known this for a while that we've had, historically, a dip with our third graders in math. So, when we were using Star testing, we just got percentile rankings and scaled scores, and we really couldn't drill down. Keep in mind with reading, we have had a literacy grant that has kept us laser focused on reading for the last five years, and I think that has made a difference. What happened with this third iteration of the grant, we are allowed to utilize some of that money for math. So that's great news. Our math coaches took the iReady scores and they drilled down into them, which was something we couldn't do with Star. So, they started with third grade, and they looked at why are kids struggling with fractions. What we came to realize is we were not focusing on number sense to the extent that we needed, to prepare kids well for fractions. So, we made that adjustment for this year. My guess is because third grade has been a difficult year historically for students in our District and because they didn't get five days of direct instruction with math, that is what played a role in what happened with fourth grade. The good news is, we know what's missing. We utilized that grant money starting last spring, to bring in a math consultant who trained all our K through five teachers. It includes the manipulatives, the instructional strategies, and the intervention components that they can utilize with students in math, which is something we hadn't pulled together before. That's what led to the intervention groups for math in addition to the intervention groups for reading. We know that we've got to do more to get our math scores up for our students so we're putting in place everything we can in our tier one, tier two, and tier three supports to start making those gains.

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. Do we know how many students took the ACT Assessment compared to previous years? I know that a lot of colleges made it optional in the admissions process, so I know that a lot of students decided not to take it.

Ms. Hess replied. That is a great question. The ACT is a state mandated test. The state implemented it as their state assessment, so Districts are required to give it with a 95% completion rate. The incentive is that kids take it more seriously because it can help guide them towards college and careers. These results that you're looking at here are from the one day-I believe April 6<sup>th</sup> of last year-where every junior in the District took the tests, or they took it on a makeup day that was designated by ACT at another time. You can take the ACT outside of that date-you can take the ACT as many times as you want-that's not included in these results. This is just looking at the state test that we gave.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. Traditionally, we have had comparisons of our elementary schools to every other double A elementary school. We have also had individual comparisons to other double A high schools. They seem to be much more relevant than just comparing it to a state average, which includes all the Class C, B, and A schools also. Do we have that information?

Ms. Hess replied. We do. For this presentation, I just chose to give that 60,000-foot view, but we can certainly give you different data if that is what you would like to see.

Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair, commented. I know there's a lot of folks in the room here that have looked at the OPI website and pulled up some state data and I think it's important to know that these standards are very aggressive. I looked at some of the emails that I got today, and I went back to the OPI, and I looked at the state averages and compared us to the state averages. In three out of four categories we are above the state average. Do we want to be just average? No, but are we in peril because we are at the state average and would like to get better? Absolutely not. That's not a bad starting spot. The Montana State standards are good standards, I'm in favor of them, but they're very demanding. The very highest school in the whole double A was 70% proficient in reading, and the highest in math was 60%. Now, those are not written in stone, because I could be wrong. I just looked at them this afternoon. But if you're feeling like we should be having 100% proficiency or 80% proficiency, it's just not going to happen. It's not happening anywhere in the country and it's not going to happen here. That doesn't mean that we don't have work to do. I can definitely see some issues in math and I'm really excited that our Administration has coaching in place and has some of those systems in place and has teachers that are already trained up and motivated to get those scores moving in the right direction. There's also just a lot of growth to celebrate. The tests that we are looking at are from last year and everyone has a different opinion as to how we did school last year and how that went; but we are in school now. We are going five days a week and there's all kinds of good work that's happening and the teachers are working hard, and the students are working hard, and I'm really excited to see where we end up at the end of the year.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I want to thank you two for all the work that you have done and presided over. I want to thank all the teachers, paras, and everyone that worked so hard-it's 1,000 people. You are identifying every kid where they are at and bringing them up. I have huge optimism for how the rest of the year goes. I really want to thank the members of the public for staying. This is the kind of stuff I talk about as a Board member all the time. It's super exciting to see it on a graph and see

it compared to the rest of the country, and the rest of the state. We didn't just stagger down the track-we have a running coach, and we're getting better all the time.

