



2026 - 2027

Elementary Parent/Student Handbook

Working together to educate, engage, and empower every student.

Full Text of Handbook Located at:
<http://www.helenaschools.org/resources/parents/handbooks>

Note: Policies and procedures may change during the school year. Changes will be noted on the District website and in school newsletters. Changes in policy may supersede provisions found in this handbook. In case of conflict between Board Policy and any provisions in the student handbook, the provisions of Board Policy that were most recently adopted are to be followed. The District's Board Policies are available at: <http://helenaschools.org>.

WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Handbook Purpose

The Elementary Student & Family Handbook is organized in sections and intended to:

- Provide an overview of district programs, services, and expectations.
- Explain school procedures and daily operations.
- Summarize student rights and responsibilities.
- Promote positive partnerships between schools and families.
- Support a safe, respectful, and engaging learning environment for all students.

This handbook is designed to be a practical reference throughout the school year. Families are encouraged to keep it available and refer to it whenever questions arise. For questions not addressed in this handbook, families are encouraged to contact their student's school office.

Board Policy Notice

This handbook summarizes district procedures and selected Board policies that apply to elementary students. It is intended as a family-friendly guide and does not replace officially adopted Helena Public Schools Board Policies.

Because Board policies and administrative procedures may be revised during the school year, information contained in this handbook is subject to change. Any revisions approved by the Board of Trustees or issued through district administrative procedures supersede information contained in this handbook.

In the event of a conflict between this handbook and adopted Board Policy, the most recently adopted Board Policy shall govern. Current Board Policies are available on the website.

Nondiscrimination Statement

Helena Public Schools is committed to providing an educational environment where every student has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

The District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, marital status, military status, citizenship status, or any other protected classification in its educational programs, activities, or employment practices, consistent with applicable federal and Montana law.

Questions regarding nondiscrimination, Title IX, Section 504, or the Americans with Disabilities Act should be directed to the District's designated compliance coordinator.

Table of Contents

DISTRICT MISSION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

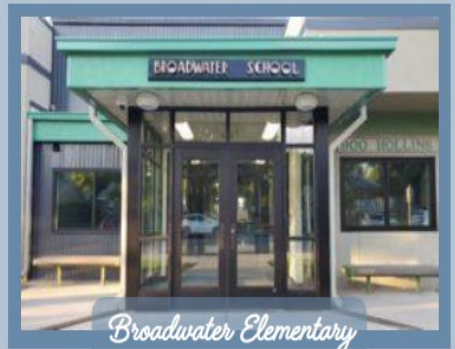
Letter from the Assistant Superintendent

STUDENT RIGHTS

Declaration of Student Rights	8
Equal Education Opportunities	8
Notice of Non-Discrimination	8
Right of Expression	9
Right to Education and the Right to Participation	9
Search and Seizure	9
Right to be Free from Sexual Harassment	10
Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment & Hazing Prevention	11
Right to Inspect and Review Records: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) / Notice for Directory Information / Protection of Pupil Rights Amendments (PPRA)	14
Surveys	17
Publications, Video, Internet Photo Agreement	18
Right to Participate in Programs without Discrimination	21
Right to Select Personal Appearance/Student Dress	22
Right to Suggest Ways to Improve Education	22
Rights in Regard to Suspension or Expulsion	22
Rights to Equal Educational Opportunities, Title IX-Section 504-American's With Disabilities Act	24
Uniform Grievance Policy	27

GENERAL SCHOOL RULES & INFORMATION

Accident Prevention	29
Alternative Assignment Request	30
Annual Asbestos Notification	30
Appearance and Dress	31
Attendance: Absences, Tardies and Truancy	31
Behavior Expectations of Students	32
Behavior Conduct Definitions	34
Bicycles	35
Birthday/Party Invitations	35
Birthday/Party Treats	35
Birthday/Party Latex Balloons	35
Book Challenge	35
Breakfast and Lunch Program	36
Cancellation of School / Bus Delays of Cancellations	38
Cell Phones, Smart Watches, Earbuds, Headphones of Any Type	39
Change of Address (including email address)	39
Children of Military Families	39
Communication with Families	39
Crosswalks and Sidewalks	41
Emergency/Safety Drills	41
Emergency Information	42
Family Night	42
Field Trips	42
First Aid	44
Foster Care	44



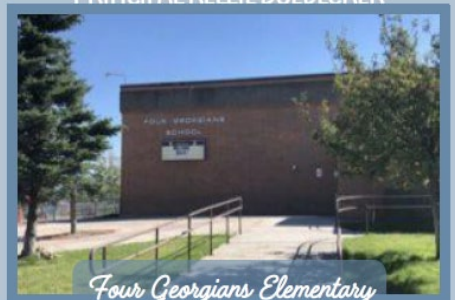
Broadwater Elementary
PRINCIPAL KELLY CONNOLLY



Bryant Elementary
PRINCIPAL TIA WILKINS



Central Elementary
PRINCIPAL KELLIE BOEDECKER



Four Georgians Elementary
PRINCIPAL BRITTANY RUTTER



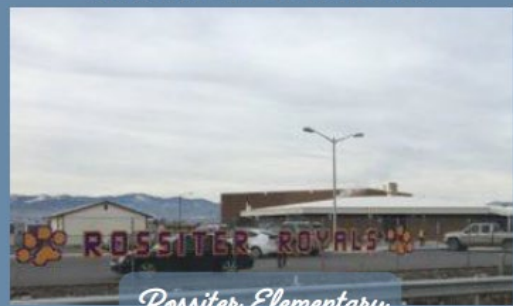
Jefferson Elementary
PRINCIPAL BRICE BURTON



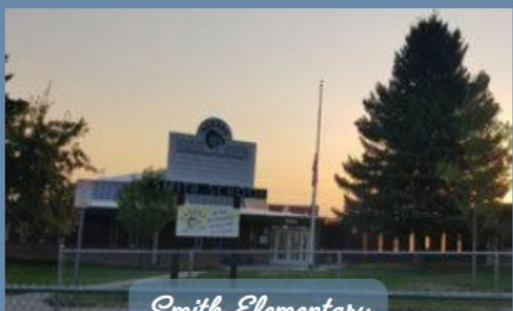
Jim Darcy Elementary
PRINCIPAL JILL NYMAN



Kessler Elementary
PRINCIPAL RILEY THATCHER



Rossiter Elementary
PRINCIPAL ERICKA HUTTON-PARKER



Smith Elementary
PRINCIPAL SARAH SIMPSON



Warren Elementary
PRINCIPAL ABBY KUHLE

GPS and Audio Child Tracking / Monitoring Systems	44
Health Services & Immunizations	44
Homeless Students	49
Lost & Found	50
Montana Department of Justice Violent & Sexual Offenders Registry	50
Out of District Student Attendance Procedures	50
Outdoor Recess	51
Parent Rights	52
Parent Volunteers	53
Participation in Club or Activity	54
Playground Safety	54
Policy Dealing with School Overcrowding	56
Public Health Emergency	57
Recording Meetings – Not Allowed	57
Release of Students from School	58
Religious Practices	59
Saturday School	59
School Age Child Care Program Information (SACC)	59
School Bus Transportation/District Bus Service	60
School Safety	64
Service Animals	64
Sexual Harassment	64
Student Discipline	65
Student Insurance	65
Threat Assessment Protocol	66
Visitor Procedure	66
Videotaping of Students	67
Weapons	67
<u>ACADEMIC PROGRAM</u>	
Curriculum and Instruction	68
Grading	68
Advanced Services	69
Human Sexuality Instruction / Identity Instruction	69
Kindergarten Entry Requirements	70
Libraries	71
Multi-Linguistic Learners	71
Montessori Charter School	72
Special Education Services	73
Student Assessment	75
Student Support: Multi-Disciplinary Team Model	76
Title 1	77
Technology Use Agreement for 2026-2027	78
2026-2027 School Year Calendar	81
Helena Public Schools Principals	82
2026-2027 HPS Parent Permission Form	83
Parent Portal: Opt Out	84
Authorization to Carry & Administer	86
Asthma Medication	86
Helena Public Schools Bell Schedule	88

VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Helena Public Schools foster dynamic educational experiences that prepare all students for life.

Mission Statement

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 lifelong learner.

This mission will be supported through the wise use of resources to meet students' needs, regardless of interests and talents. Students, families, educators, and the community are committed to sharing the responsibility for creating a student-centered educational community that acknowledges learning as a life-long process.

Guiding Principles

- ◆ Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
- ◆ Each student learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
- ◆ Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
- ◆ Each student has access to personalized learning and to qualified, caring adults.
- ◆ Each graduate is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment.

Board of Trustees

School Board Meetings

Regular monthly meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. The regular monthly meetings are generally held at the Lincoln Center in the Board Meeting room.

Special meetings are called through regularly adopted procedure with legal action restricted to those items listed in the notice of the meetings.

Executive Sessions are the only type of Board meetings not open to the public. These sessions are confined to consideration of matters involving or affecting national or state security, disciplining, hearing of complaints against an employee, etc.

Getting an Item Placed on the School Board Agenda

In order for the Board to properly consider any matter you may bring before it, the Superintendent or Chairman should be notified in writing not later than the Wednesday preceding the Tuesday meeting date. The request to be on the agenda should include the topic and details of the problem to be resolved.

Role of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees Represents the Community in:

- Establishing a sound philosophy for all educational programs and activities.
- Adopting policies for operation of the school program.
- Providing leadership for educational progress through logical goals and objectives.
- Implementing adequate methods of evaluation of existing programs.
- Developing sound financial plans consistent with the school needs and community resources.

Determining, with the community, the major directions and purposes of public education is a responsibility of the local Board of Trustees assisted by the personnel of Helena School District.

Board of Trustees – Elected Board Members

Jennifer Walsh (Chair)	Kay Satre (Vice-Chair)
Janet Armstrong.....	Lisa Coordingly
Siobahn Hathhorn.....	Keller Higby
Jenny Murnane-Butcher.....	Keith Meyer

High School Student Representatives

Ella McCullough – Capital High School

Tyson Schulte – Helena High School

To Our Partners in Learning,

At Helena Public Schools, each classroom is more than just a place where students learn; it is a space where every child is known, valued, and encouraged to grow as an individual and as a critical member of a greater learning community.

Each day, our amazing school teams work with intention to provide a safe, caring environment where students can build confidence, curiosity, and strong academic skills.

As a district leader, a parent of children who attend our district, and the spouse of a Helena teacher, I have the unique privilege of seeing our district through multiple perspectives. I continue to be deeply grateful for our teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and support staff, and so proud of all we accomplish together. Our collective commitment to students is evident in the care we show, the encouragement we give, and the dedication we bring to helping every child succeed.



We know that strong partnerships between home and school make all the difference. We believe in every child's ability to learn and grow, and we are committed to supporting each student while maintaining high expectations. I encourage you to stay connected by reaching out to your child's teacher or principal whenever you have questions, ideas, or concerns. Even consider becoming a part of the team by volunteering, serving on your school's PTO/PTC, and attending school family engagement events. Together, we can ensure your child feels safe, supported, and ready to learn each day.

We recognize the trust you place in us when you send your child to school; we do not take that responsibility lightly. Along with academic learning, we strive to help students develop the skills and character they need to succeed in their future—curiosity, resilience, and compassion.

Thank you for sharing your children with us. It is truly a privilege to be part of their educational journey!

With respect and commitment,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Justine Alberts".

Justine Alberts, Ed.D.

PreK-5 Assistant Superintendent & Curriculum

STUDENT RIGHTS

Declaration of Student Rights

Helena School District has high academic expectations for all students. The District is committed to providing all students an excellent, well-rounded educational program. With this commitment in mind, the District sets forth the following: all students are provided the opportunity to obtain a basic body of understandings, attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for living in a democracy and the world community. The opportunity for the development of intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and aesthetic appreciation shall be provided.

These rights and responsibilities provide a uniform standard of conduct that emphasizes maintaining an atmosphere where orderly learning is possible and encouraged. It defines student rights, student responsibilities, disciplinary procedures, and actions to be taken.

Equal Educational Opportunities

Equal educational and extracurricular opportunities shall be available for all students without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, sex, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ancestry, marital status, military status, citizenship status, culture, social origin or condition, political affiliation, mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic and other legally protected categories.

[See Board Policy 3000 Equal Educational Opportunities](#)

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The Helena School District strives to comply with all federal and state rules and regulations. The Helena Public Schools do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

This holds true for all students who are interested in participating in education programs and/or extracurricular school activities. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the school district's Title IX officer and/or Section 504/ADA Coordinators who have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies:

Title IX Coordinator
Keri Mizell – Human Resources Director
1325 Poplar Street
Helena, MT 59601
406.324.2010
kmizell@helenaschools.org

District 504 Coordinator
Justine Alberts – Assistant Superintendent
1325 Poplar Street
Helena, MT 59601

406.324.2000

jalberts@helenaschools.org

Additionally, you can contact the principal at your child's school. For further information on notice of nondiscrimination, visit <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm> for the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481, and inquiries may also be directed to the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. **See: Board Policy 3000 Equal Educational Opportunities**

Right of Expression

Students enjoy the right of expression as provided by state and federal law. The student may not, by speech or conduct, materially disrupt class work or educational programs, cause substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others, or substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline, education programs or other activities in the operation of the school or conduct themselves in a manner inconsistent with the school's and district's educational mission.

The use of vulgar, offensive, lewd or indecent speech or conduct is prohibited in the District.

Right to Education and the Right to Participation

A student is the center of the school and the purpose for which it is operated and maintained. Students have the inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect. A student has the right to a non-disruptive education as provided by law and school board policies. Correspondingly, the student has a responsibility not to deny any other student the right to an education.

Search and Seizure

School authorities maintain supervision, control, and jurisdiction of students who participate in or attend any school activity on or off School District premises. The building principal or designee is authorized to search a student, locker, cell phones or other electronic devices, personal property, (e.g. wallets, purses, pockets, book bags) while on or off school premises, at a school sponsored activity, or while on school transportation in transit to and from a District activity or sponsored activity, or while transit on a school bus or other transportation authorized by the District.

A search may be conducted provided the school authority has reasonable suspicion as to a violation of law, school policy or school rules. School authorities shall confiscate any illegal, unauthorized or contraband items discovered during such inspections. School authorities shall determine appropriate action, including notifying parents, notifying law enforcement authorities, and commencing disciplinary proceedings.

Reasonable suspicion means there are reasonable factual grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence the student has violated or is violating local, state or federal law or a rule of the District.

Evidence produced by a search may be used in disciplinary proceedings against the student.

[See: Board Policy 3040 Search and Seizure](#)

Right to Be Free from Sexual Harassment

A student has the right to attend and participate in school activities in an environment free from sexual harassment. The District does not tolerate sexual harassment in any form.

Sexual Harassment Prevention

The policy of the Board of Trustees of Helena Public Schools is to provide students with a school environment free from sexual harassment. Schools will not tolerate sexual harassment in any form.

"Sexual Harassment" means: a) sex discrimination within the meaning of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Montana Human Rights Act; b) unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature; or when conduct of a sexual nature creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive school environment. An intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment includes sexually-oriented jokes, innuendoes, obscenities, pictures or any action with a sexual connotation that makes a student feel uncomfortable in the school environment or that affects the school environment, whether or not sexual in connotation, that is directed toward a student based on the student's sex; and c) conduct of a sexual nature that is prohibited according to Montana State Law.

Students who believe they are being subjected to sexual harassment by anyone connected with Helena Public Schools should, and are encouraged to, report the matter promptly to their teacher, counselor, or principal, or to the Helena Public Schools' EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) officer at 324-2010.

Sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. Quid pro quo: An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or
3. "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), , or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

A determination of responsibility resulting from a formal complaint against a student for engaging in sexual harassment will result in appropriate disciplinary action, according to the nature of the offense.

