



April 15, 2022

Dear Helena Public Schools Families,

I guess Old Man Winter wasn't quite done with us. As we look to more seasonable temperatures next week, I want to give a shout-out to our HPS Transportation Department.

When frigid, wet conditions are in the forecast, Transportation Director Tom Cohn and his team hit the road at 4 a.m. to drive and inspect our school bus routes. Based on their reports, we make the call on whether to delay or cancel bus routes by 5 a.m. Thank you to Tom and his crew for getting behind the wheel in the wee hours to keep our students safe!

I also would like to recognize another district leader who steps up when the snow comes down. Canceling and rescheduling the athletic practices, games, and other weather-dependent events in our district on any given day is no small task. Activities Administrator Tim McMahon and his team make it look easy to juggle schedules, locations, and transportation. But I know it's not, and I appreciate their work to make sure students, staff, and our community don't miss out on activities.

While this week's storm didn't amount to much in Helena, we could still see icy road conditions as spring precipitation meets cool temperatures. When you need updates on bus routes, delayed starts, or other emergency information, the district offers multiple communication channels to keep you informed:

[Twitter: @SchoolsHelena](#)

[Facebook: @HelenaSchoolDistrict](#)

[Instagram: @HelenaPublicSchools](#)

[District Website: helenaschools.org](http://helenaschools.org)

[Transportation \(bus routes and schedule changes\): helenaschools.org/departments/transportation](http://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation)

And if you haven't already, I encourage you to follow our social media channels, which are a great way to follow day-to-day district news, events, and recognitions.

Speaking of events, it's been a busy week here at the Central Office as teachers from across the district have gathered in our Professional Development Center for annual Grade-Level Meetings. This is the first time in two years that we've been able to bring teachers together in person with their grade-level peers to collaborate, share tips, and focus on aligning instructional practices with our district-level vision and goals. Thank you to our substitutes for making this professional development opportunity possible and to our teachers for taking time away from your classrooms during this busy time of year.

I started today's update by recognizing two of our district administrative leaders. I also would like to recognize and thank a couple of our student leaders.

Eliza Lay, of Capital High, and Rylie Schoenfeld, of Helena High, have shown tremendous wisdom, participation, and dedication as our two Student Representatives to the Helena Public Schools Board of Trustees. I am grateful for their astute questions and observations, as well as their insights on how

decisions and events affect their fellow students. As Rylie and Eliza near the end of their terms, we're seeking young leaders to serve as Student Representatives for the 2022-23 school year. I encourage anyone who is interested to explore this opportunity to learn about governance first-hand alongside our district leaders. To learn more and apply, please see your school counselor or principal. Applicants must be incoming juniors or seniors for the 2022-23 school year. Applications are due by 4 p.m., May 6.

It's hard to believe we're already putting plans in place for the 2022-23 school year. This is a good time to remind students of the countless ways to get involved next year. Whether you're interested in student government, sports, theater, business, academics, or another path, now is the time to start planning next year's activities.

This is also the season when we see the hard work of all those activities pay off – the hours of practice, workouts, study, and rehearsal. That was certainly the case for our student musicians, who took home multiple honors from the MHSA District Music Festival last week after performing at venues in Helena and Bozeman.

HPS was represented by bands, orchestras, choir groups, and soloists, with many earning high marks. [Visit our Student & Staff Recognitions page](#) to see the large ensembles that earned Superior Ratings as well as the small combos and soloists who qualified for the MHSA State Music Festival May 6-7. Congratulations to our talented HPS musicians!

Props also are in order for Capital High Students Ella Shropshire and Rebecca Smilie, who were recently recognized as Harrison Writing Award recipients, sponsored by the Helena Education Foundation. Congratulations, Ella and Rebecca!

I also would like to recognize Kaci Hauptman, 2<sup>nd</sup>-Grade Teacher at Bryant Elementary, on being named the KMTX Radio Teacher of the Month. We appreciate the wonderful work you do for our students, Kaci!

Finally, I'd like to share notes on a couple upcoming events. Float registrations are coming in for the Vigilante Day Parade on May 6, I look forward to seeing this year's creations! If you live or work downtown, a gentle reminder to plan for parking and street closures.

Also, if you're looking for some comic relief, the Capital High Drama Program's spring production – [“The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940,” by John Bishop](#) – runs [April 21-23 and 28-30 with tickets available online](#). A success on and off Broadway, the play will take you on a comedic and corny adventure through murder and mayhem.

Have a wonderful weekend and enjoy the warmer weather next week!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex M. Wertz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "W" at the end.

Rex M. Wertz  
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools