



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 Meeting

Lincoln Center | 1325 Poplar St. | Helena, MT 59601

Tuesday, January 13th, 2026 - 5:30 p.m.

Board of Trustees Conference Room and via
TEAMS

[**Join the meeting now**](#)

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER /PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

III. RECOGNITIONS

A. National Board-Certified Teachers

The Board of Trustees extends its sincerest congratulations to the following exceptional educators in the Helena School District for achieving National Board Certification: Anna Alger, Shana Berry Brown, Samantha Conrad, Jennifer Dickey, Molly Kohoutek, Jeremy Muir, Chelsi Smith, Lacy Svingen, and Andrea Tucker. This prestigious certification is a testament to their dedication to the highest standards of teaching and their unwavering commitment to fostering excellence in education. The Board is proud to recognize their hard work, perseverance, and exceptional contributions to the educational community. We congratulate each of these individuals on their remarkable accomplishment and thank them for their continued dedication to enriching the lives of students in our district.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

V. 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 a discussion during General Public Comment.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items For Information- Facilities Bond Projects Updates

1. Helena High Campus Update
[Click Here for Full Report](#)
 - a. Helena High School
 - b. Project For Alternative Learning (PAL)
 - c. District Kitchen
 - d. Competition Stadium
2. Capital High School Update
3. Kessler Elementary School Update
4. GCCM RFQ/RFP Timeline
 - a. Helena High School
 - b. Capital High School
 - c. Kessler Elementary School

B. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Approval of FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)
4. Acknowledge FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)
5. 12.9.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes

C. Items For Action

1. Consideration of the Approval of Pay Plan Rules
2. Consideration of the Approval of the Transition to a New Salary Matrix for Independents
3. Consideration of the Approval of Districtwide Boundary Adjustments

D. Reports

1. Student Representatives Report
2. Helena Education Association Report
3. Facilities & Technology Committee Report
4. Budget & Finance Committee Report
5. Teaching & Learning Committee Report
6. Policy Committee Report
7. Health Benefits Committee Report
8. Wellness Committee Report
9. Montana School Boards Association Report
10. Parent Council Visit Report

VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

VIII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item I.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item II.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Review of Agenda**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item III.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

X Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Recognitions**
A. National Board-Certified Teachers

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item IV.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Superintendent's Report**

*TO: Board Chair Jennifer McKee and Board of Trustees
FROM: Mr. Weltz, Superintendent
RE: Superintendent Report
DATE: January 13th, 2026*

❖ **Support – Project for Alternative Learning – Family – Friends**

❖ **Recognitions**

- I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all our staff and students for their incredible efforts in supporting our community and students this holiday season. Through food drives, toy collections, fundraisers, and various service projects, their generosity has made a meaningful impact on those in need. We are truly grateful for their dedication to making this time of year brighter for others. In addition to helping families in need, these annual projects allow our students to experience the joy of giving and plant the seeds of community spirit.
- Winter Music Programs Appreciation
- January-School Board Recognition Month
- January-Law Enforcement Appreciation Month
- Thank you to Callie Aschim & the Chamber of Commerce for hosting Community Outreach: Brews & Blueprints. The next event will be February 25 at 5:30 p.m. at Brothers Tapworks
- Valley of Gold Speech & Debate Tournament Coaches and Volunteer Judges
- Congratulations to our newly certified National Board Teachers!!
- Facilities Team Commended for Districtwide Wind Storm Cleanup
- Other

❖ **New Business**

- Montana's Innovative Educational Program (IEP) Tax Credit
 - Forms Due by January 20
- Kindergarten registration for Fall 2026 opened January 7
- Mount Ascension Charter School Preliminary Registration Form Closes January 21

- Facilities Bond Projects –
 - Bond Update
 - HHS/PAL Precedent Tour-Spokane, Washington-December
 - KESS Precedent Tour-Spokane, Washington-January
 - Bond/Construction/Facility Meetings
 - Owner's Rep
 - HHS Project
 - CHS Project
 - KESS Project
 - GCCM RFQ/RFP Schedule
 - ◆ Dick Anderson Construction selected as GCCM for HHS
 - ◆ CHS Recommendation and Board Approval
- “Grow Our Own” Initiative Update
 - Para to Teacher
 - Teacher (Staff) to Leadership
- CMS Ongoing Work -
 - Compensation Philosophy
 - Pay Plan Rules
 - Independent and Administrative Salary Matrix
 - Activity/Athletic Coaching Compensation Market Analysis
- District Academic Focus Work – 2026-2027
 - Academic Performance Indicators and Targets
 - Data Dashboard
 - Behaviors and Academic Growth
- Bridged Health Alliance – Ongoing discussions
- Early Retirement Teacher and Administrator Incentive Initiative Update
- Cell Phone Ongoing Discussion and Planning
- Copy/Print Center Equipment Lease Contracts and Efficiency Upgrades
- National Conference on Education – Nashville
 - Assistant Superintendents & Superintendent
 - February 12-14
- Early Discussions – Facilities – RFP with Front Street Learning Center Post-PAL Relocation

- Transportation Facility Planning – New District Facility
 - Within City Limits
 - Route Mileage Decrease
- Hawthorne Elementary & MBC RFP Updates
- Dr. Plucker Gifted & Talented Program Review
- Ameresco Energy Audits Across the District (Elementary)
 - Energy Savings
 - Researching Facility Upgrades
- Preplanning and Strategic Monitoring of Washington, D.C. as January 30 Draws Near – Possible Disruption with Another Shutdown
- No School January 19th & 26th
- Other

❖ Outreach/Meetings

- AA Superintendents Weekly Meeting
- CHS GCCM RFP/RFQ Submission Review and Interviews
- Bond/Construction/Facility Meetings
 - Owner's Rep
 - Bond
 - Bond Finance
 - HHS Project - Architect Team & Construction Team
 - CHS Project - Architect Team
 - KESS Project - Architect Team
- New Kessler School Community Engagement Meeting
- Rotary Club Presentation
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community Outreach – Brews and Blueprints
- Board Leadership
- Legal Counsel
- DA Davidson Discussions
- HEA
- HEF
- HEF Executive Committee

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT #1

- Parent Advisory Committee
- Teacher Advisory Committee
- Health Benefits Committee
- Helena Food Share
- Cabinet & Leadership
- TV, Print, Radio, and Media
- Meeting with Architectural Firm – Interview Debrief
- Other

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item V.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **General Public Comment**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.1.a. - 1.d.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

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Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates**

1. Helena High Campus Update

- a. Helena High School**
- b. Project For Alternative Learning (PAL)**
- c. District Kitchen**
- d. Competition Stadium**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.A.2.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

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Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates**
2. Capital High School Update

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.A.3.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

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Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates**
3. Kessler Elementary School Update

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.A.4.a-4.c.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

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Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates**

4. GCCM RFQ/RFP Timeline

- a. Helena High School**
- b. Capital High School**
- c. Kessler Elementary School**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.B.1. - B.5.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Consent Action Items**

- 1. Personnel Actions**
- 2. Warrants**
- 3. Approval of FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Non-Resident Students Attending HPS)**
- 4. Acknowledge FY 2025-26 Out-Of-District Attendance Agreements (Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)**
- 5. 12.9.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes**

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Satre					
Murnane Butcher					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					
Meyer					

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

December 10, 2025 – January 13, 2026

CERTIFIED PERSONNEL

Appointments

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Offered Salary</u>	<u>Accepted Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>
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Terminations/Retirements

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
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Leaves

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Type of Leave</u>
HMS/School Psychologist	Burkhart, Trisha	2026-2027	LOAWOP
Broadwater/Kindergarten	Owen, Kyla	2026-2027	LOAWOP
CRA/Mathematics	Suchy, Alison	2026-2027	LOAWOP

CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL

Appointments

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Offered Salary</u>	<u>Accepted Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>
CRA/Para Educator	Mar, Charlotte	\$16.15/hr.	\$16.15/hr.	12/12/2025
Smith/Para Educator	Pierson, Jeri	\$19.03/hr.	\$19.03/hr.	01/05/2026
Central/Evening Custodian	Schmith, Barbara	\$17.40/hr.	\$17.40/hr.	12/09/2025
Smith/Evening Custodian	Turcotte, Kevin	\$17.40/hr.	\$17.40/hr.	12/30/2025

Terminations/Retirements

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Smith/Evening Custodian	Axthelm, Tamara	Resignation	12/19/2025
Smith/Para Educator	Bourquin, Hailey	Resignation	12/16/2025
Rossiter/Day Custodian	Dolson, Cydney	Resignation	01/09/2026
HMS/Para Educator	Farr, Zara	Resignation	01/04/2026
Educational Tech./Network Engineer	Grau, Christopher	Resignation	01/15/2026
CRA/Evening Custodian	Homer, Dennis	Separation	01/07/2026
Kessler/Para Educator	Johnson, Courtney	Separation	12/08/2025
Rossiter/Para Educator	McMillen, Erica	Resignation	01/23/2026
Central/Para Educator	Romano, Aila	Resignation	01/02/2026
CHS/General Secretary	Thompson, Heather	Resignation	01/09/2026
Broadwater/Elementary Secretary	Vauter, Holly	Resignation	01/15/2026

Leaves

<u>Location/Assignment</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Type of Leave</u>
HHS/Para Educator	Murray, Kenja	01/27/2026 to 06/09/2026	LOAWOP

SUPPLEMENTARY CONTRACT ASSIGNMENT

<u>Name</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Salary</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>End Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
Niemeyer, Alexandria	.5 Asst. Swim	\$1105.00	12/16/2025	03/14/2026	CHS/HHS

Helena School District #1

Warrants December 1 to 31, 2025

Direct Deposits: \$3,373,081.92

Payroll Warrants: 70132413-70132441

Payroll Deduction: 69306985-69307232

Non-Check Payroll Deductions: \$ 5,364,897.59

Non-Check Accts Payable Deductions: \$ 535,796.38 **Allegiance Payment Not Included

Non-Check Accts Payable Deductions- HHS Extracurricular: \$0

Claim Warrants: 69306948-69307273

CRA Middle School Student Activity Checks: 17495-17498

HMS Middle School Student Activity Checks: 8115-8818

Capital High Student Activity Checks: 25195-25223

Helena High Student Activity Checks: 37191-37215

Cancelled Warrants: \$22,530.76

We certify that all warrants herein listed were prepared and previously paid for, are just and correct to the best of our knowledge, and that the board of trustees has authorized the issuance of the same.

Chairperson _____

Business Manager _____

Running Total of FY 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements

(Out-of-District Students Attending Helena School District)

Fiscal Year 2025-26

Discretionary Attendance:

Grade	District of Residence	Address	School of Attendance
11	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Capital High School
11	Jefferson High School	Clancy, MT 59634	Capital High School
10	Jefferson High School	Clancy, MT 59634	Capital High School
11	East Helena K-12	Helena, MT 59602	Capital High School
11	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Capital High School
12	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Capital High School
11	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Capital High School
12	Jefferson High School	Clancy, MT 59634	Capital High School
8	Trinity	Helena, MT 59602	CR Anderson
7	Trinity	Helena, MT 59602	CR Anderson
7	Trinity	Helena, MT 59602	CR Anderson
6	Trinity	Helena, MT 59602	CR Anderson
6	Trinity	Canyon Creek, MT 59633	CR Anderson
6	Montana City School	Montana City, MT 59634	Helena Middle School
8	Clancy Elementary	Clancy, MT 59634	Helena Middle School
5	East Helena K-12	East Helena, MT 59635	Four Georgians Elementary

Mandatory Attendance:

Grade	District of Residence	Address	School of Attendance
6	Lame Deer Public Schools	Lame Deer, MT	CR Anderson

Running Total of FY 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements
 (Out-of-District Students Attending Helena School District)

Grade	Address																				Total
	East Helena	Helena	Clancy	Montana City	Jefferson City	Basin	Wolf Creek	Boulder	Elliston	Trinity	Wolf Point	Dillon	Billings	Chester-Joplin-Inverness	Missoula	Great Falls	Butte	Townsend	Superior	Canyon Creek	Lame Deer
Ksprouts	6		1	1						8											16
K	8		1	1						9											19
1	6							1		17											24
2	8		1							11											20
3	6		1						1	12											20
4	3			1					1	13											18
5	7		1							11	1		1		1						22
6	5	1		3				1	12		1						1		1	1	26
7	3	2	1	1					4	1						1		1		1	14
8	3	1	3	1		1			7										2		18
9	8	21	2	3										1					1		36
10	2	22										1				1					26
11	9	1	17	1				1											2		31
12	13	24	1	5				1											5	1	44
	87	5	93	12	8	1	1	2	3	104	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	5	1	334

Last Updated: 1/8/2026 15:01

Running Total of Acknowledged 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements
(Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)

HELENA STUDENTS ATTENDING OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Fiscal Year 2025-26

Discretionary Attendance:

Grade	Address	District of Attendance
5	Helena, MT 59602	Trinity Elementary #4
2	Helena, MT 59602	Trinity Elementary #4
5	Helena, MT 59602	Trinity Elementary #4
K	Helena, MT 59602	Trinity Elementary #4
K	Helena, MT 59602	Trinity Elementary #4

Mandatory Attendance:

Grade	Address	District of Attendance
11	Helena, MT 59602	Anaconda High School
10	Helena, MT 59602	Anaconda High School

Running Total of Acknowledged 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements
 (Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)
 District of Attendance

Grade	East Helena K-	Montana City	Clancy	Jefferson High	Townsend K-Cascade	High	Trinity	Huntley	Fairfield High	Augusta High	Anaconda	Great Falls	Missoula High	Total
	12	Elementary	Elementary	School	12	School	Elementary	Project K-12	School	School	High School	Elementary	School	
Pre-K	7	14	3											24
K	10	22	3				2							37
1	11	10	7											28
2	7	5	4				1							17
3	11	3	5											19
4	14	13	8											35
5	9	4	5				2							20
6	16	5	7											28
7	13	15	6											34
8	9	1	3											13
9	21			3	1	2				1	1			29
10	15			4						1			1	21
11	27			4		2			1	1	1			36
12	21			3		2								26
	191	92	51	14	1	6	5	0	1	1	3	1	1	367

Last Updated: 1/7/2026 13:47

**Superintendent**

Rex Weltz
324-2001

Business Manager

Janelle Mickelson
324-2040

Board of Trustees Meeting

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

Tuesday, December 9th, 2025
5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE – Present unless otherwise noted.

Jennifer McKee, Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Trustee
Linda Cleatus, Trustee
Janet Armstrong, Trustee
Keith Meyer, Trustee
Kay Satre, Trustee

Brock Gardipee, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Delaney Lynch, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees
Rex Weltz, Superintendent

Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent

Janelle Mickelson, Business Director

Todd Verrill, Facilities Director

Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director

Gary Myers, Director of Educational

Technology

Justine Alberts, Assistant Superintendent

Sam Holman, Business Director

Lona Carter, Student Health Services & Special Education Director

Taylor Lassiter, Communications Specialist

Becca Leaphart, HEF Executive Director

Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director, Public Finance Banker, D.A. Davidson & Co.

Dan Semmens, Partner, Dorsey & Whitney LLP

Tim Meldrum, SMA Architecture & Design

Jacob Augenstein, Slate Architecture

Gretchen Krumm, Mosaic Architecture

Many guests of the public as well as Helena School District staff

I. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Jennifer McKee called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and the Board participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. REVIEW AGENDA

The Board of Trustees reviewed the agenda and proposed the following changes: *Items for Information – Facilities Bond Projects Updates (Items D.1 through D.5)* will be moved to follow the *General Public Comment* section. Additionally, the *Item for Information – HSD Pay Plan Recommendation (Item 9)* will be moved earlier in the agenda, depending on the arrival time of Mr. Jim Kerins, who will be presenting that information.

The Board of Trustees then moved on to hear the Superintendent's Report from Superintendent Weltz.

III. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Weltz presented his Superintendent's Report to the Board of Trustees and discussed topics including, but not limited to:

Recognitions

- Congratulations to Business Director Janelle Mickelson on her retirement
- Welcome to new Business Director Sam Holman
- National Special Education Day - December 2, 2025
- Special thanks to our Parent-Teacher Organization volunteers who provided dinner for our educators during Parent-Teacher Conferences over the past couple of weeks
- Thank you to Principal Jill Nyman, and the staff and students at Jim Darcy for hosting the Veterans Day Celebration
- Thank you to Principal Matt Carey, and the staff and students at PAL for hosting a Thanksgiving Celebration
- Thank you to Becca Leaphart and the Helena Education Foundation for hosting a wonderful evening at the Great Conversations event
- Thank you to Jordan Evertz, Executive Director of Helena Food Share, for hosting the Kid Pack build with the Governor and other community members
- Thank you to Callie Aschim and the Chamber of Commerce for hosting Brews & Blueprints on December 17 at 5:30 p.m. at Brothers Tapworks with more events to come
- Winter programs and our music and classroom teachers
- Other

New Business

- Montana's Innovative Educational Program (IEP) Tax Credit
- RFP for Website Redesign and Data Transfer Project
- Bridge Health Ongoing Work
- K Sprout Enrollment Update

- Data Dashboard Update
- Facilities Bond Projects –
 - Bond Update
 - HHS/PAL Precedent Tour-Spokane, Washington
 - Bond/Construction/Facilities Meetings
 - Owner's Representative
 - HHS Project
 - CHS Project
 - KESS Project
 - GCCM RFQ/RFP Schedule
- “Grow Our Own” Initiative
 - Para to Teacher
 - Teacher to Administration
- Superintendent Recommendations – Spring 2025
 - Review
 - To-Do
- Other

Outreach/Meetings

- AA Superintendents Weekly Meeting
- Bond/Construction/Facilities Meetings
- Owner's Representative
- Bond
- Bond Finance
- HHS Project - Architect Team
- CHS Project - Architect Team
- KESS Project - Architect Team
- Chamber of Commerce
- Board Leadership
- HEA
- HEF
- HEF Executive Committee
- Parent Advisory Committee
- Helena Food Share
- Cabinet & Leadership
- TV, Print, Radio, Media
- City of Helena
- Other

That concluded the Superintendent's Report portion of the agenda. Superintendent Weltz responded to questions from the Board of Trustees, after which the trustees proceeded to hear general public comment.

IV. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Amanda Osborne provided general public comment. Ms. Osborne is a parent of students in the district. Ms. Osborne's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to urging the adoption of a districtwide, bell-to-bell student cell phone ban; citing research on the negative effects of smartphone use on student learning, attention, and mental health; noting disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and lower-performing students; referencing other states and Montana school districts that have implemented similar policies with positive outcomes; and requesting that the Board place consideration of a cell phone ban on an upcoming meeting agenda.

Ms. Carrie Owen and Ms. Emily Petrik provided general public comment together. They are both teachers in the district. Ms. Owen and Ms. Petrik's general public comment addressed several key topics including but not limited to expressing appreciation for the Board's support of world language programs; highlighting student success in Spanish, including high pass rates on AP exams and attainment of the Seal of Biliteracy; emphasizing the positive impact of offering Spanish at the middle school level; noting similar successes at both Helena High School and Capital High School; proposing the addition of French I as a middle school elective to expand student choice and strengthen pathways to advanced language study; and discussing the academic and financial benefits to students who earn qualifying AP exam scores.

The Board of Trustees proceeded to hear a Bond Finance Update provided by Ms. Bridget Ekstrom.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

1. Bond Finance Update

Ms. Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director and Public Finance Banker at D.A. Davidson & Co, presented a Bond Finance Update to the Board of Trustees. Ms. Ekstrom provided an update on the bond issuance process, noting that significant progress had been made since the last meeting through multiple Bond Finance Committee and Board meetings. She reviewed the bond issuance timeline included in the Board packet and explained that two bond resolutions—one for the elementary district and one for the high school district—would be presented for Board action. Ms. Ekstrom reported that interest rates were successfully locked on November 20 at levels more than half a percent lower than projected to voters, resulting in substantial savings. The bonds were structured in multiple series to align issuance with project expenditures, including a 20-year elementary bond and a 30-year high school bond to match the useful life of the projects and limit near-term taxpayer impact. She also highlighted the district's Moody's A1 credit rating, favorable insurance terms, strong market demand for the bonds, and overall positive financial outcomes. Closing is scheduled for December 18, at which time bond proceeds will be received and invested until used for projects. Ms. Ekstrom addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

2. **Helena High Campus Update**
 - a. **Helena High School**
 - b. **Project For Alternative Learning (PAL)**
 - c. **District Kitchen**
 - d. **Competition Stadium**

Mr. Meldrum of SMA + Design provided an update on the Helena High Campus design process, reporting that the education specifications (educational programming and space requirements) are nearing completion and will guide the upcoming design work. He noted that the project has entered the schematic design phase, focusing on overall building organization and site relationships. Mr. Meldrum summarized recent community engagement efforts, including a well-attended community meeting and planned outreach through presentations and “Brews and Blueprints” sessions. He also described a recent precedent site visit involving teachers and administrators to tour comparable schools, gather feedback, and inform design decisions. Additionally, he reported progress on campus master planning, including refinement of major site elements such as building placement, athletics, and support facilities, and stated that the project remains generally on schedule. Mr. Meldrum addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

3. **Capital High School Update**

Mr. Jacob Augenstein of Slate Architecture provided an update on the Capital High School design process reporting that extensive stakeholder engagement is underway, including a survey of students, parents, and staff that has received strong participation. He summarized the initial Design Advisory Group meeting, which included representation from students, parents, teachers, and administrators, and focused on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and priorities for the project. Mr. Augenstein also described ongoing background work to digitally model the existing school building to support informed renovation decisions. He outlined upcoming engagement activities, including staff meetings, additional Design Advisory Group meetings, and potential building tours, all aimed at refining project priorities, program needs, and design direction. Mr. Augenstein addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

4. **Kessler Elementary School Update**

Ms. Gretchen Krumm of Mosaic Architecture provided an update on the Kessler Elementary School design. Ms. Krumm reported that a post-occupancy review of Bryant School was conducted to gather feedback on functionality and lessons learned. Key findings emphasized the need for flexibility in educational spaces, adequate storage, and designated workspaces for support staff. Ms. Krumm noted ongoing engagement with the Kessler Building Committee, walkthroughs of Kessler and other schools, and plans for teacher engagement sessions to gather qualitative input on building functionality and community needs. She also outlined plans to engage parents and the broader community, with sessions scheduled primarily in January to accommodate holiday events, working in coordination with CT planning staff to map out these engagement opportunities. This feedback will inform both the design of Kessler and the planning of future spaces. Ms. Krumm addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

5. **GCCM RFQ/RFP Timeline**
 - a. **Helena High School**
 - b. **Capital High School**
 - c. **Kessler Elementary School**

Superintendent Weltz reported that the process for selecting the General Contractor/Construction Manager (GCCM) for the three construction projects is underway. The district has prepared a detailed timeline outlining committee members, notice dates, submission deadlines, screening, interviews, and anticipated Board approval. Multiple Board meetings are scheduled over the coming months to accommodate the GCCM process. Superintendent Weltz addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the GCCM RFQ/RFP Timeline.

The Board of Trustees moved on to review the Consent Action Items.

B. Consent Action Items

1. Personnel Actions
2. Warrants
3. Acknowledge FY 2025-26 Out-of-District Attendance Agreements (Helena Resident Students Attending Other School Districts)
4. 11.11.25 Board of Trustees Full Board Meeting Minutes
5. 11.21.25 Board of Trustees Special Board Meeting Minutes

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve the *Consent Action Items* as presented.”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve the *Consent Action Items* as presented. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0 motion carries unanimously.

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

C. Items for Action

1. **Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025**
 - a. **Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$31,500,000 Elementary School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025 (see attached)**
 - b. **Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$130,000,000 High School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025 (see attached)**

Ms. Mickelson, outgoing Business Manager, presented action item *1. Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: a. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$31,500,000 Elementary School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025*.

Background:

- On September 9, 2025, district voters approved a \$43 million elementary bond to build a new Kessler Elementary School.
- At a special board meeting held on September 24, 2025, the Board authorized the issuance of up to \$43 million of the elementary bonds.
- The District issued \$31.5 million of the authorized \$43 million on November 20, 2025.
- The remaining \$11.5 million will be issued in a later series.

Considerations:

- On November 4, 2025, the District received an A1 rating on the bonds from Moody's Investors Service. The District elevated its rating to an AA rating by purchasing municipal bond insurance and a public sale was conducted on November 20, 2025.
- The attached resolution finalizes the sale of the \$31.5 million bonds by fixing the form of the bond certificate, authorizing the tax levy, and making covenants with respect to execution and delivery, payments, and redemption of the bonds. Covenants agreeing to the security provisions (the accounting of the bonds), arbitrage regulations and reporting requirements are also included in the resolution.

Superintendent Recommendation:

Approve the resolution relating to \$31,500,000 elementary general obligation school building bonds, Series 2025.

Ms. Mickelson, Business Manager, presented action item *1. Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: b. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$130,000,000 High School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025 (see attached)*.

Background:

- On September 9, 2025, district voters approved a \$240 million high school bond levy to build a new Helena High School, make major renovations/improvements to Capital High School, relocate PAL and the District kitchen to the Helena High Campus, and construct a new instructional and playing field complex.
- At a special board meeting held on September 24, 2025, the Board authorized the issuance of up to \$130 million of the high school bonds.
- The District issued \$130 million of the authorized \$240 million on November 20, 2025.
- The remaining \$110 million will be issued in later series.

Considerations:

- On November 4, 2025, the District received an A1 rating on the bonds from Moody's Investors Service. The District elevated its rating to an AA rating by purchasing municipal bond insurance and a public sale was conducted on November 20, 2025.
- The attached resolution finalizes the sale of the \$130 million bonds by fixing the form of the bond certificate, authorizing the tax levy, and making covenants with respect to execution and delivery, payments, and redemption of the bonds. Covenants agreeing to the security provisions (the accounting of the bonds), arbitrage regulations and reporting requirements are also included in the resolution.

Superintendent Recommendation:

Approve the resolution relating to \$130,000,000 high school general obligation school building bonds, Series 2025.

Ms. Mickelson deferred to Mr. Dan Semmens, Partner, Dorsey & Whitney LLP, for additional details and to address any questions. Mr. Semmens explained that the resolutions before the Board represent the final action required to authorize and issue the bonds, following the bond sale on November 20. He outlined that bond closing is scheduled for December 18, at which time the Districts will receive the bond proceeds. Mr. Semmons reviewed the purpose of the resolutions, noting that they establish the terms of the bonds, authorize execution and delivery, provide for tax levies and repayment, and set up required construction and debt service accounts. He also explained that the resolutions include provisions necessary to maintain the bonds' tax-exempt status, resulting in lower borrowing costs.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 1. *Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: a. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$31,500,000 Elementary School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the *Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: a. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$31,500,000 Elementary School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025.* Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 1. *Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: b. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$130,000,000 High School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025.*”

Motion: Trustee Janet Armstrong moved to approve the *Consideration of Bond Resolutions Authorizing General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025: b. Approval of Bond Resolution Authorizing \$130,000,000 High School District General Obligation School Building Bonds, Series 2025*. Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

2. Call for Annual Election

- a. Helena Elementary School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election**
- b. Helena High School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election**

Ms. Sam Holman, incoming Business Manager, presented the action items, 2. *Call for Annual Election a. Helena Elementary School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election and b. Helena High School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election* to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

The annual regular school election is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, which is May 5th this year. The 2025 legislature changed the deadline to call for an election from 70 days before the election day to 145 days before the election (December 11th this year). Helena Public Schools entered into an agreement with the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office to conduct school elections for the district. The annual regular school election will be by mail ballot. The drop off location for ballots is at the Lewis and Clark County Elections Office located in the City-County Building. Voters will elect two trustees who reside within the elementary district boundaries to serve a three-year term and one trustee to serve a one-year term. In addition, voters will elect one trustee who resides in the Wolf Creek Elementary District or the Trinity Elementary District for a three-year term. General fund mill levy approval for both the elementary and high school districts is also being requested at this time.

The District will also be requesting an increase in the technology mill levy for both the elementary and the high school districts for the purpose of purchasing, renting, repairing and maintaining technological equipment, including computers and computer network access, cloud computing services for technology infrastructure, platforms, software, network, storage, security, data, database, test environment curriculum, or desktop virtualization purposes, including any subscription or any license-based or pay-per-use service that is accessed over the internet or other remote network to meet the district's information technology and other needs, and the associated technical training for school district personnel. If approved, the increased levies will be for a term of 10 years and will take effect on July 1, 2026, and expire June 30, 2035.

If it is later determined that any portion of the election is not required, that portion will be cancelled.

Considerations:

- Neither the ability to run a general fund mill levy nor the amount of the levy will be known until after the spring enrollment count is finalized and the issuance of preliminary budget data sheets. However, due to the statutory requirement to call for the election no later than 145 days before the election, the recommendation is to include the general fund mill levy request in the resolution. If the Board later determines that the mill levy cannot be requested or is not desired, that portion of the election can be cancelled.
- The trustees may amend the resolution calling for the annual election at least 70 days prior to the election (February 24).
- The exact dollar amount of the technology fund levies has yet to be decided and therefore, the estimated tax impact cannot be calculated at this time.
- If the number of candidates filing a nomination petition or filing a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate is equal to or less than the number of open trustee positions, the trustee election can be cancelled, and trustees may be seated by acclamation.
- The county elections office has requested that the exact language, including amounts, for any and all levies be transmitted to their office by March 20 so they may begin to prepare the ballot layout in the week leading up to the March 26 ballot certification deadline. Any portion of the election may still be cancelled up until the March 26th deadline.
- The cost of running an election can range (depending on the number of ballots and number of voters) is approximately \$60,000-\$87,500.

Superintendent Recommendation:

Approve the attached resolution calling for the annual regular election.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve the action item 2. *Call for Annual Election a. Helena Elementary School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election.*”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve action item 2. *Call for Annual Election a. Helena Elementary School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election.* Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve the action item 2. *Call for Annual Election b. Helena High School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve the action item, 2. *Call for Annual Election b. Helena High School District No.1-Trustee Resolution Calling for a Mail Ballot Election.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

3. Early Retirement Incentive

a. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Teachers

Superintendent Weltz presented the action item, *3. Early Retirement Incentive: a. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Teachers*, to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

There is an interest in ensuring that the discrepancy between base salary and average teacher salary is not less than 70% to continue eligibility under the Student and Teacher Advancement for Results and Success (STARS) Act under the requirements of MCA 20-9-324.

Helena Education Association (HEA) Members approved negotiating a larger percentage increase for the bottom of the scale than the top of the scale of the steps and lanes salary matrix when necessary. There is interest in rewarding the loyalty of the most tenured teachers to the District and for helping defer the financial crisis we found ourselves in.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve a voluntary early retirement incentive of \$20,000 for a maximum of twenty-five qualifying teachers for 2025-2026 and 2026-2027. The incentive will be awarded to fifteen (15) teachers retiring June 2026 and ten (10) teachers retiring June 2027 who meet the eligibility criteria.

Superintendent Weltz addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve the action item *3. Early Retirement Incentive: a. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Teachers*.”

Motion: Trustee Keith Meyer moved to approve action item *3. Early Retirement Incentive: a. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Teachers*. Trustee Kay Satre seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

b. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Administrators

Superintendent Weltz presented the action item, *3. Early Retirement Incentive: b. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Administrators*, to the Board of Trustees.

Background:

As we continue to evaluate organizational needs and long-term staffing sustainability, Administrator (i.e., Principals, Assistant Principals, Assistant Superintendents, Directors) roles have been identified where there are potential retirements in the near term. A voluntary retirement incentive supports leadership succession, organizational alignment, and long-term fiscal stewardship.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve a voluntary early retirement incentive of \$20,000 for up to two qualifying Administrators who retire June 2026.

Superintendent Weltz addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve the action item 3. *Early Retirement Incentive: b. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Administrators.*”

Motion: Trustee Linda Cleatus moved to approve action item 3. *Early Retirement Incentive: b. Approval of Early Retirement Incentive for Administrators.* Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

4. **Policy 2005: School Year, Calendar and Day**

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented action item 4. *Policy 2005: School Year, Calendar and Day* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to align with House Bill 591. The purpose is to educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of the United States and the values on which the United States was founded. The committee also noted that, although Martin Luther King Day is no longer recognized as a federal school holiday, the district may still choose to close schools on that day, and the policy can remain unchanged. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the policy.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 4. *Policy 2005: School Year, Calendar and Day.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 4. *Policy 2005: School Year, Calendar and Day.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

5. **Policy 2016: Human Sexuality and Identity Instruction**

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented action item 5. *Policy 2016: Human Sexuality and Identity Instruction* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to align with the revised definition of human sexuality and identity instruction as defined in House Bill 471. It further clarifies the parent or guardian’s right of consent for human sexuality instruction (opt out) and identity instruction (opt in) and the notice provisions. Ms. Mizell

addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the policy.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 5. *Policy 2016: Human Sexuality and Identity Instruction.*”

Motion: Trustee Janet Armstrong moved to approve action item 5. *Policy 2016: Human Sexuality and Identity Instruction.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

6. **Policy 2100: Recognition of Native American Cultural Heritage**

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented action item 6. *Policy 2100: Recognition of Native American Cultural Heritage* to the Board of Trustees. The policy emphasizes that schools located in close proximity to Montana Tribes will work in consultation with Tribal partners when providing instruction and implementing educational goals that include Native American cultural heritage. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the policy.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 6. *Policy 2100: Recognition of Native American Cultural Heritage.*”

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to approve action item 6. *Policy 2100: Recognition of Native American Cultural Heritage.* Trustee Keith Meyer seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

7. **Policy 2140: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training**

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented action item 7. *Policy 2140: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect employee training timeline requirements, as well as to clarify how training may be delivered in accordance with Senate Bill 369. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the policy.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee commented, “At this point, I would entertain a motion to approve action item 7. *Policy 2140: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training.*”

Motion: Trustee Keith Meyer moved to approve action item 7. *Policy 2140: Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training.* Trustee Linda Cleatus seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

8. Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property

Ms. Keri Mizell, Human Resources Director, presented action item *Policy 4332: Display of Flags and Banners on District Property* to the Board of Trustees. This proposed policy was developed to align with House Bill 819 and addresses which flags and banners may be displayed on district or school property. Ms. Mizell clarified that the policy does not apply to personal clothing, jewelry, or accessories worn by school employees, except where uniform policies or official dress codes apply, as outlined in the district's employee handbook. One Trustee suggested that this clarification may be appropriate to include within the policy itself. The Board of Trustees agreed to table the policy and refer it back to the Policy Committee for further discussion at a future date.

Board Chair Jennifer McKee entertained a motion to table *Policy 4332, Display of Flags and Banners on District Property*, so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting.

Motion: Trustee Kay Satre moved to table *Policy 4332, Display of Flags and Banners on District Property*, so it could be referred to the Policy Committee for further review and discussion at a future meeting. Trustee Janet Armstrong seconded the motion.

Public Comment: None.

Vote: 6-0; motion carries unanimously.

The Board of Trustees moved on to hear the Items for Information.

D. Item For Information

1. HSD Pay Plan Recommendation

Mr. Jim Kerins with CMS provided an informational update on the development of the HSD Pay Plan. He reviewed the work completed to date, including the use of the district's salary survey and board-adopted compensation philosophy as the foundation for a revised pay plan. Mr. Kerins explained that the pay plan consists of three components: a revised wage matrix, a job classification system, and pay plan rules currently under development.

He outlined the proposed transition to a new independent staff wage matrix, noting improvements over the existing matrix, including more consistent step increases, smoother progression between grades, greater predictability for budgeting, and stronger alignment with market rates. The revised matrix is designed so that employees generally reach market pay around Step 5, with opportunities for continued growth.

Mr. Kerins also discussed the classification process for placing positions into appropriate grades based on job content and market data, as well as upcoming communication efforts with staff. He emphasized that the pay plan is a continuation of work previously presented to the board and noted that the update was provided for information only. CMS anticipates bringing a formal

recommendation to the board for action at a future meeting, following further implementation and communication. Mr. Kerins addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

2. Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 3097: Use of Video Monitoring Cameras* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to align with parental rights under House Bill 32, allowing video monitoring during events open to the public. At the last Policy Committee meeting, clarifying language was added to specify that no staff member or volunteer may make an audio or video recording of a student without the student's parental permission. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

3. Policy 1020: School Board Elections

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 1020: School Board Elections* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect the changes to candidate filing deadlines and withdrawal under House Bill 406. There is also a requirement that school elections must be called at least 145 days before a regular election, but they can be amended until 70 days prior to the election. There is an allowance for a period of 70 days to call a special election. Ballot certification must occur no fewer than 40 days before the election. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

4. Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 2103: Religion and Religious Activities* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect changes to House Bill 343, which now requires—rather than simply permits—the district to release a student at the parent's request (at least annually) for not less than one hour per week for formal religious instruction. The Policy Committee made an update to lines 26 and 27 to use more inclusive language. The revision clarifies that a student may read any religious material during free reading time, rather than referencing a specific religious text. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

5. Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 2165: Early Literacy Targeted Intervention* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated to reflect current legislation, including the removal of lines 33 through 35, clarifying the definition of scholastic literacy and incorporating math into early targeted intervention programs. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

6. Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 3000: Equal Educational Opportunities* to the Board of Trustees. The policy changes reflect Senate Bill 350, which permits schools districts and MHSAs to prohibit participation of a home school student in extracurricular activities based upon the student either not being a US citizen or a resident of the state of Montana. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

7. Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 3410: Student Health/Physical Screenings/Examinations* to the Board of Trustees. House Bill 599 requires that a district provide parents with notice of the right to opt out of physical or mental health screenings or surveys and to be notified of the results of any such screenings. The policy has been updated to align with this requirement. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

8. Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 5025: Employment and Assignment* to the Board of Trustees. Under House Bill 226, state penalties can be issued to employers for failing to comply with federal immigration laws and the bill grants Montana Department of Labor and Industry subpoena power to determine compliance. Language was added to the policy stating, “including, but not limited to, verification that the employee is authorized to work in the United States.” Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

9. Policy 5075: Termination of Employment

Ms. Mizell presented *Policy 5075: Termination of Employment* to the Board of Trustees. This policy has been updated with a legal reference to House Bill 602. Under House Bill 602, in the process of nonrenewal of a nontenured teacher, if the recommendation for nonrenewal is for financial reasons, this must be stated in the Board agenda posted before June 1st, which is subject to public comment. Ms. Mizell addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

E. REPORTS

1. Student Representatives Report

Mr. Brock Gardipee, Helena High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, presented his Student Representative Report. Mr. Gardipee commented, “Hello everyone, great to see you all again! To get started I would like to talk about our school-wide information. Winter concerts are being put on by our amazing music groups and led by Mr. Hollow, Mrs.

Kohoutek, and Mr. Cleary. We have some very talented students so I know they will be doing a great job. All freshmen have been going through YAM training in their P.E. classes which inform them about warning signs of a friend needing help and what to do because of it. We have partnered with MSU on this, and it is a great way for students to learn how they can help. On December 9 and 10, freshman and sophomore students will be taking MAP assessments so that teachers can view what they would score on the ACT tests and for them to know how they can improve their teaching. Our school leadership team is working hard to move forward with a school and district goal related to furthering our approaches related to disciplinary literacy and overall growth of students' thinking, writing, and preparing like a professional in all our content areas. Each PLC (department) provided our SLT with insight into what they are currently doing in their classes related to vocabulary instruction, writing approaches, and the skills needed to be a professional in their field. Our next steps with this are to analyze the information given to us, look at commonalities for our strong points and areas in need of improvement. Also, our clubs have been hard at work collecting food. Now I'll move on to my recognitions. The volleyball team had six All-Conference/All-State recognition and the boys' and girls' soccer team had nine. Milo Kauffman finished 15th place in the Regional Cross Country Competition last month. This competition had over 500 competitors from the states in the Northwest. Thank you to our World Language team for the amazing Winter Holiday Market they put on at Central School this past week. Bizz, Emily, Carrie, Leah, Susan, and Sheila do amazing work to build an understanding of other cultures and cultural traditions throughout our district and community. Strings and Desserts will be held on December 11 at lunch in the library. Our Choir is singing at lunch in the Capitol Rotunda with CHS, HMS, and CRA choirs – a very awesome event. Join us to hand out donuts on Thursday, December 18 – 8:00 a.m. at any entrance. A Holiday Assembly showcasing our music groups will take place on Friday, December 19, at 10:00 a.m." Mr. Gardipee addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

Ms. Delaney Lynch, Capital High School Student Representative for the Board of Trustees, presented her Student Representative Report. Ms. Lynch commented, "Good evening, Trustees, with the last couple of weeks of school wrapping up before the holidays, lots of things have been happening at Capital High School.

Holiday concert season:

First, orchestra students performed last Tuesday as well as this past Thursday when they performed in the Capitol Rotunda (during the day, as they can no longer perform at night).

Upcoming concerts:

Monday, December 8- CHS Band Concert, CHS Auditorium, 7:00 pm

Tuesday, December 9- CHS Choir Winter Concert, CHS Auditorium, 7:00 pm (yes, the same night as the board meeting)

NHS Food Drive:

The CHS NHS recently held a food drive. A classroom competition amongst second-period homeroom classes occurred with the winning class earning donuts.