Complaints may be submitted via the District's Title IX Grievance Procedure.

[See: Board Policy 3005 Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment, Hazing Prevention and Reporting Policy](#)

Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment & Hazing Prevention and Reporting

All students have the right to learn in an environment free from bullying, intimidation, harassment, and hazing. These behaviors, including cyberbullying and harassment through electronic communication, are prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Students who experience or witness bullying, intimidation, harassment, or hazing should report the concern promptly to a teacher, administrator, counselor, or another trusted school employee. Students are not required to confront the person engaging in the behavior before making a report. School employees will respond to reports in accordance with Board Policy 3005.

Bullying does not include conduct determined, following an investigation, to be the reasonable and necessary use of physical force in self-defense or defense of another person in response to a physical attack.

The Board is committed to providing students with a safe and civil school environment free from harassment, intimidation, and bullying. The District will not tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying in any form at school, school-related events (including off-campus events), school-sponsored activities, school buses, or any event related to school business. Bullying, harassment, intimidation or hazing by students, staff or third parties is strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: inciting, aiding, encouraging, coercing or directing others to commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Bullying does not include conduct determined, following an investigation, to be the reasonable and necessary use of physical force used in self-defense or defense of another person in response to a physical attack.

The District expressly prohibits any form of intimidation, hazing, bullying or harassment including but not limited to the following: any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, creed, national origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, citizenship status, culture, social origin or condition, marital status, military status, political affiliation or a mental, physical or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic and other legally protected categories.

Intimidation, bullying and harassment include acts that a reasonable person knew or should have known, under the circumstances the gesture or written or physical act (a) will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property; or (b) will place a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property; or (3) has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

Definitions:

1. "Third parties" include but are not limited to coaches, school volunteers, parents, school

visitors, service contractors or others engaged in District business, such as employees of businesses or organizations participating in cooperative work programs with the District, and others not directly subject to District control at inter-district and intra-District athletic competitions or other school events.

2. “Hazing” includes but is not limited to any act that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or as a condition or precondition of attaining membership in or affiliation with any District sponsored activity or grade-level attainment, including but not limited to forced consumption of any drink, alcoholic beverage, drug, or controlled substance, forced exposure to the elements, forced prolonged exclusion from social contact, sleep deprivation, or any other forced activity that could adversely affect the mental or physical health or safety of a student; requires, encourages, authorizes or permits another to be subject to wearing or carrying any obscene or physically burdensome article, assignment of pranks to be performed, or other such activities intended to degrade or humiliate.

3. “Bullying” means any harassment, intimidation, hazing, or threatening, insulting, or demeaning gesture or physical contact, including any intentional written, verbal, or electronic communication (cyberbullying) or threat directed against a student that is persistent, severe, or repeated, and that substantially interferes with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, that take place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, at any official school bus stop, or anywhere conduct may be reasonable be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a student or staff member or an interference with school purposes or an educational function, that has the effect of:

- a. Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property;
- b. Knowingly placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or damage to the student’s property;
- c. Creating a hostile educational environment; or
- d. Substantially and materially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

4. “Electronic communication device” means any mode of electronic communication, including but not limited to computers, cell phones, the internet, or any other technological communication innovation.

Sexual Harassment Prohibited

Sexual harassment and other sex-based discrimination are prohibited. Reports of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment under Title IX will be referred to the District’s Title IX Coordinator and addressed under the applicable Title IX grievance procedure. See “Nondiscrimination and Complaint Procedures.

Reporting

Students who believe they are victims of sexual harassment are encouraged to discuss the matter, including the formal complaint process, with the Title IX Coordinator. Students who believe they are victims of harassment based upon a disability are encouraged to report the matter to the Section 504 Coordinator or Principal. Students may choose to report to a person of

the student's same sex if alleging a violation of Title IX. Complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate.

Any adult school employee, adult volunteer, district contractor or agent who witnesses, overhears or receives a report, formal or informal, written or oral, of bullying, harassment, or intimidation shall report it in accordance with procedures developed under this policy. Any adult school employee who has notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment shall make a report to the District's identified Title IX Coordinators. All other complaints are handled through the District's Uniform Grievance Procedure.

Formal complaints procedures:

- Title IX sexual harassment → Title IX Grievance Procedure
- Disability discrimination or harassment → Section 504/ADA Grievance Procedure
- Other bullying, discrimination, or harassment → Uniform Grievance Procedure

The Title IX Coordinator, Section 504 Coordinator [and ADA if applicable], and/or administrator are responsible for taking the following actions in conformance with the applicable grievance procedure:

1. Taking prompt action to investigate/report complaints of harassment, intimidation and bullying.
2. Promptly notifying the complainants and respondents and their parents/guardians regarding the outcome;
3. Taking supportive or remedial measures to ensure continued access to the District's programs or activities while the grievance process is pending; and
4. Taking disciplinary action as appropriate and any other actions appropriate to address the harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

In the event that a staff member or administrator knows or reasonably believes that the alleged behavior constitutes criminal activity or child abuse or neglect, the staff member or administrator shall report such activity to law enforcement and/or the Department of Public Health and Human Services. Nothing herein prohibits other individuals from reporting complaints to law enforcement. If it is determined that the alleged harassment, intimidation, or bullying did not occur at school or school-related activity or does not materially or substantially disrupt the orderly operation of the District, an administrator shall refer the matter, as appropriate, to other persons or entities with appropriate jurisdiction, including but not limited to law enforcement or the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

All staff are obligated to address bullying, harassment, hazing and intimidation as described in [Board Policy 5015](#), administrative procedures and / or staff and student handbooks.

Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies

A person alleging violation of any form of harassment, intimidation, hazing, or threatening, insulting, or demeaning gesture or physical contact, including any intentional written, verbal, or electronic communication, as stated above, may seek redress under any available law, either civil

or criminal, after exhausting all administrative remedies.

Responsibilities

The District Administration shall be responsible for ensuring that notice of this policy is provided to staff and third parties and for the development of administrative regulations, including reporting and investigative procedures, as needed.

Consequences

Students whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion. Staff whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. Third parties whose behavior is found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to appropriate sanctions as determined and imposed by the District Administrator or the Board. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

Retaliation and Reprisal

Retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports or is thought to have reported a violation, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy, whether or not a complaint is substantiated. False charges shall also be regarded as a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions.

[See: Board Policy 3005 Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment & Hazing Prevention and Reporting Policy](#)

Right to Inspect and Review Records: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) / Notice for Directory Information / Protection of Pupil Rights Amendments (PPRA)

Definition: Person is any student, parent, legal guardian, or person with parental authority.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights regarding the student's education records.

Parents receive annual notice of their FERPA rights in the handbooks, as noted below. These rights are:

1. Right to Inspect and Review Education Records:

Parents and eligible students have the right to inspect and review the students' education records within forty-five (45) days of the day the District receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit a written request to the school principal identifying the records they wish to inspect. The appropriate school official will arrange access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

By law, both parents, whether married, separated, or divorced, have access to the records of a student under age 18 unless a court order provides otherwise. A parent whose rights have been

legally terminated may be denied access if the District receives a copy of the court order terminating those rights.

The right to inspect and review education records does not extend to all records. Records not considered education records, including teachers' personal notes maintained solely for their own use, records related to former students, and records maintained by law enforcement personnel for purposes other than school discipline, are not subject to inspection. Access will also not be granted to confidential letters and recommendations regarding admission to a postsecondary institution, employment, or awards if the student has properly waived the right to inspect those records.

2. Right to Request Amendment of Education Records:

The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who want the school to amend a record should write to the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want to change, and explain why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. Right to Consent to Disclosures of Personally Identifiable Information:

Parents and eligible students have the right to provide written consent before the District discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from a student's education records, except when FERPA permits disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the school who performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

4. Right to File a Complaint:

The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Helena Public Schools to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Student Privacy Policy Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

5. Disclosures Permitted Without Consent:

Listed below are disclosures that elementary and secondary schools may make without consent:

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in 34 C.F.R. 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student.

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in §99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(2) are met. (§99.31(a)(1))
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of §99.34. (§99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency in the parent or eligible student's State (SEA). Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State- supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf. (§§99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has

received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§99.31(a)(4))

- To state and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to §99.38. (§99.31(a)(5))
- The District may disclose student records or information to the youth court and law enforcement authorities, pertaining to violations of the Montana Youth Court Act or criminal laws by the student.
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. (§99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§99.31(a)(7))
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§99.31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. (§99.31(a)(9))
- To caseworkers or other Child Protective Services representatives when DPHHS/CPS is legally responsible for the care and protection of the student. 20 U.S.C. §1232g(b)(1)(L).
- The District may disclose student records in a court proceeding where the parent is a party to an action involving child abuse or neglect or dependency matters without parental consent or notification if ordered to make this disclosure.
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to §99.36. (§99.31(a)(10))
- Information the school has designated as "directory information" under §99.37. (§99.31(a)(11))

See: Board Policy 3080 Maintenance of Student Records.

Surveys

Surveys and other instruments used to collect information from students must advance or relate to the District's educational objectives. These requirements apply regardless of whether the student can be identified, who created the survey, or how the survey is administered.

See: Board Policy 2020, Student and Family Privacy Rights

Parent Inspection Rights

Parents and guardians may request to inspect a survey created by a third party before it is administered or distributed to students. The District will make the survey available within a reasonable time after receiving the request.

Parents and guardians may also inspect, within a reasonable time, any survey requesting personal information from students. A parent or guardian may refuse to allow their child to participate in such a survey. A student will not be penalized when a parent or guardian exercises this right.

Surveys Requesting Personal Information

The District will not require a student to submit a survey requesting personal information without parent or guardian consent. When a survey requesting personal information is not required by the District, parents and guardians will receive notice and an opportunity to opt their child out of participation.

Personal information protected under this policy includes information concerning:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent or guardian.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
- Sexual behavior or attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship.
- Legally recognized privileged relationships, including relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent or guardian.
- Income, except when required by law to determine eligibility for a program or financial assistance.

The District will not disclose the identity of a student who completes a survey containing one or more of these categories, except as permitted or required by law and District policy.

Notice and Opt-Out Procedures

The District will notify parents and guardians annually of their rights under Board Policy 2020. The notice will explain:

- How to inspect a survey or related material.
- How to provide consent when consent is required.
- How to opt a student out of an applicable survey or activity.
- The approximate dates of surveys requesting personal information when those dates are known.
- How to obtain a copy of Board Policy 2020.

These rights transfer to the student when the student turns 18 or becomes an emancipated minor.

[See: Board Policy 2020, Student and Family Privacy Rights](#)

Privacy Matters – Publications, Photographs, Video, Internet Photos and Social Media

The Helena School District respects the privacy of all students and recognizes that parents/guardians have the right to decide whether their child's photograph, video, or likeness may be used in District publications, websites, social media, news media, and other public relations or promotional activities.

Parents/guardians may annually opt out of granting permission for the District to use or share their child's photograph, video, name, or likeness. The District will honor all submitted opt-out requests and will not knowingly include those students in District-sponsored publications, media releases, websites, social media posts, or promotional materials.

Despite the District's efforts to protect student privacy, it is not possible to fully control the use of

photographs or videos taken by others. School events that are open to parents, families, or the public may be photographed or recorded by attendees using personal devices. These images or recordings may be shared privately or through social media, websites, or other public platforms without the District's knowledge or control.

Examples of events where personal photography or recording may occur include, but are not limited to:

- Public performances and concerts
- Dress rehearsals
- Music and fine arts events
- Athletic practices open to the public
- Athletic competitions and sporting events
- Assemblies open to families or the public
- Field trips and other school-sponsored activities

The District cannot prevent or restrict the actions of individuals who attend these events and choose to photograph, record, or share images or videos.

Parents/guardians who do **not** want their child included in District publications, media coverage, websites, social media, or public relations activities must complete the applicable permission and release form available through the District's student information system, the school's front office, the District website, the permission form on page XXX of the Handbook, or as otherwise provided by the District each school year.

[See: Board Policy 2020, Student and Family Privacy Rights](#)

Notice for Directory Information

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Helena Public Schools, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Helena Public Schools may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the District to the contrary in accordance with District procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the Helena Public Schools to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A playbill, showing your student's role in a dramaproduction;
- The annual yearbook;
- Honor roll or other recognition lists;
- Student directories;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets, such as for wrestling, showing weight and height of teammates.

Directory information, which is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs)

receiving assistance under the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with the following information – names, addresses and telephone listings – unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student’s information disclosed without their prior written consent. ¹

If you do not want the Helena Public Schools to disclose directory information from your child’s education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the District in writing by the third Friday in November or indicate “no” on the approval form on page 83. Helena Public Schools have designated the following information as directory information:

- Student’s name
- Telephone listing
- Photograph
- Dates of attendance
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Address
- Electronic mail address
- Date of birth
- Grade level

Notification of Rights Under the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

PPRA affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- *Consent before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas (“protected information survey”) if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED)*
 1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
 2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
 3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
 4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
 5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
 6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
 7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
 8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of –
 1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
 2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
 3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.
- Inspect, upon request and before administration or use –
 1. Protected information surveys of students;
 2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and

3. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

Helena Public Schools have developed and adopted policies regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes.

Helena Public Schools will directly notify parents via the District website of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. Helena Public Schools will also directly notify, such as through U.S. Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation of the specific activity or survey. Helena Public Schools will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys. Following is a list of the specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution.
- Administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by ED.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20202

[See: Board Policy 2020 Student and Family Privacy Rights](#)

Right to Participate in Programs without Discrimination

A student shall not be excluded, expelled, limited or otherwise discriminated against in the terms, conditions, benefits or privileges of the District educational program or activity, because of race, creed, religion, gender, marital status, color, age, physical or mental handicap or disability, or national origin unless based upon lawful grounds, including adopted policies of the Helena Board of Trustees.

A student may not be denied participation in District education programs or any sponsored activity except for such reasons as are provided in the adopted policies and procedures of the

District; student code, federal, state and county associations or governmental entities; or guidelines for activities with tryouts or organizations that sponsor activities, such as the Montana High School Association.

See: Board Policy 3000 Equal Educational Opportunities

Right to Select Personal Appearance / Student Dress

A student and his/her parent or legal guardian determine a student's pattern of personal appearance. Personal appearance includes dress, grooming and personal hygiene. The personal appearance of a student shall be respected provided it does not interfere with the health and safety of the student or others and does not materially or substantially disrupt the education process. Clothing advertising tobacco, alcohol, drugs, violence or lewd, vulgar or obscene displays may not be worn in school because school authorities find such to be materially or substantially disruptive to the education process and because such apparel may be offensive to others and does not comport with a positive educational atmosphere or is inconsistent with the school's basic educational mission.

General appearance guidelines include but are not limited to the following:

- Hair - Any hairstyle is permitted so long as it is kept neat, clean and controlled.
- Foot Apparel - For sanitary reasons shoes or sandals are to be worn. Footwear that converts into rolling shoes is considered hazardous and is not allowed.
- Girls' and Boys' Apparel - Any style of clothing is allowed when worn with sensible discretion.
- All students are required to be neat and clean in appearance.
- Students shall not wear clothing or jewelry that advertises/reference tobacco, alcohol, drugs, gangs or other harmful substances.
- Items worn on the head that are materially disruptive to the education process or create visual and/or hearing impairment for the student or other students may not be worn in school.
- Students shall not wear costumes such as ears, tails, flags, non-medical masks, etc. Exceptions may be made for Halloween or school theatre productions.

Right to Suggest Ways to Improve Education

A student has the right to contribute information that will be considered when decisions are made that affect the quality and content of their education. The District encourages and expects all students to take responsibility for their education, including preparing for, and participating in, class and school activities, taking full advantage of learning services provided, helping design their educational goals, and conducting themselves respectfully and appropriately.