Trustee Janet Armstrong commented. I'm just so personally appreciative for all the work that you guys have done. When you hear it presented in this light and you see how we're drilling down and how you're filling buckets-that is what we're looking for. We're looking for excellence-trying to get our kids to their highest potential possible. I'm so appreciative of the work you and the entire team are doing. Thank you.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair, commented. I just want to say thank you Ms. Davidson and Ms. Hess. That was a rigorous, honest, and deeply informative presentation. I'm just so thankful to the two of you and to you, Superintendent Wertz, for pushing through this effort day in and day out and presenting this to this Board and this community. I think it's the kind of thing we need to do every year. I would even suggest that we need to maybe think about doing it twice a year. I'm thankful that we have hit the pause button on updating our strategic priorities because I look at that mid-year update and it talks a lot about the tools we use in supporting and educating our kids. Then we have this data review that shows how our students are doing both relative to their own historical performance, but also compared to their peers. I feel like if you add those two things together, you have a perfect formula for what those updates to our strategic priorities need to be. What we're doing, how we're doing it, and what some of our goals are around the progress that we are trying to make. I'm excited about that and I just think we've made a big step forward today. I too want to thank the public who are attending this meeting. We have several people online as well, in addition to here in person. We've heard from members of the public before this meeting. As Ms. Hess said, everyone's email and the phone numbers are on the website. I know everybody's willing to answer questions. If you ever get confused about who to contact, just send an email to Superintendent Wertz or the Board, and we'll get you hooked up with the experts who can answer your questions. If you have input-what are your expectations for your public schools-share that with us because I think it's a critical time right now as we process this information, and then look to updating our strategic priorities and setting goals. It's the right time for that kind of input. I trust everyone here who has an opinion about that will share that with the Board and the Superintendent. I very much appreciate the presentation.

Superintendent Rex Wertz commented. Trustee McKee said it earlier, it is 1000 people. We can't do this without 1000 people at the helm of supporting kids. That's bus drivers, custodians, people in food and nutrition, our parents, our paras, the front office people, the Administration, the coaches, and the nurses. It takes a team, and more importantly, it's our teachers that are in the trenches, and I've been a teacher; I've done the work. Joslyn came to me, right when I was a Superintendent and said, "I've got these really great programs going on and these coaches are really helping". I already knew in my brain that we needed instructional coaches across the District coming out of where we were, and it's doing what I had expected. It's providing great data, but more importantly, we are providing consistency across our District, and I think our coaches are so important. The coaches are also supporting teachers because they are working extremely hard, but they also deserve to be streamlined and helped in their efforts. So, I appreciate the work of our coaches and our teachers doing the job-because that's who's doing it-supplemented by 1000 other people around them getting kids to school, feeding them, and helping them out when they need it. So, there's a lot of good work there, but I also think we hold this up as a lens and say there's some things we need to work on as well. Thank you for your efforts; I really appreciate it.

That concluded the Academic Data Review Presentation.

## 2. Policy 1020 School Board Elections

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 1020 School Board Elections is an existing policy that has language added to reflect how elections will be conducted with an eye to making polling places accessible to individuals with disabilities. This is in line with requirements from Senate Bill 15 which revises election laws related to accessibility for disabled electors.

## 3. Policy 1085 Uniform Complaint Policy

Ms. Ridgway commented. I do want to share that the Board Policy Committee has spent a lot of time looking at this policy, has taken a wide perspective look at it, and taken public comment on this policy during policy committee meetings. Policy 1085 Uniform Complaint Policy is an existing policy that has been revised to clarify the process including timelines. If a complaint can't be settled informally (Level 1) a written complaint must be filed with the building Administrator or appropriate supervisor (Level 2). If the complaint is not resolved at Level 2 it can be appealed to an Assistant Superintendent (Level 3). The Assistant Superintendent's decision may be appealed to the Superintendent (Level 4). The final level for the appeal is the Board of Trustees. A decision of the Board is final unless the decision is appealed pursuant to Montana law within the period provided by statute. We also have language that addresses retaliation, which we didn't have in our previous policy, and I think that's important.