Total items donated: 563

Winning Homeroom: Mrs. Rummel, with 202 items donated!

Toys for Tots- thank you to NHS and Chelsea Mazurek-Pierce:

National Honor Society is helping with Toys for Tots this year. The deadline is the end of this

Friday, the 12th. Please note that toys must be new and in their original packaging.

Talent Show Finalists/Shakespeare in the Schools, from Laura Brayko:

Congratulations to our talent show finalists who will perform at the Holiday Assembly on December 19!

Claudia Cook

Declan O'Leary and Thomas Byron

Daniel Dachs

Isabella Fedele

Shakespeare in the Schools:

This traveling troupe will be at CHS on Tuesday for an 80-minute performance of *Richard III* in the gymnasium starting at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 9. Interested English teachers can bring their students. Due to the choir concert that evening, the performance will be held in the CHS gym.

SLT Professional Development:

Last Monday, December 1, the CHS School Leadership Team presented strategies to all teachers during PLC time on the following items:

1. Writing does not have to be an event
2. Disciplinary Literacy
3. Engagement

Our focus this year is on the implementation of literacy strategies across all curricular areas. Next, the goal will be for each individual teacher (or specific PLC team) to share a prompt/assignment that incorporated one of the presented strategies, along with a student sample of it.

MAP Winter Assessment- starts tomorrow, December 8:

Like the fall assessment, all freshman and sophomore students will take the MAP Winter Benchmark Assessment in their math and English classes (which assesses math and language arts skills). This assessment will produce data to allow all freshman teachers to see student growth from the fall benchmark to the winter benchmark.

Building Bond Upgrade Survey:

Slate and RTA Architects are collecting student, teacher, and parent data to determine the areas in need of improvement in light of the renovation of Capital High School. We had our first DAG (Design Advisory Group) meeting with architects last Tuesday, and our team is comprised of select staff, students, and parents. This week, Slate architects will host a staff meeting on Wednesday to facilitate communication regarding building design.

We are looking forward to the holidays at CHS and are eager to start the new year! Go Bru!"

Ms. Lynch addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

2. **Helena Education Association Report**

There was no Helena Education Association Report this evening.

3. **Facilities & Technology Committee Report**

Trustee Siobhan Hathhorn presented the Facilities & Technology Committee Report. Mr. Myers provided updates on state and accreditation reporting due in February, noting challenges with system alignment and thanking staff for their work. Technology updates included student ChatGPT content filtering with broader access for teachers, improved student password security, camera server upgrades, ongoing administrative training, and technology planning input for the bond process based on prior construction experience. Facilities updates included recent plumbing repairs and staffing additions, boiler issues at Central School, routine air-handler maintenance districtwide, winterization of Vigilante Stadium, and support for the Bryant School mural installation. Ongoing projects include the Smith Elementary boiler project, completion of solar design work with bidding planned for next summer, progress on the Clint Fisher Memorial project, and continued erosion concerns at Central School. Safety and security updates included fire marshal and Montana Department of Labor inspections and coordination with the Safety Advisory Committee. Trustee Hathhorn also shared key takeaways from the recent facilities tour to Spokane, emphasizing school design as community-centered spaces, thoughtful public access layouts, and the sense of pride created by new facilities. Trustee Hathhorn addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

4. **Budget and Finance Committee Report**

Trustee Janet Armstrong presented the Budget and Finance Committee Report. The committee reviewed bond-related budget items and noted a variance in paraeducator expenses, largely due to the expansion of Kinder Sprouts classrooms and the assignment of additional special education paraeducators. Administration indicated that finance staff and the assistant superintendent are working collaboratively to establish a clearer baseline for next year. The committee also discussed the district's careful approach to preserving interlocal funds, particularly as bond proceeds become available, while remaining mindful of future bond issuances and anticipated reductions in interlocal balances. Trustee Armstrong acknowledged this meeting as Janelle Mickelson's final committee meeting, expressing appreciation for her integrity, expertise, and trusted judgment in managing complex financial and legal matters, and thanked her for her service to the district. Trustee Armstrong addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

5. **Teaching & Learning Committee Reports**

There was no Teaching and Learning Committee Report this evening.

6. **Policy Committee Report**

There was no Policy Committee Report this evening.

7. **Health Benefits Committee Report**

Trustee Kay Satre presented the Health Benefits Committee Report to the Board of Trustees. Trustee Satre reported on the Health Benefits Committee meeting, including the annual health plan review with Allegiance for the 2024–2025 plan year. Membership declined, largely due to workforce reductions, and enrollment shifted between plan options following prior plan design changes. Medical costs increased modestly, pharmacy costs increased significantly, and overall combined costs rose. The number of catastrophic claims decreased from the prior year. Major cost drivers included mental health, neurological, musculoskeletal conditions, cancer, and gastrointestinal disorders.

Utilization trends showed increased use of urgent care and office visits, slight decreases in preventive visits for some age groups, and cancer screening rates above benchmarks. The St. Peter's Health narrow network generated significant cost savings. Dental utilization declined, while vision utilization increased. Despite an unusually high claims month, the health plan remained financially stable with unreserved funds exceeding the prior year's balance.

The committee also discussed updating its handbook and ongoing evaluation of the Bridged Health Alliance. A meeting with the Alliance was scheduled to review the potential benefits and risks of joining, noting that several AA districts have chosen to join contingent upon provider network and performance guarantees.

Trustee Satre addressed questions from the Board of Trustees regarding the information presented.

8. **Wellness Committee Report**

There was no Wellness Committee Report this evening.

9. **Montana School Boards Association Report**

There was no Montana School Boards Association Report this evening.

10. **Parent Council Visit Reports**

There were no Parent Council Visit Reports this evening.

That concluded the Reports portion of the agenda. The Board of Trustees moved on to review upcoming meetings.

VI. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Board Chair Jennifer McKee reviewed upcoming committee and board meetings, and the Board then moved to hear final comments.

VII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

Trustee Janet Armstrong shared remarks about attending the Central School holiday market, noting the strong participation and performance of the German Club, as well as the presence of other world language programs. She also highlighted positive conversations with Helena High staff regarding Principal Kessler's efforts to build community connections and welcome students from other schools as future Helena High students, praising this proactive approach to relationship-building and outreach. Superintendent Weltz announced that Janelle Mickelson's retirement celebration will be held on December 18 at 5:30 p.m. at Mount Ascension.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Jennifer McKee adjourned the meeting at 10:02 p.m.

Candice Delvaux, Recording Secretary

Date

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.C.1.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title:

Item For Action

1. Consideration of the Approval of Pay Plan Rules

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Satre					
Murnane Butcher					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					
Meyer					

Board of Trustees

Consideration of the Approval of Pay Plan Rules

VI. NEW BUSINESS

C. Items for Action

1. Consideration of the Approval of Pay Plan Rules

Background:

Pay Plan Rules establish a structured framework to ensure consistency, transparency, and fiscal responsibility in compensation practices. These rules support the uniform administration of employee compensation for employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement (Independent employees) across the District, while aligning pay practices with available funding and the District's strategic workforce goals.

The Pay Plan Rules are intended to provide clear guidance for compensation decisions, promote equitable treatment of employees, and support responsible financial planning.

The District engaged Communication Management Services (CMS), LLC, to support the development of formal Pay Plan Rules. A Steering Committee met on November 17, 2025, and December 18, 2025, to review the benefits of formalized pay plan rules, solicit feedback, and finalize the proposed Pay Plan Rules for District consideration.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve the adoption of the Pay Plan Rules.



The Helena Public School District recruits, retains, and motivates a highly qualified workforce through an understandable and competitive compensation structure.

Compensation Philosophy

Our compensation philosophy supports our mission to 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 through the following objectives:

- Recognize and reward employees through a compensation structure that values professional development, enhanced qualifications, and positive contributions to the organization. Ensure our compensation structure attracts new talent and promotes longevity.
- Maintain external competitiveness to honor our obligations to students, employees, taxpayers, and the community. Ensure the compensation plan is strategic and based on relevant market data and our recruitment and selection experience.
- Ensure compensation planning is fiscally responsible, recognizing local, state, and federal funding sources pose challenges. Strive to align compensation with the needs and goals of the district and our community.
- Ensure compensation for employees reflects experience and levels of organizational responsibility.
- Support employees holistically through benefits that include health insurance, retirement plans, paid leave, and professional development opportunities. Ensure employees feel valued and supported both personally and professionally.
- Ensure our plan adheres to legal standards, including state and federal laws regarding the compensation and benefits of certified and non-certified staff.
- Ensure our plan is tenable and actively promote understanding of the plan among all stakeholders, including employees, supervisors, and the community.
- Honor the collective bargaining process and foster collaborative decision-making.
- Ensure that compensation practices are sustainable, consistent, and respectful of all employees.
- Foster continuous improvement of our compensation system including regularly assessing the market and updating the system to reflect district needs and best practices.

Pay Plan Rules

Pay Plan Rules ensure consistency, transparency, and fiscal responsibility in compensation practices. The rules will support the uniform administration of employee compensation for employees not covered under a collective bargaining agreement across the District (i.e., independents), while aligning pay practices with available funding and strategic workforce goals.

Employee Movement

When an employee transitions from one employee group to another, the pay rules of the new position become the governing guidelines. This ensures consistency, equity, and alignment with the established compensation structures.

For example, if an employee moves from an independent position into a role covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the CBA will govern the pay determination and associated benefits. Conversely, if an employee moves from a represented position into an independent role, the Employee Handbook, HPS policies, and Pay Plan Rules become the governing documents for determining pay and benefits.

This framework ensures the appropriate placement of employees according to the rules and standards of the employee group they are joining.

Salary Matrix and Placement

The District will maintain a salary matrix for independent positions (positions not covered by a collective bargaining agreement or individual employment contract). Each pay range will include minimum and maximum rates of pay. Assignment of positions to a pay range shall be in accordance with the Helena Public Schools (HPS) Classification Manual that ranks job content based on factors to include knowledge, accountability, and complexity.

Overtime Eligibility

HPS will determine whether a position is overtime eligible (hourly) or overtime exempt (salaried) based on assigned duties and responsibilities that meet (or do not meet criteria) for overtime eligibility under federal and state law. Hourly employees will be paid their regular hourly rate of pay for all hours worked up to 40 hours in a work week in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA); hours worked over 40 hours in a work week will be compensated at time and a half (overtime) and requires supervisor approval. Workweeks will normally begin at 12:00 a.m. on Sunday and end at 12:00 midnight the following Saturday unless otherwise designated.

Employees exempt from overtime (salaried) are not subject to federal or state overtime payment requirements. Compensation is based on the premise that overtime exempt employees work the hours as necessary to provide the public services for which HPS hired them. The salary paid to overtime exempt employees is full compensation for all hours worked.

(Cross reference Policy 5060, Holidays and Policy 5055, Leaves of Absence)

Initial Pay Assignment (New Hire)

- A new employee's base wage may not be less than the minimum wage of the assigned grade [unless in conjunction with a training assignment]. Department heads must consult with the HR Office for salary determination to ensure internal equity. Generally, HPS will extend wage offers that align with the employee's years of experience directly relevant to the position, not to exceed the midpoint (Step 5).
- The Superintendent may grant further advancement above the midpoint (step 5) in consultation with the HR Director to address issues related to recruitment, retention, or other business-related reasons such as a multi-grade promotion, equity, alignment, or competitive market conditions.

Training assignment

An employee new to a job may be placed in a training assignment if the employee does not meet the position's minimum qualifications. Before implementing a training assignment, Human Resources (HR) must approve the justification and documentation including any base pay adjustments during the training assignment. The pay rate and overtime eligibility are based on the allocated grade of the training assignment. The step placement will follow pay plan rules. A training assignment:

- may not exceed one year;
- must be documented and signed by the employee, manager, and HR;
- must specify the starting base pay, any planned progression increases, and the ending base pay upon successful completion;
- must describe the training, experience, development goals, and performance-review requirements.

Pay Progression

- Employees on the independent salary matrix will progress from the step at which they are hired and receive an annual step increase effective each July 1 until the employee reaches the top of the salary range (i.e., Step 20) of the assigned grade.

Promotion to a Position at a Higher Pay Grade

- Employees receiving a one grade promotion typically advance to the step on the new grade that is nearest (at or above, not below) to 5%, not to exceed the top of the grade. The increase may be higher than 5% if necessary to bring the employee to the minimum of the salary range of the position.
- Advancement to a higher step above a 5% increase may be granted by the Superintendent in consultation with the HR Director to address issues related to recruitment, retention, or other business-related reasons such as equity, alignment, multi-grade promotions, or competitive market conditions.

Demotion to a position at a Lower Pay Grade

For voluntary movement (i.e., via the competitive recruitment process) or a disciplinary demotion where an employee is placed at a lower pay grade and their current base salary exceeds the top step (Step 20) of the assigned grade, the employee will be placed at the top step (Step 20) (i.e., no pay protection). Where their current base salary is below Step 20, the employee will be placed at the step closest to, but not exceeding, their current wage in the lower grade.

For involuntary movement because of discipline, the employee could be placed anywhere from the entry step of the lower grade, up to the step that is closest to, but not exceeding, their current wage in the lower grade. The district will consider internal equity when determining the demoted-to employees pay rate.

For involuntary movement as a result of District reorganization, or other business needs as determined by the Superintendent, that results in an employee assignment to a lower assigned grade, the employee will maintain their current base salary (i.e., be pay protected) and receive a stipend that is roughly the amount of any approved general wage increase that would have been received for the fiscal year until such time as they vacate the position or their current base salary falls within the salary range.

If the employee is subsequently promoted, the employee's pay shall be set according to the promotion rule, except the employee's pay rate may not result in a higher step than the employee had prior to the demotion.