Rights in Regard to Suspension or Expulsion

The following procedure is available to all students who are subject to suspension or expulsion:

Basic Rights:

- A student shall be informed of the nature of the violation for which he or she is charged, the evidence of that violation and the potential maximum corrective disciplinary action.
- A student shall have the right to explain his/her actions.
- A student has the right to appeal the decision of the principal to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

Suspension Procedure

The following procedural rules shall apply to a student charged with a violation for which maximum disciplinary action is in-school or out-of-school suspension:

- The principal or the principal's designee shall have the authority to suspend a student.
- Prior to suspension, the student shall be informed of the charges.
- Except in the case of an emergency, the student will be allowed to respond to the allegations before the administrator issues a decision regarding the suspension.
- Inform the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the student's suspension prior to releasing the student. Once informed parents must come to the school and pick up their student. A suspended student will remain in the office under adult supervision until the parent or guardian arrives & signs the child out for the length of the suspension.

Expulsion Procedure

The following procedural rules shall apply to a student charged with a violation whose maximum disciplinary action imposed is expulsion.

The building principal may recommend the expulsion of a student to the District Superintendent. The principal shall provide the District Superintendent, parent, legal guardian or person with parental authority written notification that will include the following:

- The alleged violation(s) committed by the student.
- Facts and circumstances setting forth the misconduct upon which the recommendation is based.
- Recommendation outlining whether the student should be granted credit for work completed in the present semester.
- Recommended length of expulsion.

Upon completion of the principal's written recommendation, the District Superintendent or his/her designee shall:

- Conduct a meeting to determine whether the student shall be reinstated into the Helena Public Schools, if requested by the parent, legal guardian, or person with parental authority. If the student is not reinstated after the meeting with the principal and the District Superintendent or Superintendent's designee, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the student and parent or legal guardian in writing:
- that the District Superintendent and principal shall recommend expulsion to the Board of Trustees;
- of the student's right to request a hearing of the charges before the Board of Trustees, to present a defense to the charges; to be represented by another person; to confront, examine and cross-examine witness(es); and to present information against the expulsion recommendation;

- of the maximum length of the expulsion being recommended;
- the time, date and place of a hearing before the Board of Trustees, who shall consider the recommendation for expulsion.

Board of Trustees Hearing

Only the Board may expel a student from school. After the administration has investigated the alleged misconduct, and made the decision to recommend an expulsion of the student to the Board, a Board Meeting shall be scheduled and the administration shall send a written notice to the student and the parent outlining the following:

- the intent to recommend an expulsion;
- the specific charges against the student;
- what rule or regulation was broken;
- the nature of the evidence supporting the charges;
- the date, time and place where the Board Meeting will be held;
- a copy of the procedure that will be followed by the Board;
- a reminder of the rights the student and parents have, including the right to counsel, the right to cross examine witnesses, and the right to present witnesses.

The hearing may be rescheduled by the parent by submitting a request to the Superintendent showing good cause at least 3 school days prior to the scheduled date of the hearing. The Superintendent shall determine if the request shows good cause.

After the hearing, the Board of Trustees shall decide whether to accept, reject, or modify the recommendation and direct the District Superintendent to inform the student, parent, legal guardian, or person with parental authority of such action.

Suspension and Expulsion as it Relates to District Provided Transportation Services

Suspension or expulsion from school may also result in suspension from district-sponsored transportation services.

It is important to note that students may also be suspended or expelled from riding any district-sponsored transportation services for conduct violations occurring on district school buses even if they are still being allowed to attend school.

[See: Board Policy 3055 Student Due Process Rights and Policy 3050 Student Discipline](#)

Rights to Equal Educational Opportunities, Title IX-Section 504-American's With Disabilities Act

Equal Educational Opportunities

Equal educational and extracurricular opportunities shall be available for all students without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religious beliefs, physical and mental handicap, or disability, or actual or potential marital or parental status. The District will not knowingly enter into agreements with any entity or any individual that discriminates against students on the basis of sex or any other protected status. Any student may file a discrimination grievance by using the Uniform Grievance Procedure.

No student shall, on the basis of sex, be denied equal access to programs, activities, services, or benefits or be limited in the exercise of any right, privilege, advantage, or denied equal access to educational and extracurricular programs and activities. Any student may file a sex equity complaint by using the Uniform Grievance Procedure.

Inquiries regarding discrimination of any kind should be directed to the District's Title IX Coordinator, who shall provide information and, if necessary, direct the individual to the Uniform Grievance Procedure. The District will annually publish notice of these rights to students and parents.

Title IX Grievance Procedures

The Helena School District has adopted internal grievance procedures providing for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 Act (Title IX). Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities operated by public school districts. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs and activities.

All references to sex discrimination throughout these procedures include gender-based harassment and sexual harassment. Gender-based harassment may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping, even if those acts do not involve conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can occur whenever an individual makes sexual advances, requests sexual favors, and engages in other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual or sex-based nature, imposed on the basis of sex, that:

In the case of a student, denies or limits the provision of educational aid, benefits, services, or treatment; or that makes such conduct a condition of a student's academic status; or in the case of an employee denies or limits the employment, recruitment, consideration, or selection or treatment, or that makes such conduct a condition of the employee's employment status; OR

Has the purpose or effect of:

- substantially interfering with a student's educational environment or employee's work environment;
- creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment;
- depriving a student of educational aid, benefits, services, or treatment; or depriving an employee of the benefits of or deprives that employee of employment opportunities; or
- making submission to or rejection of such conduct the basis for academic decisions affecting a student or employment decisions affecting an employee.

Sexual harassment includes sexual violence. Sexual violence refers to physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to the victim's use of drugs or alcohol or is unable to give consent due to an intellectual or other disability. Sexually violent acts include rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion.

District Title IX Coordinator

Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator:

Human Resources Director

Keri Mizell

1325 Poplar St.

Helena, MT 59601

406.324.2010

Inquiries may also be referred to the Office of Civil Rights, United States Department of Education.

Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

It is the intent of the District to ensure that students who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services.

For those students who need or are believed to need special instruction and/or related services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the District has established and implemented a system of procedural safeguards. Safeguards include a students' identification, evaluation, and educational placement.

This system includes notice, an opportunity for the student's parent or legal guardian to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with opportunity for participation by the student's parent or legal guardian, and a review process.

School District No. 1 has appointed an officer to assist any employee, student, parent, or legal guardian with a Section 504/ADA concern. Inquiries concerning Section 504/ADA may be referred to the Central Administration Office, 1325 Poplar Street, Helena, Montana, 59601, or may be made by calling 1- 406- 324-2010.

Procedures have been established for addressing any questions or concerns and for resolving any conflicts relating to Title IX/Section 504/ ADA that may be raised by an employee, student, parent, or legal guardian in School District No. 1. A copy of those procedures may be obtained from building Principals or the Central Administration Office.

See: Board Policy 2050 – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).

Complaints by Students and Parents

Student or parent questions, complaints, or concerns can often be resolved through a telephone call, email, or conference with the teacher or staff member most directly involved. When a concern cannot be resolved informally, the District provides procedures for submitting and resolving complaints.

The District's Uniform Complaint Procedure generally applies when a student or parent believes that the Board, a District employee, or a District agent has violated the individual's rights under state or federal law or Board policy. Complaints should be submitted to the appropriate building administrator or supervisor. Complaints involving a building administrator should be submitted

to the appropriate Assistant Superintendent. Complaints involving a District-level administrator should be submitted to the Superintendent. Complaints involving the Superintendent or District Clerk should be submitted to the Board of Trustees.

Some complaints are governed by separate procedures:

- Complaints alleging sexual harassment under Title IX must be addressed through the District's Title IX Grievance Procedure.
- Complaints alleging disability discrimination or harassment must be addressed through the District's Section 504/ADA Grievance Procedure.
- Challenges to books, library resources, or other educational materials must follow the District's procedure for challenged educational materials.
- Complaints governed by another procedure required under state or federal law must follow the applicable procedure.

Copies of the Uniform Grievance Procedure, Title IX Grievance Procedure, Section 504/ADA Grievance Procedure, and procedure for challenged educational materials may be obtained from a school office, the District Administration Office, or the District website. School and District staff can assist students and parents in determining which procedure applies.

[See Board Policy 1085, Uniform Grievance Procedure.](#)

Uniform Grievance Procedure and Policy

The Board establishes this Uniform Grievance Procedure as a means to address complaints arising within the District. This Uniform Grievance Procedure is intended to be used for all complaints except those governed by a specific process in state or federal law that supersedes this process or by a collective bargaining agreement. Matters covered by a collective bargaining agreement will be reviewed in accordance with the terms of the applicable agreement.

The District will endeavor to respond to and resolve complaints without resorting to this formal grievance procedure and, when a complaint is filed, to address the complaint as outlined in this policy. The right of a person to prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint filed hereunder will not be impaired by a person's pursuit of other remedies. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to pursue other remedies and use of this grievance procedure does not extend any filing deadline related to pursuit of other remedies.

The District requires that all individuals use this grievance procedure when the individual believes the Board or its employees or agents have violated the individual's rights under state or federal law or Board policy. Complaints against a building administrator shall be filed with the appropriate Assistant Superintendent. Complaints against a District level administrator shall be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent or Clerk shall be filed with the Board.

When a complaint alleges sexual harassment or a violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (the Civil Rights Act), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the building administrator shall turn the complaint over to the applicable District nondiscrimination coordinator. The coordinator shall ensure an investigation is completed in accordance with the applicable procedure. In the case of a sexual

harassment or a Title IX complaint the applicable investigation and appeal procedure is Policy 3000 or 5005. In the case of a disability complaint, the coordinator shall complete an investigation and file a report and recommendation with the building administrator for decision. Appeal of a decision in a disability complaint will be handled in accordance with this policy.

Deadlines requiring District action in this procedure may be extended for reasons related but not limited to the District's retention of legal counsel and District investigatory procedures. Additional timelines may be waived with the agreement of both parties.

Retaliation

Any individual participating in an investigation or proceeding under this policy shall notify the appropriate building or district administrator if that person believes that he or she is being retaliated against for participating in the investigation or proceeding. The District prohibits retaliation against individuals making complaints and/or participating in any investigation that may ensue under this policy. The District may discipline students or staff members determined to have retaliated against any individual for participating in an investigation or proceeding under this policy.

Level 1: Informal

An individual with a complaint is first encouraged to discuss it with the appropriate employee or building administrator with the objective of resolving the matter promptly and informally. If the complaint can't be resolved within (fifteen)15 school days of the incident that generated the complaint, then the complainant may file a written complaint as outlined in Level 2.

Level 2: Building Administrator

When a complaint has not been or cannot be resolved at Level 1, an individual may file a signed and dated written complaint stating: (1) the nature of the complaint; (2) a description of the event or incident giving rise to the complaint, including any school personnel involved; and (3) the remedy or resolution requested. The written complaint must be filed within fifteen (15) school days of the event or incident.

When a complaint alleges a violation of Board policy or procedure, the building administrator or supervisor will investigate and attempt to resolve the complaint. The administrator or supervisor will respond in writing to the complaint, within fifteen (15) school days of receipt of the written complaint.

If the complainant disagrees with the findings of the administrator or supervisor the complainant may request, in writing, that the appropriate Assistant Superintendent review the administrator's or supervisor's decision. (See Level 3.) This request must be submitted to the appropriate Assistant Superintendent within fifteen (15) school days of receipt of the administrator's or supervisor's decision.

Level 3: Assistant Superintendent

If the complainant appeals the administrator's or supervisor's decision provided for in Level 2, the Assistant Superintendent will review the complaint, any relevant documents and the

administrator's or supervisor's decision. The Assistant Superintendent will respond in writing to the appeal, within fifteen (15) school days of the Assistant Superintendent's receipt of the written appeal.

If the complainant disagrees with the findings of the Assistant Superintendent the complainant may request, in writing, that the Superintendent consider an appeal of the Assistant Superintendent's decision. (See Level 4.) This request must be submitted in writing to the Superintendent, within fifteen (15) school days of the Assistant Superintendent's written response to the complaint.

Level 4: Superintendent

If the complainant appeals the Assistant Superintendent's decision provided for in Level 3, the Superintendent will review the complaint and the Assistant Superintendent's decision. The Superintendent will respond in writing to the appeal, within fifteen (15) school days of the Superintendent's receipt of the written appeal.

If the complainant disagrees with the findings of the Superintendent, the complainant may request, in writing, that the Board consider an appeal of the Superintendent's decision. (See Level 5) This request must be submitted in writing to the Superintendent, within fifteen (15) school days of the Superintendent's written response to the complaint, for transmission to the Board.

Level 5: The Board

Upon written appeal of a complaint alleging a violation of the individual's rights under state or federal law or Board policy upon which the Board of Trustees has the authority to remedy, the Board may consider the decisions made in Level 2, 3 and 4. Upon receipt of written request for appeal, the Chair will either; place the appeal on the agenda of a regular or special Board meeting or respond to the complaint with an explanation of why the appeal will not be heard by the Board of Trustees in accordance with this policy. The Board will report its decision on the appeal, in writing, within thirty (30) school days of the Board meeting at which the Board considered the appeal or the recommendation of the panel.

A decision of the Board is final, unless it is appealed pursuant to Montana law within the period provided by law.

[See Board Policy 1085 Uniform grievance Procedure](#)

General School Rules and Information

Accident Prevention

School staff will do everything possible to prevent accidents. However, parents/guardians must understand that some activities such as recess play, physical education activities or field trips involve inherent risks to the student regardless of all feasible safety measures that may be taken by the district.

In consideration of your agreement to allow your child to participate in these activities, you agree to accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or injury to your child that occurs during your child's participation in these activities that is not the result of fraud, willful injury to a person or property or the willful or negligent violation of a law by a trustee, employee, or agent of the Helena School District #1.

Alternative Assignment Request

The Board recognizes the right of an individual parent or guardian to request that his or her child not read a given book, utilize specific curriculum materials or view a particular media work. Therefore, procedures for requesting an alternative assignment for an adopted curriculum assignment must be followed and can be obtained from the building administrator or District Curriculum Administrator.

Annual Asbestos Notification

In the past, asbestos was used extensively in building materials because of its insulating, sound absorbing, and fire retarding capabilities. All Helena School District buildings constructed before the late 1970s contain some level of asbestos. Intact and undisturbed asbestos materials generally do not pose a health risk. Asbestos materials, however, can become hazardous when, due to damage or deterioration over time, they release fibers. If the fibers are inhaled, they can lead to health problems, since as cancer and asbestosis.

In 1986, Congress passed the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) which requires schools to be inspected to identify any asbestos containing building materials. Suspected asbestos- containing building materials are located, sampled (or assumed) and rated according to condition and potential hazard. Every three years, Helena Public School District has conducted a reinspection to determine whether the condition of the known or assumed asbestos containing building materials (ACBM) has changed and to make recommendations on managing or removing the ACBM. At the last reinspection conducted during September 2020, all materials listed in the Management Plan as asbestos containing (or assumed to be asbestos containing) were inspected and recertified.

The law further requires an asbestos management plan to be in place by July 1989. Helena Public School District has developed a plan, as required, which has been continually updated. The plan has several ongoing requirements: publish a notification on management plan availability and the status of activities; educate and train its employees about asbestos and how to deal with it; notify short-term or temporary workers on the locations of the asbestos containing building materials; post warning labels in routine maintenance areas where asbestos was previously identified or assumed; follow set plans and procedures designed to minimize the disturbance of asbestos containing building materials; and survey the condition of these materials every six months to assure that they remain in good condition.

Since the Fall of 2016 asbestos containing building materials have been removed, encapsulated, or enclosed in the following buildings: Helena High School, Capital High School, C. R. Anderson Middle School, Helena Middle School, Rossiter Elementary School, Four Georgians Elementary

School, Warren Elementary School, Broadwater Elementary School, Smith Elementary School, Jefferson Elementary School, Kessler Elementary School.