## 4. Policy 5025 Employment and Assignment

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 5025 Employment and Assignment is an existing policy that has been revised. It establishes a 12-month probationary period unless that probationary period is otherwise established in a collective bargaining agreement, or some other agreement. This policy reflects changes made by House bill 254 which made extensive changes to the Montana Wrongful Discharge Act.

## 5. Policy 7025 Extra and Co-Curricular Funds

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 7025 Extra and Co-Curricular Funds isn't a required policy, it's a recommended policy and we didn't have it. This policy has been revised to add legal references about how the District will not prevent students in private or homeschool from participating in extracurricular activities (from House Bill 68) and to reflect the fact that Senate Bill 72 allows non-fulltime enrolled students who participate in extracurricular activities to be counted in the average number belonging calculation.

Trustee Libby Goldes commented. First of all, I would like to thank Barb because there are a number of policies that we're presenting today, and she's done so much work on all of them. Regarding the Uniform Complaint Policy, fellow committee members and Trustee John helped reduce the amount of time that it should take to have a complaint addressed. Although there are challenges with that when you look at summertime and access to witnesses and things of that nature, I think that we did a good job at reducing the amount of time this might take. Thank you.

Ms. Ridgway commented. Thank you, Trustee Goldes. I would also add that we tried to clarify school calendar and business days and when those particular days apply and in what situation.

That concluded Items for Information. The Board of Trustees moved on to Consent Action Items.

## **B. Consent Action Items**

1. Approval of 01.11.22 Board Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of 12.02.21 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting-Facilities Discussion Minutes
3. ~~Approval of Personnel Actions~~
4. Approval of Warrants
5. Approval of Sabbaticals for 2022-2023 School Year
6. ~~Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property-Facilities Surplus~~
7. Resolution to Dispose of Personal Property-Technology Equipment

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our Consent Action Items. I would like to note that we pulled out Consent Action Items number three and number six for future consideration.

**Motion:** Vice Chair Siobhan Hathorn moved to approve the consent action items one, two, four, five, and seven. John McEwen, Trustee, seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

That concluded Consent Action Items. The Board of Trustees moved on to review Items for Action.

## **C. Items for Action**

1. Call for Annual Election
  - a) Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election
  - b) High School Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election
2. Approve Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI)
3. Approval of Lincoln Re-roof Bid 2022
4. ~~Kessler Sewer Easement~~
5. Policy 2085 Graduation Requirements
6. Policy 3050 Student Discipline
7. Policy 3417 Communicable Diseases
8. Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities
9. Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission
10. Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers
11. Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality
12. Policy 9035 Capital Assets

1. Call for Annual Election

a) Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election

Janelle Mickelson, Business Manager, commented. So, you have before you two resolutions as you stated. The Board needs to call for an election 70 days before the election. The election is May 3<sup>rd</sup>. On the ballot will be election for three Trustees for a three-year term, and the operational levies for the general fund-both elementary and high school.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our Elementary Resolution.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved to approve the Elementary Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

1. Call for Annual Election

b) High School Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve our High School Resolution.

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve the High School Trustee Resolution Calling for The Annual Regular Election as presented. Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

2. Approve Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI)

Ms. Mickelson commented. We need to sign this MOU with DPHHS and the OPI in order to continue the CSCT services.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. How much more is a given block of CSCT services going to cost the District after this than it did two years ago before we started this process?

Ms. Mickelson commented. So, we tried to figure that out, but they changed the billing process. It used to be they would bill in 15-minute increments, and now it's a full day. The way they bill is going to completely change. So, I'm not sure at this point.



Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Fair enough. I know these services are critical to our District, and we are going to do whatever we can to seek as much reimbursement for those as we can. As those pictures become clearer, you can come back to the Board with an update.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve this MOU.

**Motion:** Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) as presented. Trustee Terry Beaver seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

### 3. Approval of Lincoln Re-roof Bid 2022

Stacy Collette, Human Resources Administrator, commented. Good evening. I have before you an action item for the approval of the Lincoln Center roof replacement project. Our current building that we sit in today is due for a roof replacement. It's been over 25 years since we've addressed the roof and we're seeing some spots and things like that that are requiring us to do some maintenance. We had the bid completed on January 18th. The contractor that provided the school District with the lowest bid to perform the work was Summit Roofing. Summit Roofing's bid was a little over \$58,000 lower than the next bid. Our partner in roofing projects, Cushing Terrell, believes that this bid falls in line with current pricing even with the material volatility currently being seen throughout the roofing marketplace. We've worked with Summit Roofing in the past and have had a very successful relationship with them and getting them to our projects and completed on time. The bid was completed in accordance with policy and Summit was the lowest bidder at \$209,750. I'm asking that you approve the contract with Summit Roofing for the Lincoln Center Roof Replacement Project.

Trustee Terry Beaver commented. Why do we partner with Cushing Terrell?

Ms. Collette replied. We have partnered with Cushing Terrell for a long time to do an assessment of all our buildings and the roofs. They do an annual update and assessment of our buildings and their roofing integrity. We make sure that we monitor which one should be next not only based on age, but also based on wear and tear and the fundamentals of their construction. So, Cushing Terrell provides us with what we would normally pay a contractor for a roof maintenance plan that projects out the integrity of those roofs so we have an idea of which roof we may need to replace in the future so we can budget for it accordingly.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve this recommendation.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved to approve the Lincoln Re-roof Bid 2022 from Summit Roofing as presented. Trustee Libby Goldes seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 4. Policy 2085 Graduation Requirements

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 2085 Graduation Requirements came before you for a first reading and has been revised to reflect new legislations that allows a student to apply to waive the District's graduation requirements (23 credits) and meet the Board of Education's requirements (20 credits) if they have had an educational disruption.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 2085.

**Motion:** Trustee Libby Goldes moved to approve Policy 2085 Graduation Requirements as presented. Trustee John McEwen seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 5. Policy 3050 Student Discipline

Ms. Ridgway commented regarding Policy 3050 Student Discipline. On lines 18 through 20 it is clarified that an expulsion for any kind of violation that's deemed significant enough-the Board always resumes that right. Then we go over to the change on Gun Free Schools. To make the language clearer, it now says the Administrator may immediately suspend the student if prior to a hearing there is cause to believe that the student brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school. In the case of a firearm violation, the student may be expelled if the Trustees find that the student knowingly brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 3050.

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 3050 Student Discipline as presented. Trustee John McEwen seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. This might be in a different policy, but when reading this policy, I didn't see any language about informing parents and guardians about the student actions that are under question. Maybe that's in a different policy where the staff and Administration take action based on the student's behavior. I just noticed that there wasn't anything in regard to communicating with parents and guardians.

Ms. Ridgway commented. That is addressed in administrative procedure and it is also in our handbooks.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

## 6. Policy 3417 Communicable Diseases

Ms. Ridgway commented. This is a new policy that we discussed at the last meeting which outlines what we do to reduce and manage communicable disease transmission among students. There were no changes when it returned to the Policy committee.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 3417.

**Motion:** Trustee Libby Goldes moved to approve Policy 3417 Communicable Diseases as presented. Vice Chair Siobhan Hathorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

## 7. Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities has been revised to include a statement that COVID-19 vaccine status will not be used as a basis to deny or allow equal opportunity to education. There were no changes since it returned to the Policy committee.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 4025.