Transfer to a Position at an Equal Pay Grade

The employee will typically maintain their current salary. The Superintendent may grant advancement to a higher step of the assigned grade in consultation with the HR Director to address issues related to recruitment, retention, or other business-related reasons such as equity, alignment, or competitive market conditions.

Retention Pay for Existing Employees

Department heads may make requests for pay exceptions by submitting them via email to the HR Director. The HR Director considers requests on a case-by-case basis, and the department head must provide support for two or more of the following in their request to the HR Director for consideration:

- The employee demonstrates consistent exceptional performance (i.e., demonstrates performance as a “senior contributor”).
- The employee is in a critical strategic position (i.e., a unique position critical to organizational operations).
- The employee has knowledge, skills and abilities critical to the organization that would be difficult to replace.
- The HR Department’s market data indicate the current wage rate is inadequate.
- The department head provides evidence of a written competing job offer (i.e., an offer letter from a competing local employer).
- The department head provides an internal equity analysis including a comparison of the employee’s competency, performance, and tenure to other employees within the department (HR must also review and approve the internal equity analysis).

The department head may include any other relevant information or documentation for consideration.

The HR Director will make a recommendation to the Superintendent for final determination within ten business days of receipt. If HR needs more time to review or gather information, the HR Director will notify the requesting party.

Typically, the HR Director will provide a written determination to the requesting party no later than one week (five business days) from the date of recommendation to the Superintendent. If HR needs more time to review or gather information, the HR Director will notify the requesting party.

Retention Pay generally shall not exceed 15% of the employee’s base salary. It may be added to the employee’s base salary or paid as a lump sum as described below. An employee may not receive more than 15% of their base salary over a twelve-month period unless recommended by the Superintendent and with the Board of Trustee approval.

In advance of authorizing a lump sum recruitment or retention payment, express conditions in writing for the payment must be agreed upon. The conditions must include a specified period of employment or continued employment. Any lump sum payment under

this section must only be made after services have been rendered in accordance with conditions established by HPS and become part of the employee's annual compensation for work performed prior to receipt of any funds.

Comparability Adjustments

Comparability increases may be used to adjust individual salaries *and/or* the pay ranges for each grade in the salary matrix. Typically, the entire pay range is adjusted for comparability, and existing employee pay is adjusted by the same percentage to avoid pay compression. However, pay ranges may be adjusted without adjusting individual employee pay or vice versa. These types of adjustments are based on economic indicators and funding availability.

An evaluation of salary information and associated comparability data will be used to establish and adjust the pay ranges for each grade. Employee pay may be moved with range adjustments within available funding, but there is no guarantee that it will. Pay adjustments may be made at any time there is a need, including responding to shifts in the market, recruitment, retention, or equity issues. Changes to rates for individual positions must be approved by the Superintendent.

The Board approves adjustments to the pay ranges and general wage increases for all employees, including the effective date.

Effective Dates

If there is a determination by the HR Office that a position is classified to a different grade (higher or lower) as a result in a significant change in the majority of job duties, the effective date will be the first day of the full pay period after the HR Office formally received the request. For example (based on a monthly pay period ending mid-month), if a formal request is received October 12, the effective date would be October 16th (the first day of the pay period following the request). If the request is received October 18th, the effective date would be November 16th.

A formal request is an updated job description from a department head or a written request from an employee that provides a detailed description of the change in job duties.

The HR Office will strive to complete classification reviews within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the formal request and will provide a status update if additional time is needed beyond thirty calendar days.

Definitions

Additional information and definitions are outlined in the Classification Manual.

Compression: Occurs when there is an insufficient salary differential between the subordinate and the supervisor or between grade levels when considering career progression.

Demotion: Movement of an employee to a position with a lower job grade assignment than their current position. Demotion may be voluntary by the employee for a position with less responsibility, or involuntary as a result of discipline or organizational restructuring.

General Wage Increase: An across-the-board percent increase approved by the Board of Trustees to the salary matrix.

Inversion: When the salary of the subordinate is higher than that of the supervisor.

Market Comparison: The market used to compare job content and salary to other positions. Market comparison will include other AA Districts and organizations in the Helena area.

Salary Matrix: A chart that shows salary ranges based on Grade and Step and is used in determining salary placement. A salary matrix is adjusted based on approved general wage increases.

Promotion: Movement of an employee to a higher job grade than their current position, and not due to a market adjustment in salary. A multi-grade promotion is when an employee advances more than one grade in the salary matrix.

Reallocation: The assignment of a position to a different grade on the salary matrix.

Red Circle Rate: A pay rate that is above the maximum range assigned to the job grade. Employees who are "red circled" are usually not eligible for additional pay increases until the range maximums are increased above the individual pay rate or the employee transfers to a job with a higher pay range.

Training Assignment: A temporary, formally documented, and approved placement of an employee new to a job into a training assignment (typically at a lower grade than the job classification) when the employee does not yet meet the position's minimum qualifications. The training assignment defines the steps necessary for the employee to acquire the competencies necessary to perform the position and will include at least one of the following:

- On-the-job training (knowledge and skill developed through experience).
- Classroom or field instruction.

- Courses conducted by an educational institution, vocational school, or professional training organization; or
- Written, oral, and/or practical examination(s).

The training assignment will not exceed twelve months (the maximum duration of an employee's probationary period).

Transfer: Movement of an employee to a position in the same job grade as their current position.

DRAFT

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.C.2.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Item For Action**

2. Consideration of the Approval of the Transition to a New Salary Matrix for Independents

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Satre					
Murnane Butcher					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					
Meyer					

Board of Trustees

Consideration of the Approval of the Transition to a New Salary Matrix for Independents

VI. NEW BUSINESS

C. Items for Action

2. Consideration of the Approval of the Transition to a New Salary Matrix for Independents

Background:

The current salary matrix for Independent (non-represented) employees contains inconsistencies in the percentage increases between steps and grades. Over time, these inconsistencies have created challenges related to logical salary progression and long-term budget forecasting.

The proposed salary matrix developed by Communication and Management Services (CMS), LLC, aligns with the District's compensation philosophy, specifically the principles of equity and transparency, budgetary discipline, and consistency in employment actions.

Placement of independent employees on the new salary matrix will be based on their current pay. Employees' salaries will generally increase as part of the transition, with expanded earning potential under the new structure.

The anticipated fiscal note is \$35,000 for implementation for the 25-26 fiscal year.

Superintendent recommendation:

Approve the transition to a new salary matrix for Independent employees effective July 1, 2025.

Grade	Minimum	Helena Public Schools Independent Wage Matrix 2026																				increase per grade
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
2	\$11.42	\$11.71	\$12.00	\$12.30	\$12.61	\$12.93	\$13.22	\$13.52	\$13.82	\$14.13	\$14.45	\$14.74	\$15.03	\$15.33	\$15.64	\$15.95	\$16.23	\$16.51	\$16.80	\$17.09	\$17.39	8.25%
3	\$12.36	\$12.67	\$12.99	\$13.31	\$13.64	\$13.98	\$14.29	\$14.61	\$14.94	\$15.28	\$15.62	\$15.93	\$16.25	\$16.58	\$16.91	\$17.25	\$17.55	\$17.86	\$18.17	\$18.49	\$18.81	8.25%
4	\$13.38	\$13.72	\$14.06	\$14.41	\$14.77	\$15.14	\$15.48	\$15.83	\$16.19	\$16.55	\$16.92	\$17.26	\$17.61	\$17.96	\$18.32	\$18.69	\$19.02	\$19.35	\$19.69	\$20.03	\$20.38	8.25%
5	\$14.49	\$14.85	\$15.22	\$15.60	\$15.99	\$16.39	\$16.76	\$17.14	\$17.53	\$17.92	\$18.32	\$18.69	\$19.06	\$19.44	\$19.83	\$20.23	\$20.58	\$20.94	\$21.31	\$21.68	\$22.06	8.25%
6	\$15.68	\$16.07	\$16.47	\$16.88	\$17.30	\$17.73	\$18.13	\$18.54	\$18.96	\$19.39	\$19.83	\$20.23	\$20.63	\$21.04	\$21.46	\$21.89	\$22.27	\$22.66	\$23.06	\$23.46	\$23.87	8.50%
7	\$17.01	\$17.44	\$17.88	\$18.33	\$18.79	\$19.26	\$19.69	\$20.13	\$20.58	\$21.04	\$21.51	\$21.94	\$22.38	\$22.83	\$23.29	\$23.76	\$24.18	\$24.60	\$25.03	\$25.47	\$25.92	8.50%
8	\$18.46	\$18.92	\$19.39	\$19.87	\$20.37	\$20.88	\$21.35	\$21.83	\$22.32	\$22.82	\$23.33	\$23.80	\$24.28	\$24.77	\$25.27	\$25.78	\$26.23	\$26.69	\$27.16	\$27.64	\$28.12	8.50%
9	\$20.03	\$20.53	\$21.04	\$21.57	\$22.11	\$22.66	\$23.17	\$23.69	\$24.22	\$24.76	\$25.32	\$25.83	\$26.35	\$26.88	\$27.42	\$27.97	\$28.46	\$28.96	\$29.47	\$29.99	\$30.51	8.50%
10	\$21.73	\$22.28	\$22.84	\$23.41	\$24.00	\$24.60	\$25.15	\$25.72	\$26.30	\$26.89	\$27.50	\$28.05	\$28.61	\$29.18	\$29.76	\$30.36	\$30.89	\$31.43	\$31.98	\$32.54	\$33.11	8.50%
11	\$23.58	\$24.17	\$24.77	\$25.39	\$26.02	\$26.67	\$27.27	\$27.88	\$28.51	\$29.15	\$29.81	\$30.41	\$31.02	\$31.64	\$32.27	\$32.92	\$33.50	\$34.09	\$34.69	\$35.30	\$35.92	8.50%
12	\$25.64	\$26.28	\$26.94	\$27.61	\$28.30	\$29.01	\$29.66	\$30.33	\$31.01	\$31.71	\$32.42	\$33.07	\$33.73	\$34.40	\$35.09	\$35.79	\$36.42	\$37.06	\$37.71	\$38.37	\$39.04	8.75%
13	\$27.89	\$28.58	\$29.29	\$30.02	\$30.77	\$31.54	\$32.25	\$32.98	\$33.72	\$34.48	\$35.26	\$35.97	\$36.69	\$37.42	\$38.17	\$38.93	\$39.61	\$40.30	\$41.01	\$41.73	\$42.46	8.75%
14	\$30.33	\$31.08	\$31.86	\$32.66	\$33.48	\$34.32	\$35.09	\$35.88	\$36.69	\$37.52	\$38.36	\$39.13	\$39.91	\$40.71	\$41.52	\$42.35	\$43.09	\$43.84	\$44.61	\$45.39	\$46.18	8.75%
15	\$32.98	\$33.80	\$34.65	\$35.52	\$36.41	\$37.32	\$38.16	\$39.02	\$39.90	\$40.80	\$41.72	\$42.55	\$43.40	\$44.27	\$45.16	\$46.06	\$46.87	\$47.69	\$48.52	\$49.37	\$50.23	8.75%
16	\$35.87	\$36.76	\$37.68	\$38.62	\$39.59	\$40.58	\$41.49	\$42.42	\$43.37	\$44.35	\$45.35	\$46.26	\$47.19	\$48.13	\$49.09	\$50.07	\$50.95	\$51.84	\$52.75	\$53.67	\$54.61	8.75%

Step to Step \$ Difference (Grade 5 Example)																				
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
-	\$0.3640	\$0.3700	\$0.3800	\$0.3900	\$0.4000	\$0.3700	\$0.3800	\$0.3900	\$0.3900	\$0.4000	\$0.3700	\$0.3700	\$0.3800	\$0.3900	\$0.4000	\$0.3500	\$0.3600	\$0.3700	\$0.3700	\$0.3800

Step to Step % Difference (Independents)																				
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
-	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.25%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%

HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.C.3.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title:

Item For Action

3. Consideration of the Approval of Districtwide Boundary Adjustments

Board Action	1st Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Other
Hathhorn					
McKee					
Satre					
Murnane Butcher					
Cleatus					
Walsh					
Armstrong					
Meyer					



Helena Public Schools

A great place to learn

Josh McKay
Assistant Superintendent
jmckay@helenaschools.org
Phone (406) 324-2004

Lincoln Center
1325 Poplar St.
Helena, Montana 59601
Fax (406) 324-2022

Date: 01/09/2026

To: Helena School Board of Trustees

From: Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent

Re: Recommended Districtwide Boundary Adjustment

Board of Trustees,

For your consideration, enclosed in this packet is the recommended Districtwide Boundary Adjustment information.

Included is the presentation that occurred on October 14, 2025, and a summary of the other communication that has occurred with the community.

The administrative recommendation is for the trustees to approve these districtwide boundary adjustments as presented to take effect for students enrolling in the 2026-2027 school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Josh McKay".