It is the intention of Helena Public School District to comply with all federal and state regulations controlling asbestos and to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure students and employees a healthy and safe environment in which to learn and work. You are welcome to review a copy of the asbestos management plan at the District Facility office at 1201 Boulder Ave during regular business hours. The Facilities Director is the District's designed asbestos program coordinator, and all inquiries regarding asbestos plan and asbestos-related issues should be directed to the Facilities Director at 324.1720.

Appearance and Dress

Students' dress and grooming must not disrupt the educational process, interfere with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate, or compromise reasonable standards of health, safety, and decency.

While matters of dress remain the primary responsibility of students, in consultation with their parents or legal guardians, students are reminded that their appearance significantly affects the way others respond to them.

Attendance: Absences, Tardies, & Truancy

Attendance Matters

Regular school attendance is important to student success. Being in school every day helps students participate in classroom learning, build on previous lessons, develop positive habits, and stay connected to their school community.

Attendance Requirements

Montana law requires children between the ages of 7 and 16 to attend school unless they are legally exempt or excused. Students who choose to remain enrolled after their sixteenth birthday are also expected to attend school regularly.

Reporting an Absence

If your child will be absent, a parent/guardian must notify the school by **8:45 a.m.** on the day of the absence by phone, written note, or approved electronic communication.

Examples of excused absences may include:

- Illness
- Bereavement or family death
- Parent/guardian requests related to instruction on human sexuality
- Parent/guardian requests to excuse a student from instruction, assemblies, or activities that conflict with the family's beliefs or practices
- Other reasons approved by the Board or permitted by law

Please refer to the **Illness** section of this handbook for additional information regarding medically

excused absences.

When the School Is Notified

If the school has not received notice of a student's absence, staff will take reasonable steps to verify the student's whereabouts, including using the District's automated notification system to contact parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians who will be traveling or unavailable are encouraged to provide the school with current emergency contact information.

Tardies and Partial-Day Absences

- Students arriving **after 9:00 a.m.** will be marked absent for the morning.
- Students arriving **after 1:00 p.m.** will be marked absent for the afternoon.
- Students leaving school between **2:45 p.m. and 3:15 p.m.** will be recorded as an **early checkout**.

Attendance Records

All absences, tardies, and early checkouts are recorded as part of the student's attendance record and may be reflected on report cards.

Students who accumulate **10 or more absences and/or tardies during a quarter** will be referred to the building principal for review. Excessive absences may result in additional interventions and, when required by law, referral to appropriate authorities.

Behavior Expectations of Students

Students are expected to conduct themselves within the bounds set by the Board and the administrative regulations set forth by the Superintendent. Consideration for the rights and well-being of others, cooperation with all members of the school community and respect for oneself and others are the basic principles guiding student behavior.

The primary responsibility for student discipline within the school rests with the Principal. The primary responsibility for maintaining discipline within the classroom lies with the individual classroom teacher.

Corporal punishment shall not be used. Corporal punishment does not include reasonable force as needed to maintain safety for students, staff, or other persons, or for the purpose of self-defense or defense of property.

Disciplinary action may be taken against any student in violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Disciplinary action may range from conferring with a teacher to expulsion from school. Continued infractions will have a cumulative effect in terms of disciplinary action.

A student is in violation of the Student Code of Conduct if the student engages in any inappropriate behavior, including but not limited to:

- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling tobacco or tobacco innovation products;

- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling alcoholic beverages or alcohol innovations.
- Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling illegal drugs or controlled substances, marijuana, including medical marijuana, look-alike drugs, prescription drugs, and drug paraphernalia.
- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring a weapon in violation of the “Weapons” section of this handbook.
- Using, possessing, controlling, or transferring any object that reasonably could be considered or used as a weapon.
- Disobeying directives from staff or disobeying rules governing student conduct.
- Using violence, force, coercion, intimidation or other comparable conduct toward anyone or urging other students to engage in such conduct.
- Causing or attempting to cause damage to, or stealing or attempting to steal, school property or another person’s property.
- Cheat or act in the conduct of cheating. Cheat or cheating means a student acting dishonestly in carrying out any assignments. This may include, but is not limited to” using AI to complete schoolwork without authorization, submitting AI-generated work as original work copying assignments, using unauthorized assistance materials for tests, looking at someone else’s test, plagiarizing, copying other’s work from the Internet or building servers or permitting another person to perform the assignment.
- Plagiarize or submit the work of others and claim it as their own. Plagiarism is defined as any of the following; directly copying a paper or portion of a paper without proper attribution; turning in someone else’s work as your own; or citing works that the student did not consult in the writing of the paper. Changing the wording of another document does not avoid the problem of plagiarism.
- Plagiarism includes ghost writing, including text generated by AI, and the use paper mills and text spinners. Plagiarism is as much about the theft of ideas as it is words.
- Engaging in any activity that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function or any other disruptive activity.
- Unexcused absenteeism.
- Misconduct of any sort on any means of District transportation.
- Hazing, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, including cyberbullying.
- Forging any signature or making any false entry or attempting to authorize any document used or intended to be used in connection with the operation of a school.

These grounds stated above for disciplinary action apply whenever a student’s conduct is reasonably related to school or school activities, including, but not limited to the circumstances set forth below:

- On, or within sight of, school grounds before, during, or after school hours or at any other time when school is being used by a school group;
- Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school;
- Travel to and from school or a school activity, function, or event;
- Anywhere if conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member, an interference with school purposes or an educational function, a threat to the safety and welfare of the student population, or

conduct that detrimentally effects the climate or efficient operations of the school.

Behavior / Conduct Definitions

The following definitions are provided to help students and families understand common behavior expectations. When a term is defined in Board policy or law, the definition in the most recently adopted Board policy or applicable law controls.

Assault: Intentionally or knowingly causing physical injury to another person, attempting to cause physical injury, or placing another person in reasonable fear of imminent physical injury.

Bullying: see Board Policy 3005

Cyberbullying: Bullying conducted through electronic communication, including text messages, email, social media, online platforms, images, videos, or other digital communication. Cyberbullying may be subject to school discipline when it occurs through District technology, during a school activity, or when it materially affects school safety, operations, or a student's access to education.

Disruptive Behavior: Conduct that materially or substantially interferes with teaching, learning, school operations, a school activity, or the rights and safety of others.

Fighting: Mutual participation in physical aggression or violence between two or more individuals. Fighting is prohibited and is distinguishable from conduct determined, following an investigation, to be the reasonable and necessary use of physical force in self-defense or defense of another person in response to a physical attack.

Harassment: Written, verbal, electronic, or physical conduct that threatens, intimidates, humiliates, or demeans another person or interferes with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities. Conduct based on sex, disability, or another legally protected characteristic may be addressed under a separate complaint procedure.

Hazing: Hazing includes conduct meeting the definition established in Board Policy 3005. See the Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment, and Hazing section of this handbook.

Intimidation: Conduct intended, or reasonably likely, to cause another person to fear physical injury, damage to property, humiliation, or other harmful consequences.

Threat: A verbal, written, electronic, or physical statement or action that communicates an intent to cause harm to a person, damage property, or disrupt school operations. A threat may be addressed even if the person making it later states that it was intended as a joke.

Vandalism: Intentionally or recklessly damaging, destroying, defacing, or misusing school property or the property of another person.

Bicycles

Students are allowed to ride bikes to school. Bikes must be in good working condition. Bikes must be placed in the racks and must be correctly chained/locked to the bike rack. Students are expected to wear helmets when riding bikes to school. If your child rides a bike to school, they should dismount and walk the bike once they are on school grounds.

Birthday / Party Invitations

Students may distribute invitations to birthday parties in school provided they are inviting their entire class. If a child wishes to only invite certain friends, families will need to find alternative ways to send invitations to those friends outside of school. Per confidentiality requirements, the school's main office and classroom teachers will not release parent contact information to those wishing to send invitations to select classmates.

Birthday / Party Treats

Children may bring birthday / party treats for their classmates, but the treats must be commercially prepared. Please visit with your child's classroom teacher to schedule the best time. Your child's teacher will be able to apprise you of any significant food allergies so that those foods can be avoided (e.g. nuts). Helena Public Schools encourages the promotion of a positive learning environment by providing healthy snacks for celebrations. Each celebration should include healthy foods and beverage choices, including water. Physical activity during celebrations is encouraged.

[See: Board Policy 2120 Wellness](#)

Birthday / Party Latex Balloons

Because of the potential for serious latex-related allergic reactions, as well as the choking hazards associated with latex balloons, only non-latex balloons will be allowed in the school building or on school grounds.

Book Challenge

The Board of Trustees, although it is ultimately responsible for all instructional and library material, recognizes the right of students to free access to many different types of books and resources. The Board also recognizes the right of teachers, librarians and administrators to select books and other materials in accordance with the adopted curriculum, current trends in education, and student and staff needs, and to make them available in schools and libraries.

Therefore, books and other resources will be chosen for value of interest and enlightenment of all students in the school community. A book or other resource will not be excluded because of the race, nationality, political, or religious values of the writer or of the material's style and language. Every effort will be made to provide materials that present all points of view concerning the international, national, and local problems and issues of our times. Books and other resources of sound factual authority will not be proscribed or removed from library shelves or classrooms because of partisan doctrinal approval or disapproval.

Censorship of books and other materials will be challenged in order to maintain the school's responsibility to provide information and enlightenment. Accordingly, the Board will deal with censorship of books or other materials as follows:

- The final decision on controversial materials rests with the Board after the established process for handling challenged materials has been exhausted/completed.
- The Board recognizes the right of an individual parent or guardian to request that his or her child not have to read a given book or view a particular media work.
- Any parent or person of legal standing who wishes to request reconsideration of the use of any book or resource in the school must make such request in writing on forms provided through building principals or school librarians.

Challenges to books, library resources, or other educational materials are addressed through the District's established reconsideration process and not through the Uniform Grievance Procedure. Request forms are available from building principals and school librarians.

[See also Board Policy 2067 Handling Challenged or Questioned Material](#)

Breakfast and Lunch Program

Breakfast and lunch at the Helena Schools will be free for students on the first day of school.

The school breakfast and lunch prices for the 2026-2027 school year are as follows:

- Breakfast - Student - \$2.00
- Lunch – Student - \$3.00
- Milk - \$0.60 per half pint
- Adult Breakfast - \$3.50 per breakfast
- Adult Lunch - \$5.00 per lunch

Elementary schools (K-5) will be running the “Bright Bites Kitchen” nutrition program. We set out to exceed expectations by reinventing our grade school offering from the ground up. We put kids first, by harnessing feedback at the school level. We’ve created Bright Bites Kitchen, a healthier, more communal, meal service that empowers students with whole-food ingredients, chef inspired meals, and a nutritionally balanced menu design to nourish body, mind, and spirit. All you can eat Salad bars will be at every school with a variety of fresh and canned fruits, vegetables and salad every day. This will allow students to be able to make their own healthy choices of what they want to try.

Every parent/guardian may have a **FREE** lunch and a **FREE** breakfast, with their child(ren) each month during the school year. The School Food Service Program wants to encourage parents to be a part of their student’s meals so they can experience the variety of nutritious options available every day to students at school. This offer does not include special events and is not valid on special days like BBQ days or Open Houses.

The School Food Service Program will continue to offer "Pay On-Line Program" for your student's food service account needs. You can go to the web site, www.mymealtime.com. You will need to

set up an account, with the user as yourself (not the student). You will need to know your child(ren)'s student ID number. You will be able to use a credit card to put money into your child's accounts. All additional processing fees still apply at the time of the deposit, and the process may take about 48 hours to get into your child(ren)s account in each school.

If you have more than one student enrolled, we want parents to know that we can build you a "Family Account" no matter which school your children might be attending within the Helena School District. This means that you can just put money onto one student and all of your students can pull from that same pool of money. You will also be able to see who is using it all on one report. This is not an automatic program you just need to send an email to the Food Service Director Rworthy@HelenaSchools.org, and he will build one specific to your needs. Nothing else will change other than the fact you only need to do one deposit instead of one for each student.

****Applications for free and reduced-priced lunches are available on the school district website** We recommend every family try to qualify through either the one line Free/Reduced meal form, or it is also acceptable to qualify your family through other programs: SNAP, FDPIR, Head Start, WIC, unemployment compensation or TANF or if you are a foster child, homeless, or runaway.**

Changes/Free & Reduced Meals

The District recognizes that students may forget or lose lunch money or may have an unpaid meal account balance. The District endeavors to treat all students with dignity regarding unpaid meal charges; however, unpaid meal charges create a significant financial burden for the District. To ensure that students do not go hungry but also minimize the financial burden, the District shall charge meals and collect on meal account charges in all schools consistent with this policy. Students who are eligible to receive free meals do not have a meal account and, therefore, are not subject to this policy. Free lunch status students may pre-pay for or purchase a la carte items with cash or check. Students that had a negative balance before they are approved for FREE or REDUCED meals are still liable for any charges incurred before approval, even though they will be free going forward for this school year.

Parents may restrict their child's ability to charge by sending the school written notice either stating their child cannot charge or limiting the amount their child can charge. However, they will need to send a lunch with their child.

K-12 Students

Students will pay for meals at the full rate as established by the District in accordance with federal law. Eligible students will pay a reduced rate as established by the District in accordance with federal law. Meals must be pre-paid. Students will be permitted to charge a maximum of \$30.00 once his or her meal account reaches zero. Once a student has charged the maximum number of meals, the student will no longer be permitted to charge and parents will initially be contacted directly by phone or in person by the building principal. The school will offer the student an emergency (regular) meal at the standard rate.

Payment of Meal Account

Each school shall maintain records regarding student meal balances. The District will send out notices bi-weekly using current email addresses to parents/guardians informing them of low or negative meal account balances.

Parents/guardians may also check a student meal account balance online at mymealtime.com.

Parents/guardians must submit payment for meal accounts with a credit card or debit card at mymealtime.com OR pay in person with a check or cash at their student's school. Payment must be submitted 30 days from date of notice of deficit balance. If the District has not received payment within 30 days the payment is considered overdue and is a delinquent debt.

[See Board Policy 7052 Meal Charges](#)

School Meal Charges / Free and Reduced Lunch Applications

There will be a charge for all student meals unless the student qualifies for free or reduced meals.

If you need assistance paying for your child's meal costs, now is the time to apply for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Visit <https://helenaschools.org/departments/food-services/> to get started.

When you apply for meal assistance, you not only help your family, but you help your school receive more funding for important student services like textbooks and math and literacy programs.

If you're concerned about paying your child's meal costs, please apply. If you have questions, please contact your school office. By signing up, you feed your family and support your school.

Cancellation of School / Bus Delays or Cancellations

In case of severe weather or other emergencies, official information about school closings will be broadcast on the local radio stations. Information will also be posted on the district web site –

<http://www.helenaschools.org>

If there are inclement weather delays or canceled bus routes, information will be announced on the following media outlets:

KXLH / KTVH / KFBB / KRTV

MTPR & YPR

KGR

Helena Independent Record

The HPS District website at: <http://www.helenaschools.org> for weather alert and bus delay/cancellation information.

HPS Transportation Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HSD1Transportation/>

Twitter: @HelenaPublic

Instagram: Helena Public Schools

Cell Phones, Smart Watches, Earbuds, Headphones of Any Type

Use of cell phones and smart watches is prohibited during school days. Using any type of cell

phone (including phone watches) in buildings or during class time will result in the phone or watch being confiscated and held in the office unless it is used as part of a teacher-directed, time-limited educational activity. Phones must remain off from 8:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.; watches should be set to “school” mode or turned off. Students may not use phones for calls to parents (this is done in the school office), text messaging, or taking photographs. Students are not to loan their cell phones to others.

Students are not to wear earbuds or headphones of any type without permission from the teacher or principal.

Lost or damaged cell phones, phone watches, etc. are the responsibility of the student and his or her parent/guardian. The district is not responsible for loss or damage to cell phones of any type.