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities as presented. Trustee Terry Beaver seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. Policy 4025 should just state vaccine status based on House Bill 702. House Bill 702 says vaccine status. It doesn't say based on measles vaccine status or chickenpox or COVID-19. It says vaccine status, so that might need to be looked at with House Bill 702 verbiage. Thank you.

Ms. Tammy Stefanik commented. I just had the same comment as Ms. Mohs in that House Bill says vaccine status, it's not COVID-19. I did provide that comment at the last Board meeting as well. I do appreciate how the Board is working on consistency between both statute and policy in the writing and addressing other policies in the same way. I just ask the same for this one. Thank you.

The Trustees discussed House Bill 702 and Policy 4025 Accommodating Individuals with Disabilities and proceeded to vote.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 8. Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission is a new policy that outlines what we do to reduce and manage communicable disease transmission among staff, and it includes staff training. There have been no changes since the last presentation.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved to approve Policy 5230 Prevention of Disease Transmission as presented. Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 9. Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers

Ms. Ridgway commented. Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers has been revised to comply with Commercial Driver's License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. There have been no changes since it was last before the Board.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers.

**Motion:** Trustee Libby Goldes moved to approve Policy 5080 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers as presented. Trustee Jennifer McKee seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 10. Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality

Ms. Ridgway commented. MERV stands for minimum efficiency reporting value for air filters. So, for facilities like ours, a MERV rating between 8 and 13 is pretty standard. The higher the MERV, the more pull on your equipment. Beyond 13 would be something like a hospital operating room. We were at 8 and we are now at 11, and our new schools are at 13. Some of our filters are treated with an anti-microbial treatment. The other change we made was on line 17, the district facility manager or other staff approved by the Superintendent will complete the annual indoor air quality inspection-not the Superintendent.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. In that third paragraph we're saying that we're going, to the greatest extent possible, use better filters of MERV 13 or greater if outdoor air quality is poor. Does a MERV 13 filter do anything for filtering viral or bacterial particles?

Rob Brewer, Maintenance Manager, commented. The higher the MERV, the tighter the strands are in the filter which helps filter out viruses. We can only go so high in many of our vents, or it can create motor failure.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. Thank you. Do we want this policy to specify what we're doing around air quality in times of a surge of seasonal flu or something like that? Should it also affect our portable HEPA filters? Do we want to codify in policy what we're doing to prevent disease transmission through filtering our indoor air?

Trustee John McEwen. We could consider that in our Policy 7060-School Safety.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality.

**Motion:** Trustee Jennifer McKee moved to approve Policy 7063 Indoor Air Quality as presented. Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** Ms. Dawn Mahler commented. My name is Dawn Mahler. I am a 27-year veteran nurse and just listening to the banter back and forth about the HEPA filters and filtration for the good quality air for schools, I just want to educate people. So, in the hospital when we take care of patients with COVID they are in negative pressure rooms, with higher filtration. We don't have it in our budget to provide that kind of filtration for these schools. So don't muddy the water with trying to think, "is this going to help prevent flu viruses from spreading?". Maybe a tiny bit, but don't hang yourselves up on that because you're comparing apples to oranges. It's not going to make a difference. It really isn't. Leave it for the HVAC system guys to tell you what you need. Leave it for the Department of Environmental Services to tell you what you need. Leave the medical part of it in the hospital because it's not going to provide any source of protection for the children or the teachers.

Ms. Robyn Mohs commented. We talk about air quality around us but we're forgetting about air quality right here in front of your faces under a mask that's holding in the gases that you should not rebreathe. If you talk to contractors or businesspeople who work with those machines and they test air quality where they're working and they put their meters under their mask, they will warn them to get out of the environment that is harming them.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

#### 11. Policy 9035 Capital Assets

Ms. Ridgway commented. This is an existing policy and there have been no changes since the last reading.

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. At this point I would entertain a motion to approve Policy 9035.

**Motion:** Trustee John McEwen moved to approve Policy 9035 Capital Assets as presented. Vice Chair Siobhan Hathhorn seconded the motion.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Vote:** 7-0 motion carries unanimously.