Josh McKay
Assistant Superintendent
Helena Public Schools
(406) 324-2004

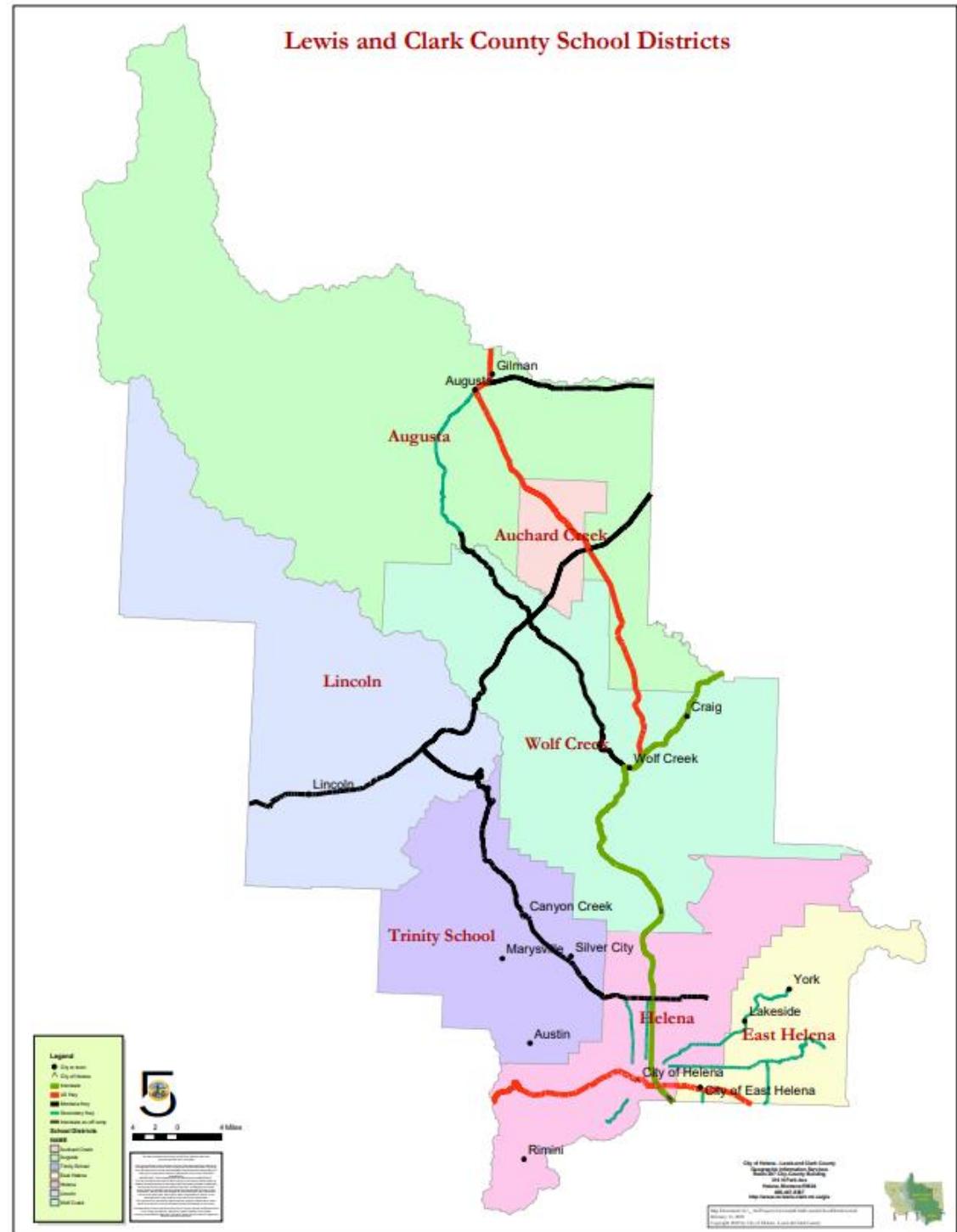
DRAFT

10/14/2025

In-District Boundary Change Presentation

Map of School Districts surrounding Helena

(Helena Public Schools District in pink)



The Why? The How? The What? and The When?

Changing the East/West Boundary Line will balance Middle School and High School enrollments.

The reason to make the shift is to ensure equal student educational opportunities remain an option of each high school and middle school. If we do not change, students on one side of town will have more class opportunities than on the other side of town. Also, if we travel our program staff to different sites, we lose time with them, when they could be working with students. Our budget challenges and human resource constraints require us to maximize the use of our resources to ensure equal educational opportunities exist for all students in our schools.

The East/West Line needs to shift from East to West to balance the High School and Middle School enrollments to maintain equal opportunities in those schools.

Gradual Transition: Begins for the 2026-2027 school year.

Students may choose to stay in the school they are currently in. This is a change in transportation routes.

Sibling Rule: Families with children may follow their sibling in school attendance areas if they choose, parents will need to transport or utilize a courtesy route.

Transportation Changes will occur at the beginning of 2026-2027. Students will be able to use in-district courtesy transportation routes if families choose to stay at their current school. These are regional type stops. Courtesy routes are the concept where an in-district resident student may board an existing route.

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The projection of school age children population in Lewis and Clark County in the next 20 years is relatively not changing, according to the State Department of Commerce. (not growing, not declining).

Continued regular boundary maintenance is suggested for our district. (Every 10 years or more often)

Trend for Lewis and Clark County: 5 year olds: through Year 2040

Population Projection Regional Economic Models Incorporated (REMI)

2021 data vintage year

[Trend](#)[Age Pyramid](#)[Change Map](#)[Table](#)

Population Projection - Trends

Adjust the figures below by selecting a custom age range, gender and race. Select one or more counties to display in the county figures.

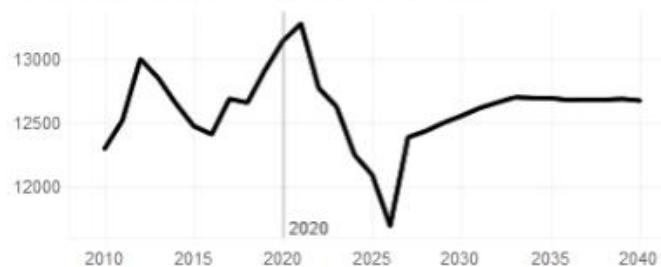
Select State and County:

Select Age Range:

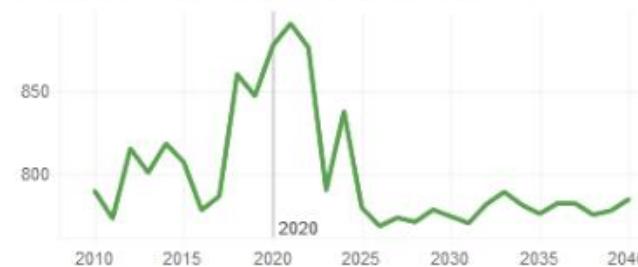
Select Genders:

Select Races:

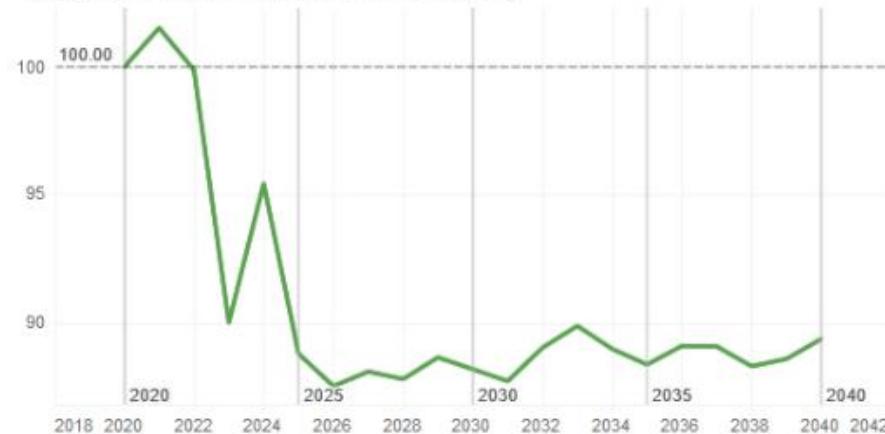
Projected Population Total for State of Montana



Projected Population Total for Selected Counties



Change in Projected Population from 2020 (index)

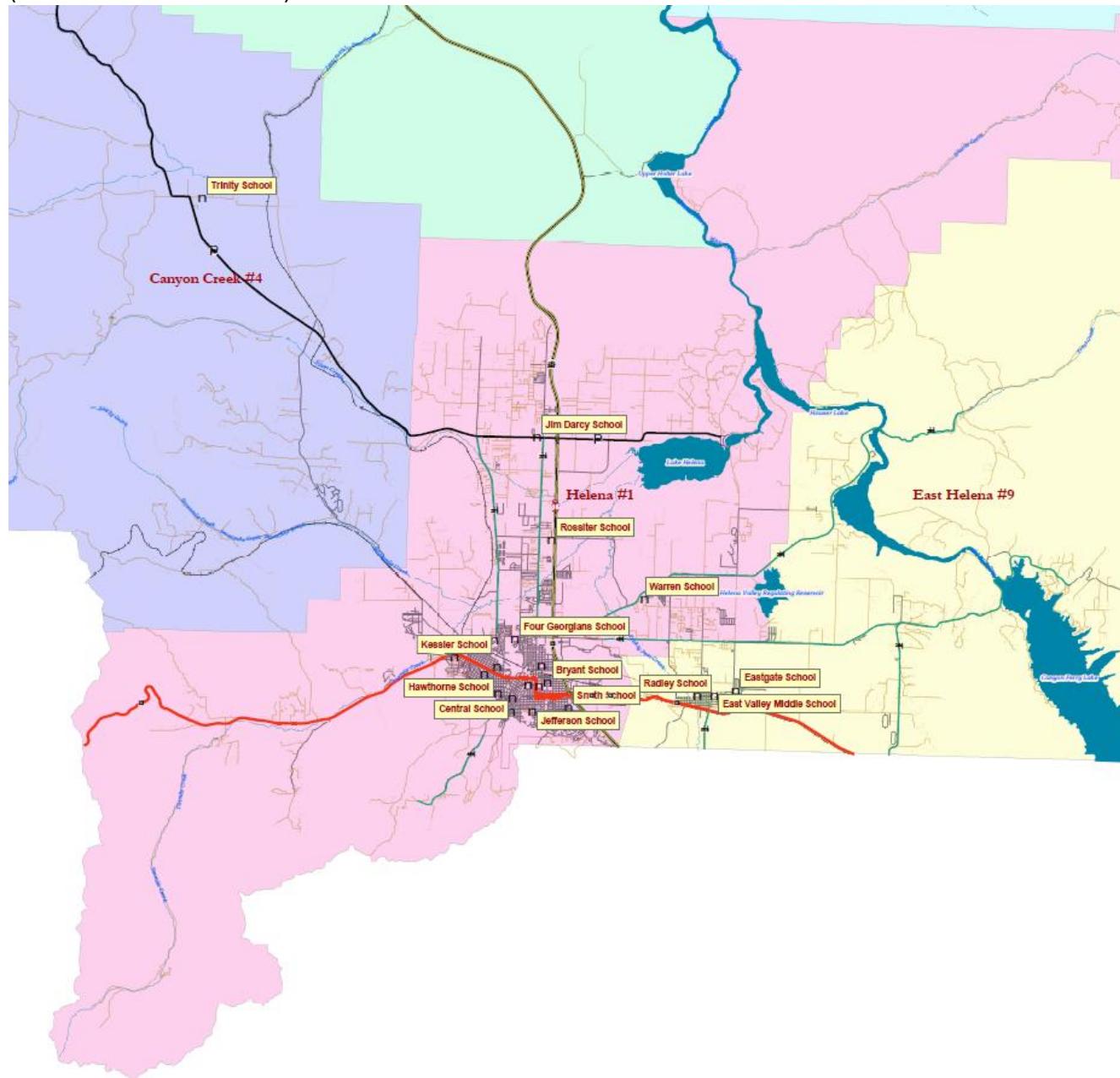


Projected population change is indexed to the data release year of 2020. Indexing the rate of change enables the comparison of data with different magnitudes.

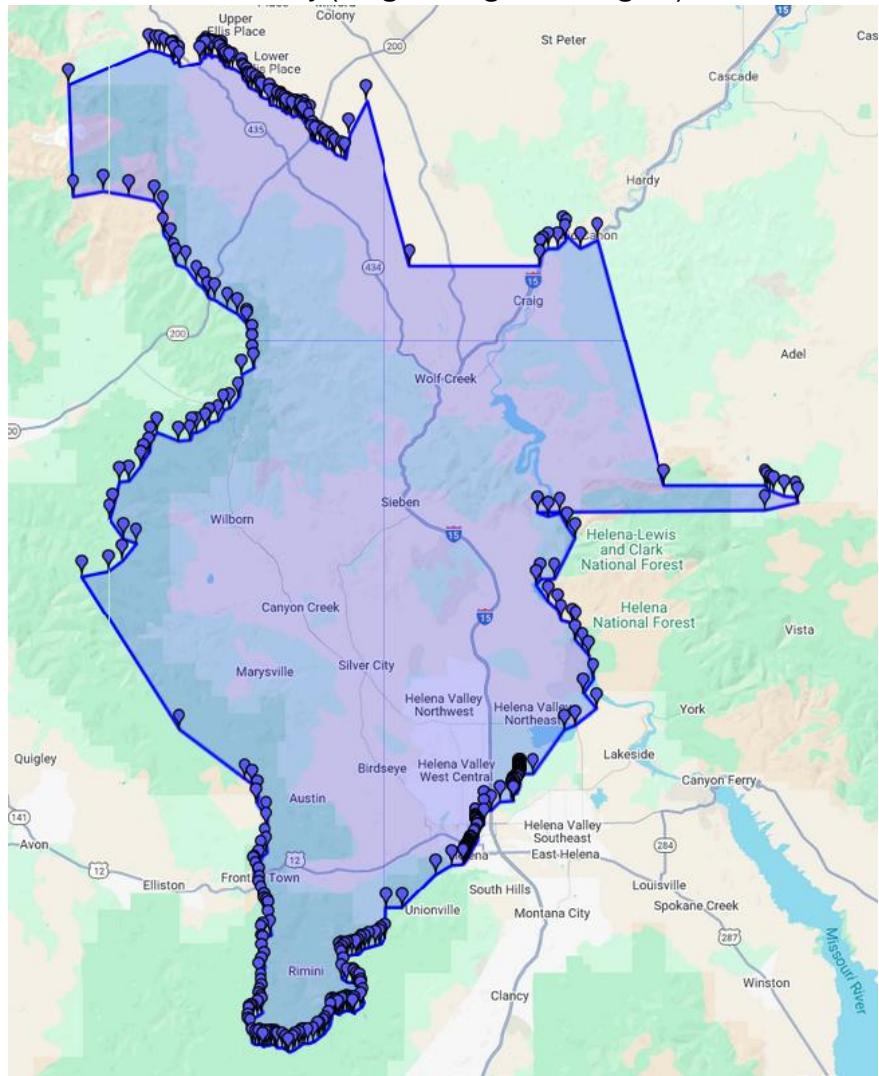
█ Lewis and Clark

Data Source: eRemi Montana State and County Population Projection by Gender, Race and Age from Regional Economic Models Incorporated (REMI) compiled by Montana Department of Commerce.

