



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, September 10th, 2025

12:00pm

Lincoln Center & TEAMS

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

Trustees: Others:

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| Jenny Murnane Butcher, Trustee | Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff |
| Siobhan Hathorn, Trustee | Candice Delvaux, Board Reporter |
| Kay Satre, Trustee | Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent 6-12 |
| | Rex Weltz, Superintendent |
| | Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent PreK-5 |
| | Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs Director |
| | Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology |
| | Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special Education Director |
| | Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director |
| | Jane Shawn, HEA President |
| | Teal Klabo, Coordinator |
| | Katie Literski, Coordinator |
| | Ashlie Buresh, TOSA |
| | Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist |

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. by Committee Chair Jenny Murnane Butcher.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no general public comment.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The committee reviewed and accepted the minutes from the 6.25.25 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting.

V. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. FAPE Judgement Guidance Document

Ms. Lona Carter, Director of Student Health Services and Special Education, provided an update on the recently issued FAPE Judgment Guidance Document. In a landmark development, a federal district court approved a settlement requiring the state of Montana to extend access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities who qualify through the end of the school year in which they turn 22—regardless of whether they have received a traditional high school diploma. This brings Montana into alignment with the vast majority of states across the nation. The ruling also includes a retroactive provision for one year, allowing students who were improperly exited during the 2024–2025 school year to re-enroll and receive continued educational services. These students were formally notified and were given 30 days from the date of notification to complete their re-enrollment paperwork. Under this federal interpretation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), FAPE must be provided to eligible students with disabilities until they turn 22, unless they have received a standard high school diploma. Four students within our district were notified that they qualified under this new provision, based on a combination of AIM data and the regular diploma the student received. Each has received the state-issued notification letter and has 30 days to respond. In response, our Special Education team is actively preparing to support these students through the following steps:

Conducting individualized meetings with each student to identify postsecondary transition and vocational goals;

Developing a tailored offer of FAPE to meet their unique educational and developmental needs;

Creating new Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) aligned with both academic and career-readiness objectives;

Designing connected-curriculum plans that provide instruction aligned with ability-appropriate academic standards;

Building a program framework that delivers individualized career readiness training in accordance with the new legal requirements;

Partnering with community organizations to provide job coaching and employment support, with the ultimate goal of promoting independence and long-term success.

Ms. Carter addressed questions from the Teaching and Learning Committee regarding the information presented.

B. Curriculum and Assessment

1. Introduction of Ashlie Buresh-TOSA

The Teaching and Learning Committee was introduced to Ms. Ashlie Buresh, K–8 ELA Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA). This year, Ms. Buresh is primarily supporting non-Title I schools across the district. At C.R. Anderson Middle School, she is working directly with teachers to support implementation of the ELA labs. In the non-Title I elementary schools, her focus includes establishing reading systems, analyzing student data, and conducting progress monitoring. Additionally, she is involved in piloting a writing system that aligns with our reading curriculum.

Next, the Teaching and Learning Committee was introduced to Katie Literski, PreK-5 SPED Coordinator Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA). Her work has focused on launching the KinderSprouts program, with an emphasis on supporting SPED students through a push-in model. This includes deploying support staff to provide informal language interventions and monitor their effectiveness as early intervention strategies. Additionally, she is collaborating with building principals and case managers to address behavioral needs and provide support as the school year gets underway.

The Teaching and Learning Committee was also introduced to Ms. Teal Klabo, 6-12 Coordinator. Ms. Klabo is working on implementing the new graduation requirements, particularly for students with diverse learning needs—from those missing a single English credit to those with significant cognitive or medical challenges. The team is researching best practices and collaborating with educators from other states to ensure equitable support. In preparation for next year, she has begun coordination with the Pre-ETS specialist and local Vocational Rehabilitation to initiate student intakes and job coaching services.

2. Teaching and Learning Priorities with Action Steps

Ms. Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent for PreK-5 reviewed the District Priorities & Student Achievement Goals document with the Teaching and Learning Committee. This updated version includes initial action steps to support each goal, with the intention of revisiting and updating progress throughout the year. Ms. Alberts emphasized that many of the goals are long-term, with target outcomes set for spring 2026. These goals focus on key academic benchmarks, particularly in literacy, including first-grade oral reading fluency and third-grade ELA performance—both identified as critical indicators of future academic success. Additional goals address middle school achievement (specifically at seventh grade), mental health and suicide prevention efforts (in collaboration with the Student Services department). Following the review, the committee engaged in discussion on several key topics, including district-wide mental health supports and the importance of ensuring that all students achieve at least typical academic growth. Ms. Alberts addressed questions from the Teaching and Learning Committee regarding the information presented.

C. Overview of Assessment Calendar/Plans

Ms. Kaitlyn Hess, Assessment and Federal Programs Director, provided an overview of assessment calendar/plans to the Teaching and Learning Committee. Ms. Hess highlighted updated district guidance for managing MAST testing. While the assessment remains in development with little change to its structure, average testing times have increased, prompting the district to limit MAST testing to one core block per window to preserve instructional time—responding to last year’s significant loss of classroom days. The testing window has been extended to eight weeks, with the first running from October 14 to December 5. Summative scores are expected in October but remain un-normed and difficult to use. Teachers are advised to proctor actively and support pacing, with unfinished tests completed outside instructional hours. OPI supports this structured approach. Ms. Hess also shared that a new three-year SPED assessment has launched, with fall testing underway and staff training scheduled; the assessment will have fall and spring windows. Finally, Ms. Hess shared updates about other assessments in the district. Middle schools have moved the i-Ready diagnostic from March to May to obtain more accurate end-of-year data. At the high school level, the district has transitioned to the MAP assessment system, and there is interest in potentially piloting the pre-ACT 9 in the spring. This would allow the district to begin building longitudinal data across pre-ACT 9, pre-ACT 10, and the ACT in students’ junior year. Ms. Hess addressed questions from the Teaching and Learning Committee regarding the information presented.

D. Pacing Guides-Teacher Resources

Ms. Alberts provided an update on curriculum pacing and teacher resources, highlighting ongoing work with Chalk Curriculum and Instruction, a PowerSchool add-in that serves as a centralized platform for housing curriculum documents. This system allows teachers to plan instruction more effectively and offers the potential for an outward-facing portal where families can view lesson plans and unit overviews. Much of the district’s elementary ELA and partial math curriculum has been uploaded, along with middle school science and social studies content. Efforts are ongoing to rehouse and update pacing documents for all grade levels, including departmental work at the high school level. Additionally, Ms. Alberts reminded the committee that state math standards have been revised and adopted, and ELA standards work is also underway this year.

VI. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

There were no further board or superintendent comments.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m. by Committee Chair Jenny Murnane Butcher.