Helena Public School District and individual schools are not responsible for cell phones, smart watches or other electronic communication devices that are stolen or damaged when confiscated or placed in a container for classroom management purposes

Change of Address (Including Email Address)

Please **immediately** inform the school of any change in address, work phone number, home phone number, email address or emergency phone numbers. Parents of 4th and 5th grade students may update their contract information by logging onto the PowerSchool parent portal and entering updated information.

Children of Military Families

It is the intention of the District to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families transitioning to and from school because of frequent moves and/ deployment of a parent on active duty in the regular Armed Forces, National Guard, or Reserves.

In the event that a child of a military family seeks to enroll in the District, the District shall enroll and appropriately place the student as quickly as possible based upon information in the unofficial educational records pending receipt of the official records.

The District shall not charge tuition in relation to a child of a military family transferring into the District who has been placed in the care of a noncustodial parent or other person through a special power of attorney so long as that noncustodial parent or other person resides within the District.

[See: Board Policy 3022 Children of Military Families](#)

Communication with Families

Communication between the home and school is an essential part of the elementary program. You are encouraged to contact your child’s teacher, principal or any specialist if you have questions, concerns, or compliments about your child’s progress in school.

There are a number of ways for parents to receive information about their child’s progress and school.

- **Automated Notification System:** The District has implemented a notification system called School Messenger. The system will provide parents with instant communication regarding student attendance, general information notifications, and emergency notifications utilizing voice messages, email and text messaging.
- **Open House** is a time set aside each fall for parents to visit their child's school and meet their child's teachers. This is not a time for individual parent/ teacher conferences but rather a time to meet and greet the school staff and classmates for the coming year.
- **Report Cards** are issued following each twelve-week period. These reports are based on standards and will inform parents of their child's progress.
- **Parent / Teacher Conferences** provide opportunities for teachers to share information with parents about their child's progress in school. The parent / teacher conference is an important means of reporting to parents and guardians. These conferences are scheduled in the fall and spring of the year. Additional conferences may be held at the request of the parent or teacher anytime during the year. Some teachers conduct Student- Led Parent / Teacher Conferences.
- **Email / Telephone** contact is encouraged. All teachers now have classrooms telephones. Messages can be left during the day. Parents are encouraged to utilize email as well. Please contact your child's teacher and/or principal for their email address and/or phone number.
- **Newsletters** from the principal are sent home with students on a regular basis to provide timely information about school, classroom and district activities. Some school principals email newsletters to parents wishing to receive email rather than papercopies.
- **Parent Council Groups** (also PTA / PTO / PSTA) are established in each school to provide valuable support and service to students and staff. Parents are encouraged to become activemembers.
- **School District Web Site** at <http://helenaschools.org> provides general information about the District and its programs as well as current news items. Each individual school has a section on the district web site that has information pertaining to that school.
- **Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council** meets monthly at the Lincoln Center. Membership is comprised of a parent representative from each school. If you are interested in participating please notify your child's building principal.
- **Assessment Results** provide parents with an academic indicator of how their child is progressing in school. As part of their learning, students participate in a variety of classroom assessments throughout the school year. In addition to these classroom assessments, students participate in district level assessments that drive instructional decisions.

Students in grades K-1 take the Acadience reading assessment to determine reading abilities. Students in grades 1-5 take the iReady district benchmark three times a year to determine if they are on track for grade level reading and math. The purpose of these assessments is to use the results to inform instruction to meet the learning needs of the students.

Students in grade two will participate in the CogAT ability test in the spring of the school year. These results provide baseline information on the cognitive ability of students as well as being one of a variety of criteria to determine placement in the district's gifted and talented program.

Students in grades 3-5 will participate in a state assessment throughout the year called the MAST which measures students' proficiency on grade level standards in Math and English Language Arts. Fifth grade students also take the Montana Science Assessment. These standardized test results provide teachers, principals, and District administration with data to determine the effectiveness of instructional programs.

Crosswalks and Sidewalks

Students learn by example. Please use the crosswalks and sidewalks when you come to school. Adults may save a minute when they jay walk, however, this is a dangerous example for students.

Emergency/Safety Drills

The Board recognizes that safety and health standards should be incorporated into all aspects of the operation of the District. Rules for safety and prevention of accidents will be posted in compliance with Montana Safety Culture Act and the Montana Occupational Safety and Health Act.

Each of the schools in the Helena School District has developed an emergency plan to help ensure the safety of children in the event of a fire or other disaster, such as an earthquake or a building intruder.

There will be at least eight (8) disaster drills a year. All teachers will discuss disaster drill procedures with their class at the beginning of each year and will have them posted in a conspicuous place next to the exit door. A record will be kept of all fire drills. The drills will be held at different hours of the day or evening to avoid distinction between drills and actual disasters.

In the event of actual emergency, up-to-date information may be obtained at the District web site: <http://www.helenaschools.org> or by tuning in or following the various information sites below:

- KXLH / KTVH / KFBB / KRTV
- MTPR & YPR
- KGR Radio
- Helena Independent Record
- The HPS District website at: <http://www.helenaschools.org> for weather alert and bus delay/cancellation information.
- HPS Transportation Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HSD1Transportation/>
- Facebook: Helena Public Schools

- Instagram: Helena PublicSchools

In compliance with state regulations, fire drills will be held throughout the school year. Specific instructions for the fire drill exits are posted in each room. An annual earthquake drill takes place in October of each school year.

[See Board Policy 7060 School Safety](#)

Emergency Information

In case of an emergency, each student is required to have on file at the school office the following information:

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) name(s).
- Complete and up-to-date address information.
- Home phone number and parent work phone numbers.
- Emergency phone numbers of friends or relatives.
- Physician's name and phone number.

No pupil will be enrolled in kindergarten whose 5th birthday does not occur on or before September 10 of the school year in which the child registers to enter school. A kindergarten program that is designated as a full-time program must allow a parent, guardian, or other person who is responsible for the enrollment of a child in school, as provided in MCA 20-5-102, to enroll the child half-time.

Students enrolling for the first time at any Helena public school must present a **birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age within 40 days**. Additionally, enrolling students must present proof of residence and immunization records. (Note: ** Montana State law requires all students to be immunized against Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough), Tetanus, Polio, Measles, and Mumps & Rubella (MMR). Exceptions are allowed for verified religious and medical reasons only.) Proof of immunizations must be provided on or before the first day of school.

Students transferring to the Helena School District will be admitted and placed pursuant to the terms of Board policy. The District will enroll the student and will request the student's records from the previous school district. A final decision regarding grade placement will not be final until records from the previous school are received.

Family Night

The Helena Board of Trustees has designated each Wednesday evening during the school year as Family Night.

The purpose of this evening is to allow students the opportunity to participate in family or community-based youth activities without scheduled conflicts from schools. This promotes the concept that school-sponsored activities are not scheduled on Wednesday night. There may be occasional exceptions due to MHSA scheduling conflicts.

Field Trips

Your child's class will be participating in educational field trips during the year. It is the policy of Helena School District #1 to acquire parental permission before allowing a student to travel with members of his/her class. ***If you would like your child to participate, please carefully read and sign the "Parent Permission Form" available at the back of this handbook or when you complete your PowerSchool registration online.***

By signing and checking the yes or no on the Parent Permission Form you are giving permission for your child to go with his/her class on field trips during the year. Transportation will be provided by the district. If travel by a private car is required for an event, you will be notified prior to the trip.

As a parent or guardian, your signature on the Parent Permission Form indicates that you understand that the school and the staff will do everything possible to prevent any accidents. However, by checking and signing you indicate that you understand that some activities on field trips involve inherent risks to students, regardless of all feasible safety measures that may be taken by the district. In consideration of the district's agreement to allow your child to participate in field trips you agree to accept responsibility for any loss, damage, or injury to your child that occurs during your child's participation in a field trip that is not the result of fraud, willful injury to a person or property or the willful or negligent violation of a law by a trustee, employee or agent of the Helena School District#1.

In the event it becomes necessary for the district staff in charge to obtain emergency care for your child, neither he/she or the school district assumes financial liability for the expenses incurred because of an accident, injury, illness and/or unforeseen circumstance.

If your child has a medical condition, which the school should be aware of before allowing your child to participate on a field trip, you must notify the school and inform them of the nature of the medical condition.

In the event that unforeseen circumstances arise creating a need for you to contact your student or to have information relayed to you about an emergency, change in itinerary, etc. an information network has been established. You will be provided with a contact person and number prior to the field trip.

Chaperones and Volunteers on Field Trips

Parents interested in chaperoning a field trip should contact the classroom teacher or building principal. Volunteer opportunities may be limited by trip needs, available space, or destination requirements. Chaperones must be approved by the principal or designee, complete all required volunteer forms, and follow staff directions, the trip supervision plan, emergency procedures, student confidentiality requirements, and the District's Guidelines for Volunteer Field Trip Chaperones. If a chaperone's assignment may involve unsupervised contact with students, the chaperone must complete the background check required by the Board.

Students and staff will travel using District-provided transportation. Unless otherwise approved, volunteers and chaperones must arrange their own transportation and may not bring additional family members or friends. Students must ride District-provided transportation to and from the

field-trip location. A building administrator may approve an exception when requested at least 24 hours in advance.

See: Board Policy 2075- Field Trips and Board Policy 5122 – Criminal Background Investigations

First Aid

There are facilities in each school for a student to rest if he/she is not feeling well. If your child does not feel well enough to return to class in a short time, you will be contacted to pick up your child from school. It is important that the school is kept informed of your current local phone numbers and where you can be contacted.

Procedures for administering first aid within the school system have been formulated by the district's School Nurses. Very minor injuries will be taken care of by trained school personnel or by the School Nurse. Parents will be contacted and requested to take over the responsibility for any care that goes beyond "first aid." It is imperative that the school has emergency phone numbers in case the parent cannot be reached.

Foster Care

Children in foster care are entitled to educational stability and the opportunity to achieve at the same high levels as their peers. "Foster care" means 24-hour substitute care for children placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the child welfare agency has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes.

The District shall enroll a child in foster care in a school determined to be in the child's best interest without delay, regardless of whether that student can produce records normally required for enrollment. The new school in which a child in foster care is enrolled shall immediately contact the school of origin to obtain the child's records.

See: Board Policy 3023 Education of Children in Foster Care

GPS and Audio Child Tracking / Monitoring Systems

Parents and students are expressly prohibited from using covert means to listen-in or make a recording (audio or video) of any meeting or activity at school. This includes placing recording devices, or other devices with one- or two-way audio communication technology (i.e., technology that allows a person off-site to listen to live conversations and sounds taking place in the location where the device is located), within a student's book bag/backpack, on the student's person or otherwise in an area capable of listening in or recording without express written consent of the Superintendent.

Health Services

Communicable Diseases

The School Nurse assists school staff and families in the management of communicable disease. This is accomplished through classroom education including proper hand washing and respiratory hygiene, newsletter and in-service communications on health updates, and through the management of disease outbreaks in conjunction with local health department staff.

Per MCA 20-5-405 To protect children from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. Parents of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the school nurse or principal. Examples of diseases include Mumps, Measles, Chicken Pox (Varicella), Influenza, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Coronavirus Disease (Covid).

For more information on MCA 20-5-405, please visit

https://www.leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0200/chapter_0050/part_0040/section_0050/0200-0050-0040-0050.html

A team of registered, professional school nurses travel between schools as assigned. They are available to students, families and staff for questions, concerns, and information regarding health and safety in the school setting.

The Helena Public Schools Nurses request updated health information annually or anytime there are changes throughout the school year. A link to health forms and the school nurse contact information can be found [here](#).

Students who have health concerns during the day should tell their teacher(s), who may refer them to the school nurse/health office.

Illness Protocol

When a student becomes ill but does not require immediate medical help, a determination will be made about whether the student should be sent home (ie. should be temporarily excluded from school). The School Nurse or designated staff member will determine whether the student's illness meets one of the following criteria:

1. Prevents the student from participating comfortably in activities as determined by staff members of the school.
2. Results in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other students. This may include psychological or physical issues affecting academic performance.
3. Poses a risk of spreading disease to others based on the list of specific excludable conditions.
4. Temperature 100.4 or higher
5. Uncontrolled cough or difficulty breathing
6. Vomiting and/or repeated diarrhea
7. Severe headache, especially with fever
8. Red eyes with discolored discharge, and/or pain, and/or itchiness
9. Discolored nasal discharge, especially with fever
10. Severe ear pain
11. Rash accompanied by fever, drainage or blistering
12. Sore throat accompanied by fever, rash or difficulty swallowing

For a complete description of the Helena Public School Illness Protocol, please visit:
<https://helenaschools.org/illness-protocol/>

Immunizations

Vaccines Required for School Attendance, Preschool -12th Grade



VACCINE	PRESCHOOL ¹	KINDERGARTEN - 12 TH GRADE
Haemophilus influenza Type B (Hib)	1 dose (given on or after the 1 st birthday, unless child is older than 59 months) ²	None Needed
Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (DTaP, Tdap)	4 doses	4 doses (one dose must be given on or after 4 th birthday) ^{3,4} Plus 1 dose of Tdap (prior to entering 7 th grade) ⁵
Polio (IPV or OPV)	3 doses	3 doses (one dose must be given on or after 4 th birthday) ³
Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)	1 dose (dose must be given on or after 1 st birthday)	2 doses (first dose must be given on or after 1 st birthday, and spacing between doses is 4 weeks)
Varicella "chickenpox" (Var)	1 dose (dose must be given on or after 1 st birthday) ⁶	2 doses (first dose must be given on or after 1 st birthday, spacing between doses is 12 weeks for children under 13 years, and 4 weeks for those older than 13 years) ^{5,6}

¹Per MCA 20-5-402, a preschool is defined as a facility that provides, on a regular basis and as its primary purpose, educational instruction designed for children 5 years of age or younger and that: (a) serves no child under 5 years of age for more than 3 hours a day; and (b) serves no child 5 years of age for more than 6 hours a day.

²Hib vaccine is not recommended for children older than 59 months.

³When following the ACIP schedule, children will have at least 5 doses of DTaP and 4 doses of polio vaccine.

⁴A pupil 7 years or older who has not completed the DTaP requirement must receive additional doses of Tdap vaccine or Td vaccine to become current in accordance with the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) recommendations per ARM 37.114.705.

⁵While it is not recommended, if a child younger than 13 years receives their second dose of varicella at an interval of 4 weeks or longer, the dose does **not** need to be repeated.

⁶As of October 1, 2015 pupils are required to have varicella vaccine and all pupils 7th-12th grade must have a Tdap vaccine.

Note: A four-day grace period may apply, as appropriate, per the ACIP recommendations.

Documentation of a valid medical or religious exemption or conditional enrollment may be submitted in lieu of receiving all required vaccines.

Proof of school required vaccinations or exemptions must be provided before:

- Kindergarten entry
- 7th grade entry (Tdap booster given on or after the age of 10)

For more information regarding Montana required vaccines for school entry and exemptions allowed, please visit:

https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0200/chapter_0050/part_0040/section_0030/0200-0050-0040-0030.html

Immunization Exemptions

Per Montana Code Annotated, parents can file in writing for either a Medical exemption or a Religious exemption. A Medical Exemption is appropriate if a student's health care provider and parent agree that a required vaccination is not appropriate, based on the student's health. A Religious Exemption is appropriate if a vaccine is contrary to the family's religious beliefs. Links for both exemptions can be found below:

[Medical Exemption HES101A](#)

[Religious Exemption HES113](#)

For more information on the immunization exemptions allowed by Montana law, please visit :

<https://helenaschools.org/departments/school-nurse-health-services/>

Medication Procedures

In special cases the school nurse, healthcare provider and parents may agree on a plan for administration of medication during school hours. The parent/guardian will bring the pharmacy labeled bottle of medication to school for intake including signature and counting of pills. Medication administration by family may be needed up to 24 hours after medication intake allowing time for a district school nurse to process the new medication.