Map of School Districts surrounding Helena
(2024-2025 School Year)



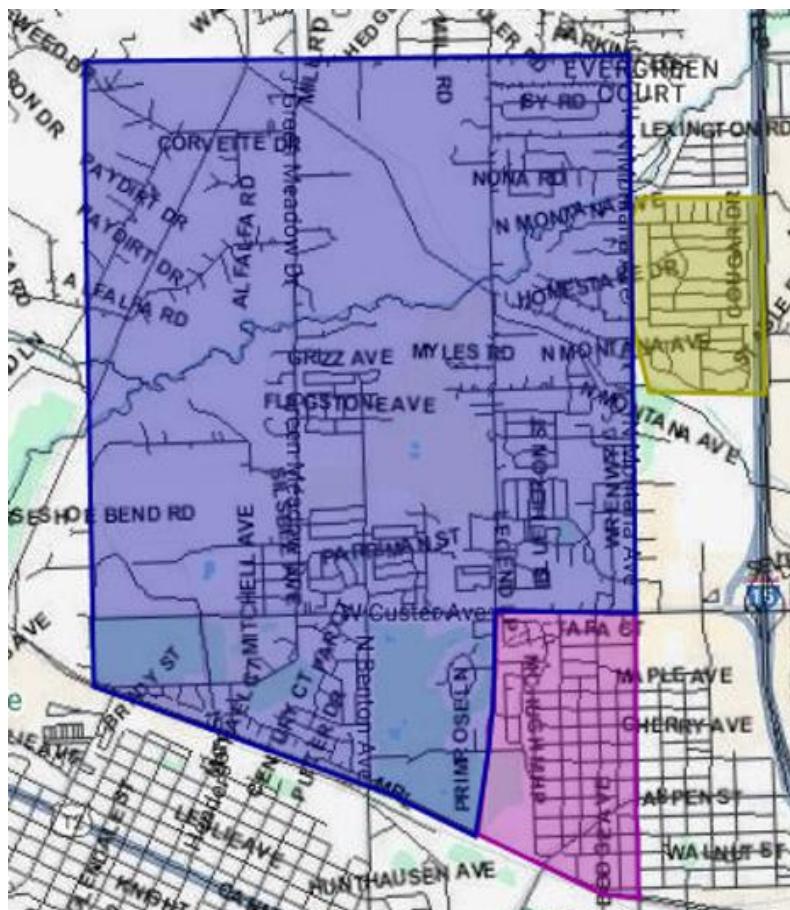
Current CHS Boundary (Larger Image and Region)



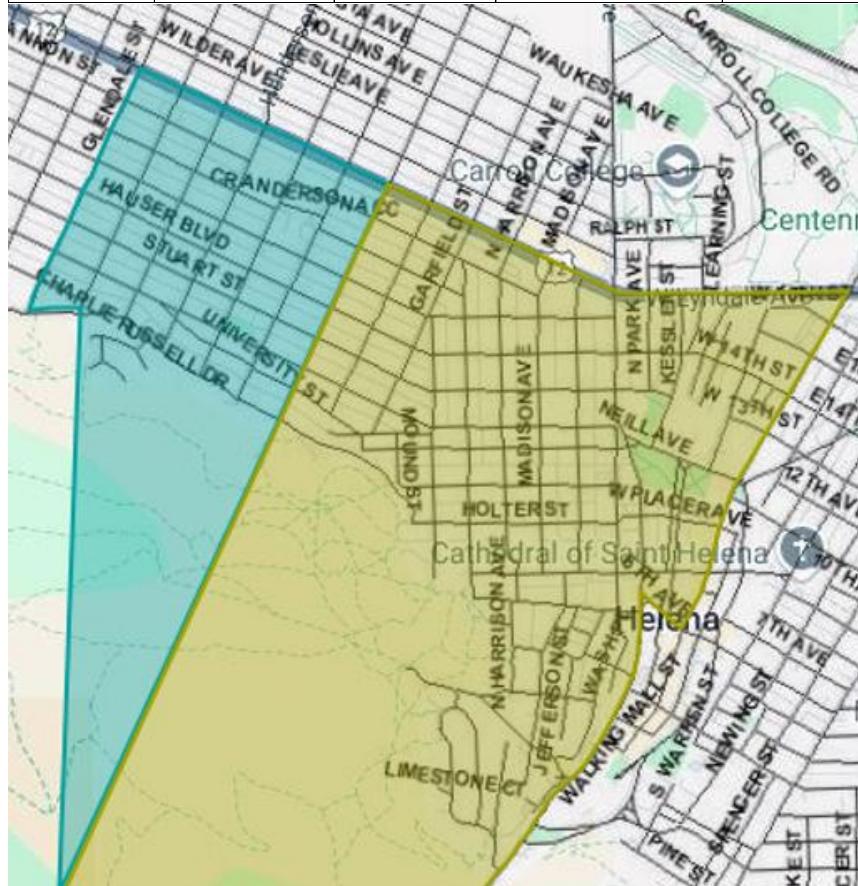
Current HHS Boundary (Smaller Image and Region)



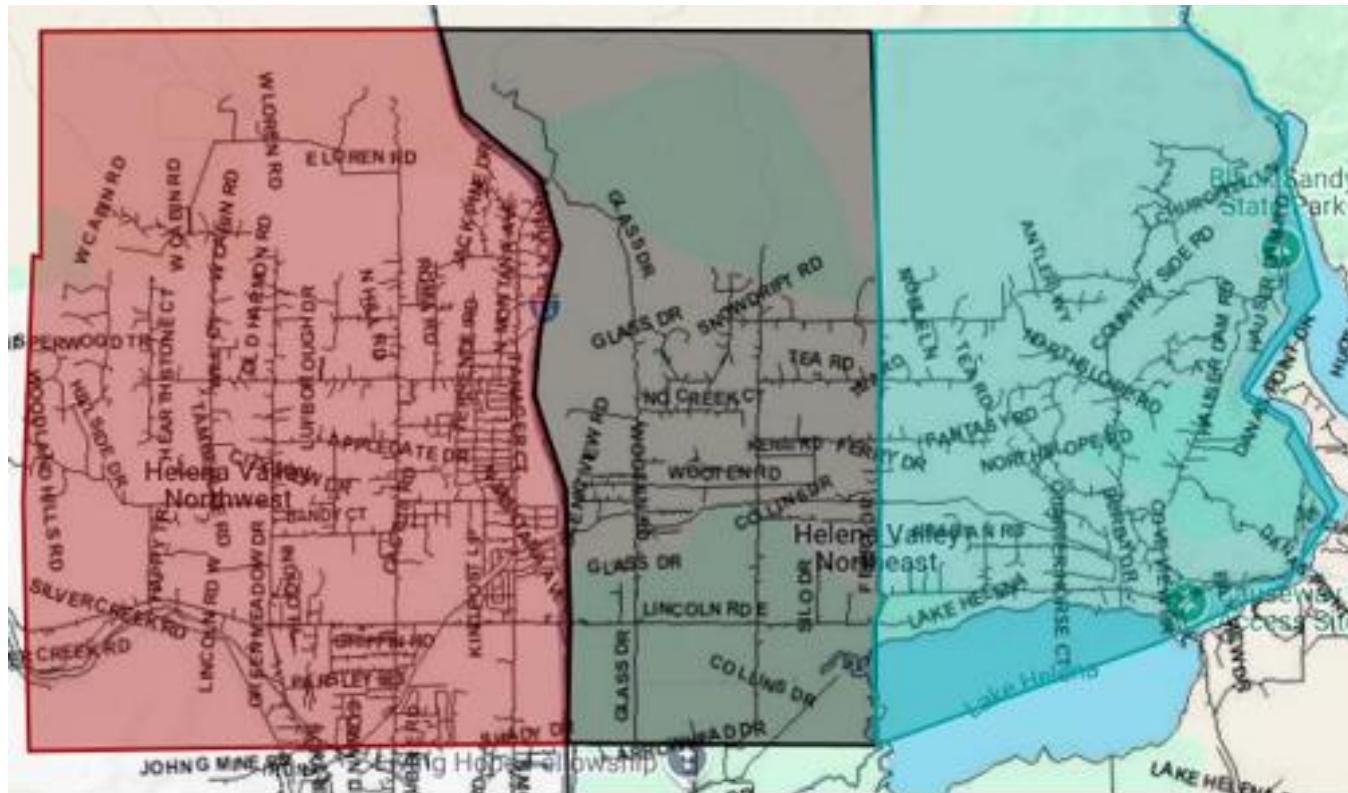
Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
1	Treasure State Addresses	Currently attends Four Georgians, CRA, CHS	Change Elementary School to Rossiter, maintain attendance to CRA, CHS	Change Elementary School, keep same MS and HS	Treasure State Acres Neighborhood changes k-5 student attendance changes from Four Georgians to Rossiter, these students will continue to attend the CRA/CHS pattern	Rossiter enrollment is declining and Four Georgians is growing	70 students live in this area, effectively adds 12 students per grade to Rossiter, Four Georgians overflow less students to other schools	Begins with enrolling Kindergarteners for 2026-2027
2	Tree Street Addresses	Currently attends Four Georgians, then either CRA or HMS, either CHS or HHS	Change to HMS and HHS, maintain Four Georgians	Has been an optional split to MS and HS, Change is to require the Elementary School to split into HMS and CRA with HHS and CHS	After grade 5 at Four Georgians, Tree Street Neighborhood students attend HMS and HHS. The dividing line is McHugh Lane. West to CRA, East to HMS.	Assists in reducing enrollment at CRA and CHS, growing the enrollment at HMS and HHS	30 Middle School students go to HMS and 40 High School students go to HHS.	Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027



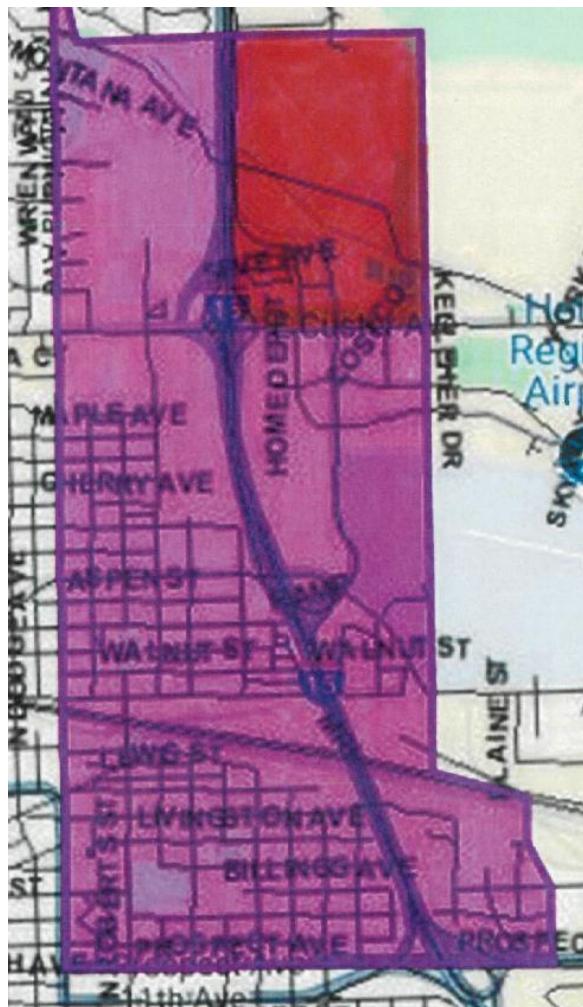
Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
3	North and East Mount Helena Addresses, South of Euclid	Currently attends Kessler, Central, CRA, HMS, CHS, HHS	Using Grant Street as the East/West Line. The East side attends HMS/HHS. The West side attends CRA/CHS.	East side goes to HMS/HHS and West side goes CRA/CHS	The dividing line is Grant Street. West to CRA/CHS, East to HMS/HHS.	Assists in reducing enrollment at CRA and CHS, growing the enrollment at HMS and HHS	Using Grant Street as a line, the West side goes to CRA/CHS and the East side goes to HMS/HHS. 48 students attends HMS. 64 students attend HHS.	Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027



Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
4	North of Lincoln Road and East of Ferry Drive	Currently attends, Jim Darcy, CRA, CHS	Change to Warren, HMS, HHS	Change Elementary School, Change MS and HS	k-5 students instead of attending Jim Darcy, these students attend Warren, HMS then HHS	Assists in reducing the enrollment at Jim Darcy, CRA and CHS. Increases the enrollment at Warren, HMS, HHS.	Using Ferry Drive North of Lincoln Road as a line. The West side attends Jim Darcy, CRA, CHS. The East side attends Warren (48 students) , HMS (12 students), HHS (32 students)	Begins with K enrollment for 2026-2027 for Warren, Begins with Transition to 6th Grade for HMS for 2026-2027



Boundary Adjustment	Area	Current	Change	Change Type	Further Description of Change	Why	How	When
5	North of Custer Ave, East of I-15 (South of Pleasant Valley Subdivision, this is the new housing North of Super 1 Foods)	Currently Bryant attendance Area, then HMS, HHS	Change to Rossiter, maintain HMS, HHS	Change to attend new Elementary, keep the original MS and HS which means its now a split	Change K-5 to attend Rossiter instead of Bryant, this was formerly a Bryant/HMS/HHS attendance area. These students attend Rossiter, then attend HMS/HHS. After grade 5, these students split from Rossiter and attend HMS/HHS.	Makes sense with location of this subdivision	3 students currently live in this neighborhood.	Begins with K enrollment for 2026-2027