That concluded Items for Action. The Board of Trustees moved on to Reports.

## **D. REPORTS**

1. Helena Education Association Report

Jane Shawn, President of the Helena Education Association, commented. I do not have a report, other than to thank all the teachers and para educators for all the hard work they are doing. As we can see from the data, they have put everything into working with these students. I appreciate you recognizing them, thank you.

2. Budget & Finance Committee Report

Trustee John McEwen commented. Mr. Chairman, the Budget Committee will be meeting on February 18, and we'll be discussing the five-year budget projection.

3. Teaching & Learning Committee Report

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. We've had two meetings since our last full Board meeting. The last meeting we had was about the iReady assessment and we were ever bit as wowed as you were. The meeting before was about curriculum. The way that Helena Public Schools deals with curriculum is-it's not like rotisserie chicken-you don't set it and forget it. It is kind of a big wheel of this feedback loop along with testing that asks, "how are kids doing?". It's all built onto the state standard, which is defined by the Board of Education, and then everything that's in the curriculum is around a benchmark that is meant to fulfill the state standard. On Mondays, the teachers do PLC time during early out. That is to allow every teacher of the same subject, at the same grade level, to get together and talk about improving learning, and because of the structure and the way it informs itself, we are able to address gaps in the curriculum. So, we're not just buying a curriculum off the shelf and then hoping that it meets the standard. It's informed by what we're actually experiencing, and that all drills down into the standards.

4. Policy Committee Report

Committee Chair Libby Goldes commented. We considered 13 policies, 12 of which were presented to you today for consideration, and we held one back. We had some great conversations and I really appreciate the input of fellow committee members, John and

Janet, and the hard work of Barb and others who contributed to the discussion. Thank you.

5. Facilities & Maintenance Committee Report

Committee Chair Siobhan Hathhorn commented. Yes, we met just yesterday, and we talked about the roofing project for this building that we've already approved. We also had an update on our request for qualifications for our facility's master plan which is our big project for the year. That has gone out for bid and the deadline is March 14th, and we've already had some interest so we're very excited to get that process going and to update our facility's master plan. We also had a long discussion about Kessler School. There's a sewage issue with the city and they have asked to bore underneath the parking lot and to connect to a line for the new development out there. After much discussion, we are sending a team back to the city to discuss some options, should we want to use that in the future, they would have to pay for that change. So, we will be having more negotiations with the city so that we can get a symbiotic agreement where we can help them, and they can help us in the future if we decide we need that property. Then we had a robust discussion about Growing Friends. We are very thankful to the community for wanting to make not only our school grounds more beautiful but also the community in general. We talked about the challenges that go along with that. If those trees are planted, we just want to make sure that we have the resources to keep them alive and well and growing. We talked a lot about the cost of irrigation and maintenance and maybe having some sort of access to an arborist so that we can get the appropriate number of trees in the places that we can so that we as a school District can keep them growing.

6. Health Benefits Committee Report

Trustee John McEwen commented. Mr. Chairman, members of the Board, the committee met last week. We had a fairly short meeting just to look at the quarterly report for the first quarter of the plan year-the plan year is October 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>. So, we saw a spending report for the first three months of the year as compared to previous years, and things are as expected. There is not much change in the overall fund balance. I'm also on the finance subcommittee and we begin the discussion about plan design changes-whether we should change the deductibles, co-pays, and maximum out of pocket-anticipating that things are continuing to be more expensive and employees may need to pick up more of the cost of the plan. That will be under discussion for a couple more months.

7. Wellness Committee Report

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz gave the Wellness Committee Report on behalf of Trustee Jennifer Walsh. The Committee continues to work towards a finalized newsletter to send out to the community, and content and structure of the newsletter continues to progress. Harvest of the Month is thriving, and the program has been well received by

students and staff. Nutrition is starting to develop a social media campaign with content such as recipes, nutritional resources, school lunches and more.