Over-the-Counter Medications (OTC)

- Pre K- 8th grade: A licensed health care provider must provide a written order for administration of OTC medication, parent authorization given, and medication provided in original container. Allow up to 24 hours before administration begins for school nurse processing.
- 9th grade -12th grade: may keep a small quantity of non-prescribed, parent recommended OTC medication with them and may self-administer, according to package directions. Parents who want the school to manage OTC medication for their high school student must complete an Authorization for Medication to be Given at School form and provide the medication.

Self-Administration of Emergency Medications

- Students with permission by their health care provider and guardian who have provided the permission form to the school and who have asthma, severe allergies or anaphylaxis may possess and self-administer emergency medication; epinephrine auto-injector (epi-pen), epinephrine nasal spray, oral antihistamine, or asthma inhaler during the school day, during field trips, during school-sponsored events, or while on a school bus.

For more information on medication procedures, please visit:

<https://helenaschools.org/medication-procedures/>

Allergies

The Helena School District makes every effort to decrease exposure to allergens, however we encourage parents of children with life threatening allergies to contact the School Nurse prior to the beginning of the school year to work together to develop an Allergy Action Plan. In case of suspected anaphylactic reaction, trained staff may administer stock emergency injectable epinephrine to any student in need thereof on school grounds, in a school building, or at a school function according to a standing order of a chief medical officer for administration of emergency medications.

Stock Medications

In addition to Epinephrine injectors, Helena Public Schools stocks Naloxone, an opioid antagonist, to be administered by a school nurse or other authorized personnel to any student or nonstudent as needed for an actual or perceived opioid overdose.

Head Lice

Head lice are wingless insects about the size of a sesame seed. They cannot fly, jump, or swim. They are passed from person to person from direct head-to-head contact or, very rarely, by

“hitching a ride” on a comb, brush, or hat. While they are an anxiety-producing nuisance, they do not carry disease. Students with head lice or nits (louse eggs) will not be excluded from school as unnecessary absences directly affect school performance and a child’s opportunity to learn.

If a parent or staff member believes a student has lice, they can contact the School Nurse who will arrange a time to assess the student privately. If live lice or nits are found the student’s parents will be contacted with information about effective treatment options. The student may remain at school until the end of the day.

Classroom wide screenings will not be done as studies indicate that it does not decrease the incidence of head lice, is disruptive to the learning process, and a violation of privacy and confidentiality of the student and their family.

Helena Public Schools nurses educate students regarding lice and how to avoid transmission by decreasing head-to-head contact and not sharing hats, combs, brushes or hair accessories. Parents can help by routinely inspecting their child’s hair for lice. If you are unsure of this process, how to identify a louse, or how to treat an infestation, please contact your School Nurse. For a step-by-step guide for managing head lice at home, refer to:
<https://identify.us.com/idmybug/head-lice/head-lice-documents/lice-mgmt-chart-home.pdf>

Health Screenings

Methods for screening may include checklists, observations, and formal instruments as indicated. Parents will be notified prior to a health screening by email, a letter home, or BrightArrow message and given an opportunity to Opt-Out. Parents are notified of any unusual performance or failed screening. Students may be referred for further evaluation by a health care provider.

Vision – School Nurses may screen students in grades K, 1, 3, 5, 8, and students new to Helena School District without screening documentation, students who are referred, and students who are being monitored.

Oral Health – Students in grades 1 and 3 may be screened by local dentists and dental health professionals who volunteer to provide a visual inspection. The School Nurse coordinates the program in each elementary school.

Hearing- School Nurses and School Speech/Language Pathologists may screen students for hearing in K, 1st and 9th grade. Students in other grades may be screened upon referral, if they are without screening documentation, and students who are being monitored. The regional Audiologist may consult with the school nurses regarding referrals and ongoing management.

5th Grade Growth and Development Lesson

The Helena Public Schools Nurses partner with school staff to teach a Growth and Development lesson at the 5th grade level. The lesson focuses on the changes that come with puberty. Please contact your school nurse for questions or concerns related to classroom instruction materials or environment. Instruction materials will be made available to review prior to the lessons. Per MCA

20-7-120, there will be parental or guardian notification no less than 48 hours prior to holding an event or assembly or introducing materials for instructional use.

Topics taught in the lesson for girls are limited to:

- When to expect puberty to begin
- The physical and emotional changes that come with puberty
- The maturation of the female reproductive system
- Menstruation
- The importance of good hygiene, healthy habits, and sleep
- The benefits of maintaining health through good nutrition and exercise

Topics taught in the lesson for boys are limited to:

- When to expect puberty to begin
- The physical and emotional changes that come with puberty
- The maturation of the male reproductive system
- Common experiences of puberty, including voice changes, feelings of physical awkwardness, and nocturnal emissions
- The importance of good hygiene, healthy habits, and sleep
- The benefits of maintaining health through good nutrition and exercise

Homeless Students

In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and applicable state and federal laws, Helena Public Schools will ensure that students experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as provided to all other students. Homeless students will have access to educational services and programs necessary to support academic success and school participation. Students experiencing homelessness shall not be segregated, stigmatized, or separated on the basis of their housing status.

The District will determine school placement based on the best interest of the student. To the extent feasible, students experiencing homelessness shall remain in their school of origin unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth. Students may also enroll in the local attendance area school where they are currently residing.

If a student is an unaccompanied youth, the District's McKinney-Vento liaison shall assist the student with enrollment, school placement, and access to services, while ensuring that the views of the student are considered in decisions regarding educational placement. The homeless liaison will work to ensure that all barriers to education are mitigated to the fullest extent possible for any student experiencing homelessness.

The District shall immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness, even if records normally required for enrollment, including academic records, immunization records, proof of residency, guardianship documents, or other documentation, are unavailable at the time of enrollment. The District will work to promptly obtain any necessary records.

Students experiencing homelessness shall receive services comparable to those offered to other

students in the District, including but not limited to transportation; Title I services; special education services; programs for English learners; gifted and talented programs; career and technical education; preschool programs; before- and after-school programs; and extracurricular activities. Students experiencing homelessness automatically qualify for free school nutrition programs.

Transportation shall be provided, at the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, to and from the student's school of origin in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

[See: Board Policy 3020 Education of Homeless Youth](#)

Lost and Found

Each school has a lost and found area. Throughout the year a large amount of hats, coats and gloves are often accumulated. If your child has lost an article of clothing, please ask him/her to check the lost and found area in the school office or to speak with his/her teacher. Lost and found items, which are not picked up, will be periodically donated to local charities. **Please remember write your child's name in their belongings so items that are left/lost can be returned to your child.**

Montana Department of Justice Violent & Sexual Offenders Registry

The Montana Department of Justice maintains a Sexual or Violent Offenders Registry that can be reviewed online at <https://dojmt.gov/sexual-or-violent-offender-registry/>. This website provides the last known residences for these individuals and supplemental information regarding the nature and dates of the crime(s) that caused them to be listed in this registry.

While the district does not track or monitor the individuals that may reside in the vicinity of schools or bus stops, it is our intent to make you aware that this registry information is available to the public. The Montana Department of Justice also provides on-line guidance and educational materials for both Parents and Educators on their website and we encourage parents and guardians to review this information and familiarize themselves with the resources that are available to help address these situations.

Out of District Student Attendance Procedures

Parents or guardians of any student who is seeking to enroll in the Helena Public Schools and who currently resides outside of the Helena Public Schools attendance area and/or is attending school in another District must complete a ***K-12 Student Out-of-District Transfer Request*** form. The form is available from all schools and the Assistant Superintendent's Office at the Lincoln Center and can also be found at the following link: [K-12 Student Out-of-District Transfer Request](#).

The 2023 legislative session changed the law regarding out-of-district enrollment. We welcome students who reside outside of the Helena Public Schools attendance area, but families in addition to the ***K-12 Student Out-of-District Transfer Request*** form are now required to submit an [Montana Out-of-District Attendance Agreement \(FP-14.1\)](#) each year. The form is linked here

for your convenience. Please complete, sign and return the form to your child(ren)'s school the first week of school or mail to the address noted below. If your address has changed, please notify your school as well.

Mail forms to:

Assistant Superintendent
ATTN: Enrollment
1325 Poplar Street
Helena, MT. 59601

Upon receipt of the form and the requested records the Assistant Superintendent or designee will review the student's attendance, academic standing, behavior, etc. and approve or deny the request based upon the student's standing. Students who are not in good standing with their current district may not be accepted.

Boundary lines set by the Board of Trustees shall be observed unless an exception is granted through guidelines established by the Superintendent.

Approved transfer requests carry the following conditions:

1. The parent/guardian must provide transportation to and from school.
2. The District will determine the placement of any out-of-district student accepted for enrollment.
3. Out-of-District transfers will be subject to review each year in order to ensure that all students and policies are being met.
4. The District reserves the right to have students return to the school of residence if overcrowding results in the receiving school or there is need to balance enrollments.
5. The student who transfers is subject to the eligibility policies established by the Montana High School Association (grades 9-12 only).
6. A student requesting a transfer from outside the Helena School District must be in good standing in their current school. The criteria include, academic standing, behavior, attendance, etc.
7. Tuition fees will be applied based on Board Policy.

Outdoor Recess

Outdoor recess is an important part of the elementary student's day. The much needed fresh air adds to student success in the classroom. Students need to dress appropriately for outdoor recess. During the winter months, students should bring gloves or mittens, hats, snow boots, and layered clothing in addition to a warm winter coat. Students will go outside for recess when the temperature is above zero. Students will also go outside in light rain and/or snow and should be dressed for this type of weather. Schools do not send students outdoors in extreme temperatures, such as below-zero weather with the wind-chill factor taken into account. Also, if the county informs schools of "poor air quality," this factor is considered in regard to outside activities. Parents will be informed if poor air quality or temperatures will affect school operations and be provided with an outline of adjusted operations by the building principal.

If a student is ill, home is the best place for him/her to be. We realize that, from time to time, students are not sick enough to stay home, but are too sick to go outdoors. Unfortunately, we are not equipped or staffed to supervise students indoors at recess time. Because of this, we ask that, if a student is to be kept in at recess because of illness, parents should send a note each day the request is in effect up to a total of three consecutive days. If after three days the parent still requests that the student stay in, the parent should provide a written statement from a physician stating the reason the child should be excluded from outdoor activities.

Parent Involvement and Responsibilities

Helena Public Schools believes that students are most successful when families, students, and school staff work together. This partnership requires trust, regular communication, shared responsibility, and a commitment to each student's academic growth and well-being.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to:

- Make education and regular school attendance a priority.
- Ensure their child arrives at school on time and prepared to learn.
- Review the student handbook and discuss school expectations with their child.
- Maintain current telephone numbers, email addresses, emergency contacts, and other information with the school.
- Monitor school communications, attendance, assignments, progress reports, and report cards.
- Communicate concerns promptly and respectfully with the teacher or staff member most directly involved.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences, family activities, and other school events when possible.
- Support their child in completing assignments and developing responsible learning habits.
- Inform the school of circumstances that may affect their child's learning, attendance, health, safety, or well-being.
- Encourage their child to follow school rules and treat students, staff, and school property with respect.
- Review and return required permission forms, acknowledgments, and other school documents.
- Become involved through school organizations, committees, volunteer opportunities, or other family-engagement activities when possible.

Parents and guardians with questions about their child's education are encouraged to begin by contacting the classroom teacher. Questions that cannot be resolved at that level may be referred to the building principal or other appropriate District administrator. Formal complaints are addressed through the procedures identified in the Complaints by Students and Parents section of this handbook.

Parent and Student Rights

All fundamental parental rights are exclusively reserved to the parent of a child without obstruction or interference by a government entity in accordance with state and federal law (including without limitation to statutes and the common law) and District policy.

Parents and legal guardians have the right to receive information about and make decisions concerning their child's participation in certain instructional activities, surveys, evaluations, clubs, extracurricular activities, and the disclosure of student information, as provided by state and federal law and District policy.

These rights include the right to:

- Inspect surveys and evaluations and, when applicable, provide consent or decline their child's participation.
- Inspect instructional materials used as part of the educational curriculum, as permitted by law and District policy.
- Request an alternative assignment when instructional material or an activity conflicts with the family's beliefs or practices, in accordance with District procedures.
- Review notices regarding the collection, disclosure, or use of students' personal information.
- Review student education records and request correction of information believed to be inaccurate or misleading.
- Control the disclosure of directory information by submitting the District's directory-information opt-out form within the specified period.
- Withdraw a student from human-sexuality instruction or decline to provide consent for identity instruction, as provided by Montana law and District policy.
- Provide or withhold permission for participation in student clubs and extracurricular activities when parental permission is required.
- Request reconsideration of a book, library resource, or other educational material through the District's established challenged-materials procedure.

Additional information and applicable forms are available from school offices, the District Administration Office, and the District website.

Volunteers

Helena Public Schools values the contributions of parents, guardians, and community members who volunteer in our schools. To promote student safety, all volunteers must receive approval from the building principal or designee and comply with applicable District screening, confidentiality, supervision, and background-check requirements before beginning their service.

Volunteers often work as tutors, mentors, special event organizers, parent council members, guest speakers, classroom assistants, playground monitors, and much more! Whatever your talents or interests, your school welcomes your time and support. If you are interested in volunteering, you can contact your school principal or obtain a Volunteer Application Form [HERE](#) or from your building secretary or the Helena Public Schools Human Resources Department.

All volunteers must:

- Complete required volunteer applications and disclosure forms;
- Follow staff directions and applicable District policies;
- Protect the confidentiality of student information;
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with students and staff;
- Report student-safety concerns promptly to a District employee; and

- Wear required visitor or volunteer identification while on District property.

The District may deny, limit, suspend, or withdraw volunteer approval when necessary to protect student safety or school operations.

Background Checks

Volunteers who may have unsupervised contact with students must complete a fingerprint-based national criminal history background check as required by law and Board Policy 5122.

“Unsupervised contact” means a student is left alone with an adult and directly interacts or communicates with that adult. The Superintendent or designee may also require background checks for other volunteer assignments when necessary to protect student safety.

A brief absence by another adult or interaction in a public setting is not considered unsupervised contact. Volunteers must follow the school’s supervision plan and may not intentionally place themselves alone with a student. The Human Resources Department coordinates background checks. For more information, contact Jacqueline Young at jyoung3@helenaschools.org.

See Board Policy 5122, Criminal Background Investigations.

Participation in Club or Activity

The passage of a law in the 2023 Legislative session requires that parents/guardians must provide **written** permission for a student to participate in a school club or activity.

In the event that your school offers student clubs, activities, events, and programs for students, your school will send a permission form that will need to be completed and signed before your child can participate.

Playground Safety

All Helena Public Elementary Schools want to provide a safe playground experience for all students. To do so playgrounds are supervised by school staff during recesses and before and after school.

Commonly understood and implemented rules are essential to helping make sure everyone is safe.

Custodians are trained to recognize and reduce equipment and surface hazards. Principals, teachers and paraprofessionals are knowledgeable about appropriate activities for the available school playground space and equipment.

Please review the safety rules below with your child. Playground equipment varies by school, but the general safety rules below apply to all playground activities.

General School Playground Safety Rules

1. Always play safe by being careful and showing kindness and respect for others.
2. Never run around or push and pull others while near playground equipment. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
3. Don’t go too close to the front or rear of moving equipment like swings; instead, walk

out around moving equipment.