Fall Enrollment Site Totals 10/6/2025	Adjustments occurring over time with these Boundary Adjustments	Estimated New Totals with these Boundary Adjustments over time
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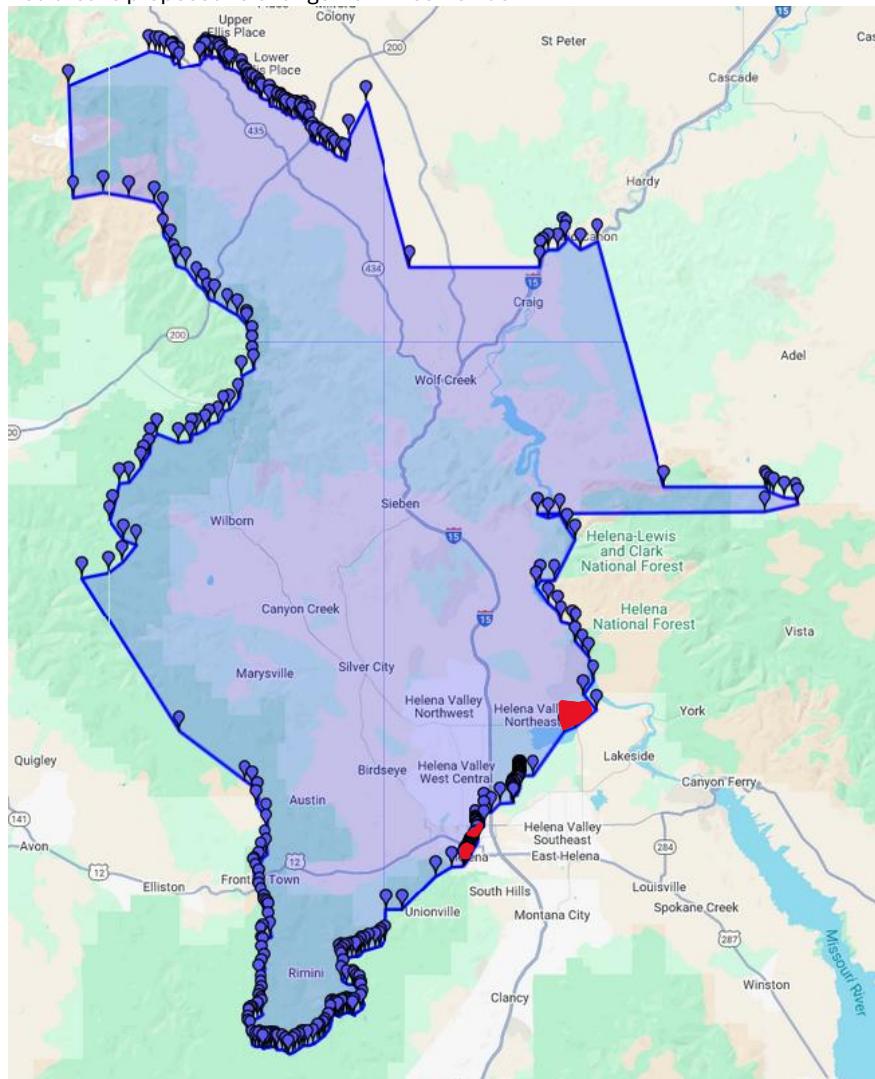
Broadwater	248	0	248
Bryant	253	-3	250
Central	406	0	406
Four Georgians	477	-70	407
Jefferson	252	0	252
Jim Darcy	458	-48	410
Kessler	282	0	282
Rossiter	358	73	431
Smith	299	0	299
Warren	262	48	310

C.R. Anderson	927	-90	837
Helena Middle	723	90	813

Capital	1369	-136	1233
Helena High	982	136	1118

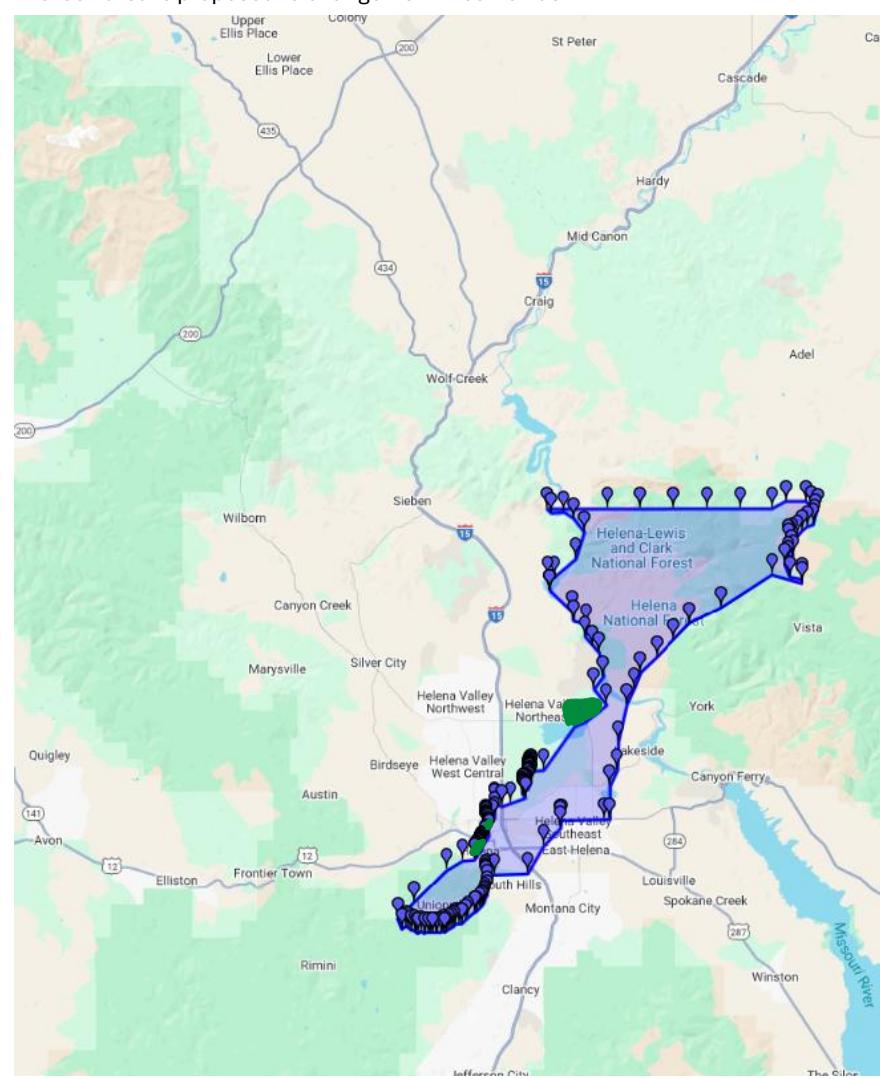
Proposed change to CHS (CRA) Boundary

Red area is proposed to change from West to East

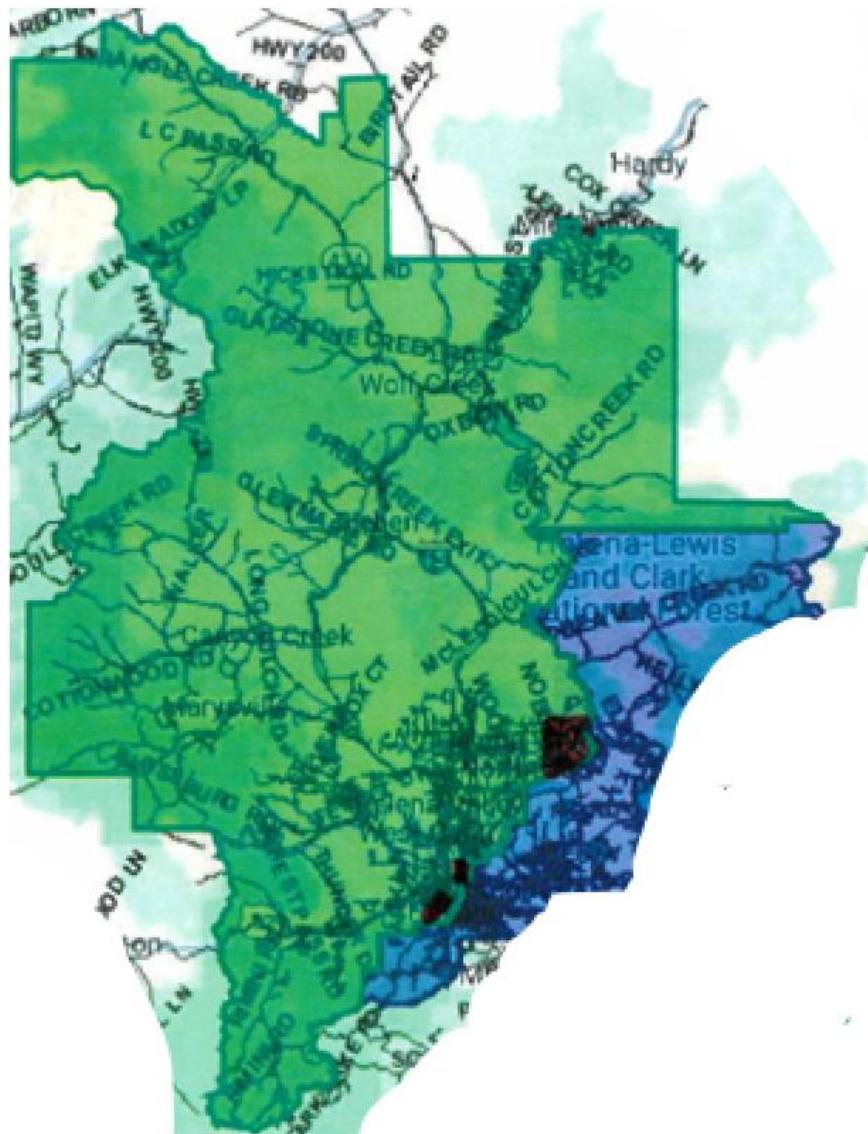


Proposed Change to HHS (HMS) Boundary

Green area is proposed to change from West to East



MAP of the CHS and HHS boundaries combined, the red portion is the new proposed area to move from West to East



The Why? The How? The What? and The When?

Changing the East/West Boundary Line will balance Middle School and High School enrollments.

The reason to make the shift is to ensure equal student educational opportunities remain an option of each high school and middle school. If we do not change, students on one side of town will have more class opportunities than on the other side of town. Also, if we travel our program staff to different sites, we lose time with them, when they could be working with students. Our budget challenges and human resource constraints require us to maximize the use of our resources to ensure equal educational opportunities exist for all students in our schools.

The East/West Line needs to shift from East to West to balance the High School and Middle School enrollments to maintain equal opportunities in those schools.

Gradual Transition: Begins for the 2026-2027 school year.

Students may choose to stay in the school they are currently in. This is a change in transportation routes.

Sibling Rule: Families with children may follow their sibling in school attendance areas if they choose, parents will need to transport or utilize a courtesy route.

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School Boundaries Timeline of Communication

**Friday Messages from Superintendent Weltz*

***Friday Message, November 4, 2022:** “The SMA team...will also include data such as demographic and enrollment projections, real estate assessments, boundaries, 21st Century technology needs and many other factors.”

***Friday Message, February 28, 2025:** “We’re looking at the district’s long-term future around factors such as district boundaries;...”

Press Release, also on Feb. 28, 2025: “The Master Facilities Plan ties into the launch of a broader, 10-year planning initiative that will look at the district’s future through a wide lens, considering topics such as school district boundaries...”

***Friday Message, March 7, 2025:** “I plan to make a slate of facilities recommendations to the Board of Trustees...These include: Reassessing district boundaries...”

***Friday Message, March 14, 2025:** “The district needs to redraw school boundaries to balance enrollment...”

- Recommendations to the Board of Trustees
 - Redraw boundaries for the elementary, middle school and high schools by the end of this school year.
 - Families will be offered flexibility during the transition period.

Board Work Session at HHS, March 25, 2025:

- New Business-Informational
 - Boundary Recommendations Update - Assistant Superintendent Josh McKay

***Friday Message, March 28, 2025:** “Board briefed on school boundary draft”

Board of Trustees Mtg., April 8, 2025:

- New Business
 - Boundary Recommendation – Ongoing work and communications

***Friday Message, April 18, 2025:** “New district FAQ answers questions on everything from budget to boundaries”

Board of Trustees Mtg., May 13, 2025:

- Items for Information
 - Boundary Recommendations Update/Presentation

Board of Trustees Mtg., October 14, 2025:

- Items for Information
 - In-District Boundary Change Review

***Wednesday Message, October 15, 2025:** “Resuming the Attendance Boundary Line Discussion...” with link to proposal, updates, and to submit comments/questions.

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VI.D.1. - D.10.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

Items For Information-Facilities Bond Projects Updates

Consent Action Items

Items For Action

Reports

Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

Adjournment

Item Title: **Reports**

- 1. Student Representatives Report**
- 2. Helena Education Association Report**
- 3. Facilities & Technology Committee Report**
- 4. Budget & Finance Committee Report**
- 5. Teaching & Learning Committee Report**
- 6. Policy Committee Report**
- 7. Health Benefits Committee Report**
- 8. Wellness Committee Report**
- 9. Montana School Boards Association Report**
- 10. Parent Council Visit Report**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VII.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

Recognitions

Superintendent's Report

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Adjournment

Item Title: **Upcoming Meetings**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item VIII.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

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Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

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Adjournment

Item Title: **Board/Superintendent Comments**

**HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Meeting**

Meeting Date: 1/13/2026

Item IX.

Call To Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Review of Agenda

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Superintendent's Report

General Public Comment

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Items For Action

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Upcoming Meetings

Board/Superintendent Comments

X Adjournment

Item Title: **Adjournment**