8. Montana School Boards Association Report

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. We have some governance roles here and the first is the K12 Vision Project which is actually administered by MTSBA but is really a function of MTPEC and this greater coalition of organizations that are representing and advocating for public education. That will be held March 10th. I've nominated Trustee McKee to participate in that on our behalf, and as MTSBA President, I'll be participating in that as well. The MTSBA Board will be meeting in person March 17th and 18th. We haven't had an in-person Board meeting since August. The MTSBA Delegate Assembly will be held March 29th and the MTSBA Annual Meeting will be held June 9<sup>th</sup>. I will be asking some of my fellow Trustees to represent the District in that Delegate Assembly and annual meeting as well. There are some neat trainings going on and the School Finance and Budget Symposium is an online one on March 8th.

9. Student Representatives Report

Eliza Lay, Capital High School Representative, commented. The State Thespian Festival was recently held in Missoula this past Friday and Saturday, and our theater teacher, Laura Brayko, was the recipient of the Montana Theater Teacher of the Year Award. This week is National School Counselors Week, and we would just like to thank our counselors for all the support they provide to our students. We are having more staff members joining our school leadership teams when participating in instructional rounds. Basically, this means that teams of teachers are going around to observe other teachers at the beginning of the lessons to collect more data before identifying our next goal area. The BASC-BESS social emotional screener tool will be administered to all students this Wednesday in second period following the winter virtual pep assembly. During PLC time teacher teams spent last Monday reviewing recent iReady data in both math and literacy. Speaking of the iReady assessment, in the middle of January when we tested all 9<sup>th</sup> through 11th graders, Capitol High seniors were able to take advantage of opportunities found within the career fair set up by our career counselor. Seniors were able to select four different career presentations over the two days during iReading testing. We had a lot of community members participate, including Luke, it was really fun to see him at school. It was a great two-day event for the seniors. Registration for next year is currently taking place. Last week current juniors registered, and this week is current sophomores. On January 28, Senator Daines and others visited Capitol high to honor the Veterans that were recently highlighted by the Big Hearts Under the Big Sky presentation and the knife ceremony held previously this year. Jim Weber was the point of contact as it is his students and his involvement with Big Hearts Under the Big Sky makes such connections possible. We will be having a winter pep assembly tomorrow. Unfortunately, it will be virtual, but our student body President and I, and a couple of our peers will be



hosting that, and we will have the band performing live so that will be fun to see. State swimming and wrestling will be held this week.

- Ms. Lay gave the Helena High School Representative Report on behalf of Rylie Schoenfeld. Things are going well at Helena High. We hosted our first dance in a few years. About 450 students were in attendance at the dance. We held it at the fairgrounds. Recently we had five presidential candidates. They are Erik Callery, Olivia Coburn, Lucy Lantz, Ben Pargot and Chloe Roberts. Additionally, a number of Helena High students took top honors at the state DECA conference. The Helena high DECA Club was also recognized for being an outstanding school-based enterprise. At the State Theatre Festival hosted by the University of Montana, two of our theater students auditioned in a very competitive field and won scholarships. Brenna Holgate won a \$800.00 University of Montana Drama Dance Scholarship and Kaylee deMontigny Won a Montana State Thespian Merit Scholarship worth \$500.00 and a University of Montana Drama \$800.00 Scholarship.

## **VII. BOARD COMMENTS**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz commented. I appreciate you giving a shout out to Mr. Weber and his students and all that they do, and it's pretty neat to have U.S. Senator Daines at that ceremony.

Trustee John McEwen commented. I want to give a shout out to Helena High and Capital High. I judged seven rounds of the Speech and Debate Tournament and it was really fun and educational.

Trustee Jennifer McKee commented. I would like to thank our members of the public that stayed for the entire meeting.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chair Luke Muszkiewicz adjourned the meeting at 10:19 p.m.

---

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary      Date