4. Wear proper clothing. Make sure your shoes are tied and wear clothes that can't get tangled up in playground equipment.
5. When you get off equipment make sure there isn't anyone in the way. If you jump, always bend your knees slightly and land on two feet.
6. Be careful when playing on equipment that may be wet. If it is a very warm day make sure the playground equipment is not too hot to use – like the slide.
7. Take turns and get in a line when more than one person wants to use a piece of equipment. When you share everyone gets a turn.
8. No holding places or cutting in line.
9. Sit properly on equipment and do not overcrowd. If a piece of equipment has a handrail, make sure you hold it at all times.
10. Be sure to ask a playground paraeducator for help if there is a problem or someone is hurt.
11. Listen to and respect the teachers on duty. Follow their directions the first-time directions are given.
12. Leave extra clothes and items you don't need in a designated spot away from the playground equipment.
13. Always make sure the adult on the playground knows if you are going inside before the bell rings.
14. After the bell rings, if you are on the school playground, pick up your belongings and any small equipment you were using.
15. Line up and walk inside the school quietly after you receive directions from the teachers on duty.
16. Leave snow on the ground.

Slides

1. Keep your shoes tied and don't wear any loose strings or clothing on the slide.
2. Be patient and wait your turn in line before getting on the slide ladder.
3. Take one step at a time and hold the handrails with both hands when climbing the ladder to the top of the slide. Never climb or run up the slide surface or the frame.
4. Slide down feet first and sitting up, never head first or on your back, knees or stomach. Go down one at a time with no fancy tricks.
5. Check the bottom of the slide to see if it is clear before sliding down. When you reach the bottom, get off and move away from the end of the slide.
6. On hot days, feel the slide with your hand before climbing to the top. If the side is too warm, don't play on it.

Swings

1. Always sit in the center of the swing; don't stand or kneel. Hold the chains tightly with both hands. Stop the swing completely before getting off.
2. No jumping out of swings, no twisting chains or swinging sideways. Do not swing empty seats!
3. Never double up with two kids to a swing or try to swing too high.
4. Don't push other children on swings. If you cannot start swinging, ask an adult to

- push you softly to get you started.
5. Stay a safe distance from other children on swings being careful not to run or walk in front, in back or between them. Walk out around instead.

Climbing Equipment

1. Hands stay well behind the person in front of you and beware of swinging feet. Never reach for bars or ropes that are too far away.
2. When you drop from the bars or ropes make sure you have enough room to not hit the equipment and hurt yourself. Bend your knees, land on both feet and don't touch others.
3. Don't overcrowd the equipment. Everyone starts from one side and moves in the same direction. When climbing down watch out for those climbing up.
4. Always stay in line, take turns, and never push or try to touch others.

Small Equipment – (balls, skipping ropes, hoops, etc.)

1. Use this equipment in a designated space away from the large equipment.
2. Be careful using this equipment so that you don't interfere with others. Be sure to stay in the designated play space.
3. When you share a ball with others, be sure to take turns and play safely. No rough play allowed!
4. If you are using a ball and it goes outside the play area, ask an adult (teacher) for permission to get it.

Policy Dealing with School Overcrowding

District Placement Grades K- 5

The district will strive to equalize classroom enrollments based on the state standards established by the Office of Public Instruction and the guidelines established by the Helena Board of Trustees. When a parent seeks to enroll a child in a grade level that has reached maximum enrollment allowed under state/district guidelines at any east side elementary school (Bryant, Central, Jefferson, Smith, Warren), the district will determine the placement of the student in a different east side elementary school based on space availability. Transportation will be provided for students to the new school of attendance when they are eligible according to district policy.

When a parent seeks to enroll a child in a grade level that has reached maximum enrollment allowed under state/district guidelines at any west side elementary school (Jim Darcy, Four Georgians, Rossiter, Broadwater, Kessler), the district will determine the placement of the student either on the west side or east side depending on space availability. Transportation will be provided for students to the new school of attendance when they are eligible according to district policy.

Remember, in the event that the grade level you are seeking to enroll your child in is at maximum capacity, the District will locate a classroom in another school that has capacity and will provide transportation.

Parent Choice Grades K- 5

The district will allow parents living within the east side elementary attendance area to request enrollment of their child in any of the east side elementary schools, depending on space availability based on state/district standards. In the event the request is approved, transportation of the student is no longer the district's responsibility. Additionally, the student and parent/guardian must strive to ensure the student is at school each day.

The district will allow parents living within the west side elementary attendance area to request enrollment of their child in any of the east or west side elementary schools, depending on space availability based on state/district standards. In the event the request is approved, transportation of the student is no longer the district's responsibility. Additionally, the student and parent/guardian must strive to ensure the student is at school each day.

Out-of-District Parent Choice Grades K- 5

The placement of out-of-district K-5 students who enroll in the Helena Public Schools will be made to east side elementary schools, depending on space availability based on state/district standards. Transportation of the student is not the district's responsibility.

Students attending a school on either an in-district or out-of-district Parent Choice request must adhere to all school rules and attendance requirements. The District reserves the right to have students return to the school of residence if school rules and attendance requirements are not met.

District Programs Grades K-5

Parents who enroll a child in a district program which is not provided at all elementary schools will be permitted to enroll any siblings in that school. Transportation will be provided to students who attend district programs when they are eligible according to district policy.

Students in district programs will be allowed to enroll in the middle and high school of their choice.

Public Health Emergency

In the event of a declared public health emergency as determined by the Board of Trustees or a public health service the Board authorizes the Superintendent to take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of all students, staff, and visitors to include but not limited to closure of school buildings, implementation of infection control measures, and other appropriate safety actions.

The Superintendent will communicate with parents, citizens, and other stakeholders about the actions to be implemented per this policy.

[See: Board Policy 7061 Public Health Emergency](#)

Recording Meetings – NOT Allowed

For the security and integrity of our school community's communications, recording meetings with school staff is not permitted. This procedure has been implemented to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information exchanged during these discussions and meetings.

The ability to modify or manipulate recorded content raises concerns about the potential misrepresentation of conversations. By not allowing the recording of meetings, our goal is to maintain a transparent and reliable platform for communication among all participants.

The importance of clear and open communication between school staff and stakeholders is very important. If a participant has concerns about retaining accurate information from a meeting the individual is encouraged to take notes or request written summaries from the appropriate staff member.

Release of Students from School

A student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day except with permission from the principal or designee and in accordance with building sign-out procedures or in the instances outlined within the approved Board policies.

Religious Instruction Release Time

In keeping with the United States and Montana Constitutions and judicial decisions, the District may not support any religion or endorse religious activity. At the same time, the District may not prohibit private religious expression by students.

The District provides a religious-instruction released-time program. A student must be released from regular school attendance for the purpose of receiving religious instruction when the student's parent or guardian submits a written request. The written request must be renewed at least annually.

The District will excuse, per parent request, one hour per week of released time for religious instruction. The schedule and arrangements for a student's release must be coordinated with the building principal or designee in accordance with District procedures. Time approved for released-time religious instruction will not negatively affect a student's attendance record or enrollment status. However, students are responsible for making up any missed classwork, assignments, assessments, or instruction, and the District is not responsible for providing additional instruction or opportunities due to time missed while participating in the program. Students will not be academically penalized or discriminated against for participating in approved released-time religious instruction.

Religious instruction may not take place on public school property, and public funds may not be used directly or indirectly for the religious instruction.

The student's parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring that the student is appropriately supervised during the released-time period and returns to school in accordance with the approved schedule. Transportation arrangements must follow District procedures.

[See Board Policy 2103- Religious Instruction](#)

Other Releases During the School Day

Except for an approved religious-instruction released-time program or other legally authorized release, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the instructional day unless the principal or designee grants approval.

A student who needs to leave school during the day must have authorization from the student's parent or guardian and must follow the building's sign-out procedures.

A student who becomes ill during the school day should, with the teacher's permission, report to the school office or school nurse. The administrator, nurse, or designee will determine whether the student should be sent home and will notify the student's parent or guardian.

When there is uncertainty regarding custodial rights, the District will rely on the most recent information available in the student's records. A student will be released to a previously unauthorized adult only with prior authorization from the custodial parent or guardian, unless an emergency situation justifies an exception.

Religious Practices

Each student has a right to individually, voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. Students may also pray in groups and discuss their religious views with other students as long as they are not disruptive or coercive. The school will not require, encourage, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity. Student prayer, even if nonsectarian or non-proselytizing, will not be broadcast over the school public address system.

Students may study religions ancillary to the studies of human history and development and various national, cultural, and ethnic groups. This study will give neither preferential nor derogatory treatment to any religion or religious belief. The inclusion of religious music, symbols, art, or writings during instruction or in school programs or performances may occur where the religious content has a historical and/or independent educational purpose consistent with the approved curriculum. A student may read the Bible or other religious material during free reading time or when self-selected and consistent with a classroom or course requirements.

See: Board Policy 2103 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs

Saturday School

In emergencies, including during reasonable efforts of the trustees to make up aggregate hours of instruction lost during a declaration of emergency by the trustees under Section 20-9-806, MCA, pupil instruction may be conducted on a Saturday when it is approved by the trustees.

Pupil instruction may be held on a Saturday at the discretion of a school district for the purpose of providing additional pupil instruction beyond the minimum aggregate hours of instruction required in Section 20-1-301, MCA, provided student attendance is voluntary.

See also Board Policy 2005 School Year – Calendar- and- Day

School Age Child Care Program Information (SACC)

SACC Information for Parents

The School-Age Child Care Program is available for elementary school-age children (grades K-5) who are currently enrolled as students in the Helena School District.

Schedule 2026-2027

The School Age Child Care Program will serve children during scheduled school days and most major breaks and holidays. Separate registration and prepayments are required for out of school time. For general information, contact Kirstan 324-1260 or kroush@helenaschools.org. For registration and billing questions, contact Jamie at 324-2119 or jmerrill@helenaschools.org. Please see the SACC page of the district website and the digital SACC Family Handbook for more detailed information. <http://www.helenaschools.org/departments/school-age-child-care>

**Payments may be paid at www.myprocare.com or mailed to:
Helena School District #1/SACC Program**

**1325 Poplar St.
Helena, MT 59601**

Do not send payments to the school site

2026 – 2027 SACC Fees are updated on the SACC page of the District website.

The SACC Program is a licensed program and accepts the Best Beginnings scholarship. For families who believe they may qualify for a scholarship, contact Child Care Connections (CCC) at (406) 587-7786 and start an application. CCC will determine eligibility and will determine financial assistance for their funding. The parent is responsible for the full amount of the bill until all paperwork is completed and coverage has been approved by CCC. Scholarship families are required to report change of sites for full days to their case worker or risk being billed the daily rate.

School Bus Transportation/District Bus Services

Helena Public Schools has elected to provide student transportation services as allowed by the Montana Codes Annotated (MCA 20-10-121). The District's Transportation Department strives to provide safe, reliable and professional transportation services for its students. The primary mode of transportation offered is on school buses that are operated by First Student, a private vendor under a contract managed by the District's Transportation Department. This section of the Student Handbook is designed to provide an overview and reference information for the bus services offered. For information regarding bus behavior conduct guidelines and consequences please refer to the section of the handbook entitled "Student Responsibility and Codes of Conduct – Section 9.0". Do not hesitate to contact the District's Transportation Department if you have questions or require additional information. Our contact information is:

Transportation Department/Helena Public Schools

3020 Big Sky Loop, Helena, Montana 59602

Phone: 324-2100

Email: transportation@helenaschools.org

Website: <https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/>

Busing Eligibility

A student is eligible for district-provided transportation if they*:

- Resides in an attendance area and the student's residence is more than 3 miles from the school for high school students or outside the established walk zone for K-8 students as defined for each individual school's attendance area. Busing eligibility walk zone information may be reviewed on the district's website (<https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/>)
- Resides in the school's area of attendance and has an Individual Education Plan (IEP – Special Needs) that includes transportation as a related service in the IEP.

A student is ineligible for district-provided transportation if they*:

1. Lives less than 3 miles from the school of attendance for high school students or within a K-8 walkzone.
2. Resides in a District that does not have an applicable transportation agreement with the Helena Public Schools.
3. Resides beyond his/her school's attendance boundary as the result of a Parent Choice Boundary Exception, regardless of mileage to the school of attendance.
4. Has been temporarily placed in a District program for less than 15 days.
5. Loses riding privileges for discipline reasons.

As defined by MCA 20-10-101(5) 2015: "Transportation" means: a district's conveyance of a pupil by a school bus between the pupil's legal residence or an officially designated bus stop and the school designated by the trustees for the pupil's attendance; or

(a) "individual transportation" by which a district is relieved of actually conveying a pupil. Individual transportation may include paying the parent or guardian for conveying the pupil, reimbursing the parent or guardian for the pupil's board and room, or providing supervised correspondence study or supervised home study.

Inclement Weather and Bus Delays or Cancellations

In case of severe weather or other emergencies, official information about school closings will be broadcast on the local radio stations. Information will also be posted on the district web site.

(<https://helenaschools.org/>), the Transportation department's webpage <https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/>, Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HSD1Transportation/>), via Bright Arrow and via the Parent Portal app.

If there are inclement weather delays or canceled bus routes, information will be announced on media outlets through the Lincoln Center Administration Office.

Bus Registration

Bus registration should be completed each school year. Students are not rolled over from one year to the next. All bus registrations will need to be submitted through our Parent Portal App or in-person. For more information on our Parent Portal app, please visit

<https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/parent-portal/>

High School students who reside under the 3-mile limit and Elementary/Middle School students residing within the walk zones prepared for each K-5 and Middle School may register to ride; however eligibility is determined upon the availability of an established bus route and bus capacity busing for students that do not live within the designated transportation areas shall be provided on a first come - first serve basis and are only granted on a case by case basis. Please call the Transportation Department for more information.

Guest Pass

Students who are not registered riders may ride a bus with a registered bus student as a guest. Students will need to get a 1-day pass from their school of attendance. Students must have a note

from a guardian that states who they will be riding with, the bus number and the location of the bus stop. The note must be verified by the school and signed off by the principal or designated school official. Students who do not follow the guest pass procedures will not be allowed to ride the school bus.

Bus Routes, Stops and Schedules

The bus stops are created with safety taking precedence over convenience. Bus routes are developed with safety and efficiency as top priorities. Roads must be county or city maintained for buses to traverse them. The district recognizes the travel time on buses extends the day for students. The district strives to minimize the time students must ride the bus. Transfer buses are used to minimize ride times for students given the geographic locations and numbers of school sites the district operates. Bus routes, stops and schedules are approved by the Lewis and Clark County Transportation Committee in June of each year.

Students are recommended to be at the bus stops 5 minutes prior to the scheduled time of arrival. Buses can arrive up to 2 minutes prior to their scheduled-pickup time. If the bus does not arrive as scheduled (up to 15 minutes late), please call the First Student dispatcher at 227-7400. Afternoon routes may arrive early at their designated stop due to a wide range of circumstances; Monday early outs, lack of student loads, district early releases, etc. The individual students, and their parents, are responsible for the student's behavior and conduct until the student has boarded or departed the bus.

Parent Portal Program

1. Parents may register for a free application to track the location of their student's bus. This application allows parents to see if their bus is running on time.
2. All bus students will be asked to carry a bus card. This card will inform parents when their student's bus stop was picked up, via push notification message.
3. If parents have any questions about Parent Portal, they should contact the Helena Public Schools Transportation Office.

Parent Pickup Program

Parents of kindergarten and first grade students are asked by the Helena Public Schools Transportation Department to request an escort for their student(s). The program was created to ensure the safe delivery of our most vulnerable student population. A parent or guardian is required to submit an escort form if their kindergarten or first grade students' must be accompanied by an adult off the bus. An example of a designated individual would be a grandparent, an older brother or sister, a neighbor, etc. Kindergarten and first grade students who have opt-in to the program and are not met at their bus stop will be delivered back to the nearest school site SACC program. Parents will be contacted for pickup locations. The opt-in permission form is available online [at https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/parent-portal](https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/parent-portal) or it can be submitted manually via email or regular mail.

Transportation of School Related and Non-School Related Items

Contraband, weapons, flammable liquids, animals or other dangerous, objectionable or non-

school related items shall not be transported on a school bus. School related items transported on the bus shall be small enough to be transported on the student's lap, adjacent seat or under the seat of the bus. School related items that would block exit isles or extend above the back of the seat will not be transported on the school bus. If you are unsure if an item is allowed, please contact the Transportation Department prior to the day your child plans on transporting the material or object.

Bus Behavior Conduct Guidelines and Consequences

Each transported student has the right to a safe and enjoyable ride to and from school that is free from intimidation, threat or harassment. Good conduct of all transported students while waiting for the school bus and while traveling to and from school is primary for a safe and enjoyable ride for all students. The transportation department's bus standards for safe riding practices are available online at <https://helenaschools.org/departments/transportation/bus-riding-standards/>

The School District has established student behavior procedures that apply to all transported students while on the school bus and while in school bus loading or unloading areas. The bus and the bus stop are extensions of the school day. Each individual student, as well as his/her parents, or guardians, is responsible for the behavior of that student while on the school bus and in school bus loading or unloading areas.

Transportation service is a privilege that is granted by the district to eligible students and their parents or guardians that is contingent upon proper behavior according to established district policies, rules and standards. A student's eligibility to ride the school bus may be suspended or revoked for a violation of school bus safety or conduct rules and standards, or for violation of any other law or policy governing student conduct on a school bus. Revocation of a student's bus riding privileges is not considered an exclusion, expulsion or suspension from school, however unacceptable conduct on the school bus may result in suspension or expulsion from school. It shall be the responsibility of the parent or guardian to transport students to and from school when bus riding privileges are revoked. The district will not provide alternative transportation to a student whose transportation privileges have been suspended or revoked. (Decisions regarding special education students will consider related disabilities and individual education requirements pertaining to transportation).

Suspension or expulsion from school may also result in suspension from district sponsored transportation services.

It is important to note that students may also be suspended or expelled from riding any district sponsored transportation services for conduct violations occurring on school district buses even if they are still being allowed to attend school.

Corrective Disciplinary Action

Minimum Corrective Action: Driver identifies the unacceptable behavior and informs the student of the intent to complete a conduct report if the behavior continues.

Maximum Corrective Action: Unlimited transportation services suspension, school suspension, expulsion, and/or police notification.

Bus Seatbelt Procedures

It is the goal of the Helena Public Schools Transportation Dept. to provide the safest student transportation system available. The District requires that all students riding the school district buses comply with state law regarding the use of seatbelts. Students 6 years old or younger that are less than 60 pounds are required to utilize child seats and wear 5-point safety harnesses. Students who may require assistance in using seat belts should ask the bus driver for help so that all students are safely belted in their seats before the bus is put in motion. Drivers will announce prior to the bus leaving that each student needs to be in their assigned seat with seatbelts fastened. Students refusing to use seatbelts in a legal and safe manner will be subject to school district disciplinary actions. Repeated refusal to wear seatbelts will result in suspended riding privileges from the bus.

Helena Public Schools Transportation Video and Audio

All buses are equipped with audio and video capabilities. The school district will only retain approximately 2 weeks of audio and video storage history. The Helena School District does not guarantee the working operation of the surveillance system and therefore cannot guarantee the storage of up to 2 weeks of surveillance storage. Individuals who would like to view information pertaining to their child should make an appointment with the School District Transportation Department. Copies of bus video will not be released except under the request of a court-ordered subpoena.

Transportation Questions

Parents who have any questions or require additional information are encouraged to contact the Helena School District Transportation Department at 324-2100.

School Safety

The personal safety of its students is of great importance to the Helena Public Schools. Thus, every possible consideration will be taken to manage and enhance conditions within the schools so that each student can feel secure, safe and unthreatened. To this end, standard safety precautions will be taken in all arenas of the school program and school facility.

Service Animals

The District complies with all state and federal laws, regulations, and rules regarding the use of service animals by students, staff, or community members when the service animal is required because the individual has a disability and the service animal is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of that individual.

Please contact the school office or the District Administration Office for more information and/or procedures related to the use of service animals in schools.

[See: Board Policy 4035 Service Animals and 4036, Facility/Therapy Dogs](#)

Sexual Harassment

Helena Public Schools prohibits sex discrimination and sexual harassment. Students and

parents should promptly report concerns to a teacher, principal, or the District's Title IX Coordinator. For definitions, coordinator contact information, reporting options, and grievance procedures, see "Nondiscrimination and Complaint Procedures" on pages 20–22.

Student Discipline

Students are expected to conduct themselves within the bounds set by the Board and the administrative regulations set forth by the Superintendent. Consideration for the rights and well-being of others, cooperation with all members of the school community, and respect for oneself and others are the basic principles guiding student behavior.

The primary responsibility for student discipline within the school rests with the principal. The primary responsibility for the maintenance of discipline within the classroom lies with the individual classroom teacher. Corporal punishment shall not be used. Corporal punishment does not include reasonable force as needed to maintain safety for students, staff, or other persons, or for the purpose of self-defense or defense of property.

Disciplinary action may be taken against any student in violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Disciplinary action may range from conferring with a teacher to expulsion from school. Continued infractions will have a cumulative effect in terms of disciplinary action.

These grounds stated below for disciplinary action apply whenever a student's conduct is reasonably related to school or school activities, including, but not limited to the circumstances set forth below:

- On, or within sight of, school grounds before, during, or after school hours or at any other time when school is being used by a school group;
- Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school;
- Travel to and from school or a school activity, function, or event;
- Anywhere if conduct may reasonably be considered to be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member, an interference with school purposes or an educational function, a threat to the safety and welfare of the student population or conduct that detrimentally affects the climate or efficient operations of the school.

[See: Board Policy 3050 Student Discipline](#)

Student Insurance

Neither the Helena School District nor individual schools provide accident or medical insurance coverage for students. Insurance coverage for students is made available through a private company for a minimum fee. If you do not have insurance, this is an excellent opportunity to obtain low-cost coverage while your child is at school.

Insurance information is distributed at the beginning of the school year. Please review the information carefully, consider the benefits of such coverage, and complete the application as

per instructions.

Threat Assessment Protocol

The safety of all students and staff is a priority for the Helena Public Schools. A threat assessment protocol has been designed for use with students who are engaged in situations that are determined to suggest harmful or dangerous behavior. Parents will be informed and involved throughout the process.

The following objectives are key components of the process:

- Identify and assess threats to determine the level of concern and action required.
- Administer a formal screener if the threat is determined to be viable.
- Organize resources and strategies to manage situations that involve students that pose threats to other students, the staff and/or the community.
- Maintain a culture of safety among students, teachers and parents and foster a learning environment that is free from harmful or dangerous behavior.

Visitor Procedure

Helena Public Schools welcomes families and community members into our schools and appreciates the time and support they provide. Visitors, volunteers, and field trip chaperones help strengthen our schools and support student learning. The following procedures help us maintain a safe, welcoming, and well-organized environment.

General Guidance

As a safety measure, we ask that ALL visitors to the building enter through the main entrance, report to the office, complete sign-in procedures, and make your presence known to staff. You will be issued an identification badge when you check in.

Please note the following:

- If you are picking up a student before school is dismissed, please come to the office and ask the office staff to call the child from his/her classroom. Please do not go directly to the classroom.
- Each morning, all outside doors will be locked except the main entrance. Parents and others must enter through the main entrance.
- Exterior doors remain locked during the school day, and students are taught not to open locked doors for anyone during the school day. Please help us by using the main entrance doors even at dismissal.
- It will be our practice to question anyone in our school whom we do not know.

Student Procedures

Students who want to have out-of-town visitors, or students who are not regularly enrolled in school, are not permitted to visit or join classes during school hours unless a written request has been submitted to the principal and the principal authorizes the visit.

Volunteer Procedures

Volunteers must receive approval from the school, complete any required forms, sign in at the office each time they volunteer, and wear an identification badge. The volunteer sign-in information helps the District track volunteer service and maintain an accurate record of who is in the building. Volunteers must follow staff directions, school procedures, and any assigned supervision plan. Volunteers must not intentionally place themselves alone with a student.

Pet Procedures

Students and families who wish to bring a pet to school must receive prior approval from the building principal. All pets visiting the school must be current on required vaccinations. Service animals and approved facility or therapy dogs are governed by applicable Board policies and procedures.

See: Board Policies 4020, Visitors to the Schools; 4036, Facility/Therapy Dogs; and 5122, Criminal Background Investigations.

Videotaping of Students

The District has the right to use security and surveillance video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District facilities and equipment.

Video cameras may be used in locations as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent. Students in violation of Board policies, administrative regulations, building rules, or law shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Others may be referred to law enforcement agencies.

Students may be videoed at events and practices open to the public, including but not limited to public performances, dress rehearsals, athletic practices open to the public and athletic competitions.

Video recordings from security and surveillance cameras may become a part of a student's educational record. The District shall comply with all applicable state and federal laws related to record maintenance and retention. Signs will be posted at various locations to inform students, staff, and members of the public that video surveillance cameras are in use.

The District will seek consent before recording students individually in the classroom.

Weapons

Gun Free Schools

The Board will follow federal law for any student who uses, possesses, controls, or transfers a firearm on school property. The Board hereby authorizes the Superintendent to modify the disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis, including eliminating the requirement for expulsion.

The administrator may immediately suspend a student if, prior to a hearing, there is cause to believe the student brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school. In the case of a firearm violation the student may be expelled if the trustees find that the student knowingly

brought a firearm to school or possessed a firearm at school.

Possession of a Weapon in a School Building

The District will refer to law enforcement any person who possesses, carries, or stores a weapon in a school building, except as provided below. For the purposes of this section only, “school building” means all buildings owned or leased by the District that are used for instruction or for student activities; “weapon” means any type of firearm (including but not limited to imitation, look-alike, replica and toy firearms), a knife with a blade 4 or more inches in length, a sword, a straight razor, a throwing star, nun-chucks, brass or other metal knuckles, or any other article or instrument possessed with the purpose to commit a criminal offense. The Board may grant persons advance permission to possess, carry, or store a weapon in a school building. All persons who wish to possess, carry, or store a weapon in a school building must request permission of the Board at a regular meeting. The Board has sole discretion in deciding whether to allow a person to possess, carry, or store a weapon in a school building.

[See also Board Policy 3050 Student Discipline](#)

Academic Program

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction are of central importance in developing policy and determining goals for Helena School District No. 1. Curriculum and instruction are the core of the educational program of the Helena School District and exist for the sole purpose of preparing students for life. Questions regarding curriculum may be directed to your child’s teacher, the building principal, or the District Curriculum Administrator at 324-2002.

Grading and Reporting Student Progress

Helena Public Schools uses Standards-Based Grading in its elementary schools. Standards-Based Grading provides families with clear information about what students are expected to know and do at each grade level and how well they are progressing toward those learning standards. Rather than relying only on traditional letter grades or percentages, teachers use classroom work, observations, assessments, and other evidence collected over time to determine each student’s current level of learning.

Elementary report cards communicate student progress using the following proficiency descriptions:

- **Meets Standards Consistently:** The student demonstrates the skills independently, accurately, and consistently over time.
- **Progressing Toward Meeting Standards:** The student demonstrates the skills independently most of the time but may still make occasional errors.
- **Support Needed to Meet Standards:** The student demonstrates a basic understanding but continues to need guidance or support.

- **Does Not Yet Meet Standards:** The student is developing foundational understanding and requires significant support.

Report cards are provided three times during the school year. Parent-teacher conferences, assessments, classroom communication, and report cards work together to provide a complete picture of student growth. Families are encouraged to contact their child's teacher whenever they have questions about progress, proficiency ratings, or ways to support learning at home.

Building administration makes final promotion decisions after considering multiple educational factors, including successful completion of the curriculum, attendance, classroom performance, and District assessments.

[See Board Policy 2080, Grading, Progress Reports and Promotion.](#)

Advanced Services

The Helena Public Schools provides a comprehensive array of services for identified GT students (PreK-12).

All students of all ability levels are provided differentiated opportunities at their building and from their classroom teacher. Starting in grade 3, identified learners can also opt into receiving a specialized curriculum via separate classroom services (i.e., pull-out model) in the following strands: critical thinking, problem solving, logical reasoning, communication skills, leadership, research, technology, creativity, intrapersonal skills, and interpersonal skills. These activities are specially designed for gifted students to team with other gifted students from the district as they develop lifelong learning skills. Students who qualify for services are identified through the District's Universal Screening process in grade 2.

Specialized services include:

- Consultations to parents and district employees
- Identification for pull-out services through multi-factored assessments
- Weekly thematic pull-out intervention services for identified students in grades 3-5
- Twice-weekly lunch labs for identified students in grades 6-7
- Monthly intensive seminar pull-out services for identified students in grades 6-7
- Weekly meetings for identified students in grades 8-12
- Multi-day symposiums for identified students in grades 8-12
- Parenting initiatives: speaker series, discussion groups, and conferences
- Academic acceleration through a referral process
- Leadership Conference (grades 3 - high school) each spring

Human Sexuality Instruction or Identity Instruction

A parent, guardian, or other person who is responsible for the care of a student may refuse to allow the student to attend or may withdraw the students from human sexuality instruction. The withdrawal or refusal to attend is an excused absence. Human sexuality instruction is instruction that has the goal or purpose of studying, exploring, or informing students about intimate relationships, sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual acts, abstinence, contraception, or reproductive rights and responsibilities. These absences do not count toward the student's discretionary 10-day total.

Written consent from the parent or legal guardian is required prior to any student attending identity instruction. Identity instruction is instruction that has the goal or purpose of studying, exploring, or informing students about gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. A student is excused from not attending identity instruction unless the student's parent/guardian provided written consent for the student to be in attendance prior to the instruction.

The District will provide parents/guardians with at least five (5) school days' notice (but not more than 14 school days notice) before human sexuality or identity instruction is scheduled to occur.

[See also Board Policy 2016 Human Sexuality Instruction](#)

Kindergarten and Early Learning Entry Requirements

Kindergarten Entry Requirements

Montana State law states a child must be five years old on or before September 10 of the current school year in which they enter Kindergarten. A **birth certificate** is required at the time of registration as is a **record of completed immunizations**. Physical and dental examinations are recommended for children entering the Helena Schools for the first time, as well as students entering seventh grade. Health forms, available in the doctor's office, should be completed and presented to the school at the time of registration.

A kindergarten program that is designated as a full-time program must allow a parent, guardian, or other person who is responsible for the enrollment of a child in school, as provided in MCA 20-5-102, to enroll the child half-time.

KinderSprouts Entry Requirements

Helena Public Schools offers KinderSprouts, a free, full-day early-learning program for qualifying four-year-old children. The program is designed to strengthen early literacy, early numeracy, language, social-emotional development, and other skills that support a successful transition to kindergarten.

KinderSprouts is an early-learning program and is separate from kindergarten enrollment. A child participating in KinderSprouts may not repeat the program under any circumstances. If a child is enrolled in KinderSprouts with Helena Public School District, the family is still required to complete the regular kindergarten registration process for the following school year.

To be considered for the 2026–27 KinderSprouts program, a child must be four years old on or before September 10. **Participation in developmental and academic-readiness screening is required; currently enrolled students are not entitled to a spot in the program.** Screening information is used to determine whether the child would benefit from early literacy or early numeracy intervention, and will, for the purpose of programming, be monitored yearly for continued eligibility for summer Jump Start programming. Reference MT Code § 20-7-1803 (2025) and Board Policy 2165. Screening dates for the next school year will be announced through district communications late Fall.

Participation in the screening process does not guarantee placement. Enrollment is limited and is based on program eligibility, available classroom space, and District enrollment procedures.

Eligible children may be placed on a waiting list when available spaces have been filled. Families participating in the screening and enrollment process should be prepared to provide:

- A completed District enrollment form.
- A copy of the child's birth certificate.
- Immunization records or documentation of an allowable exemption.
- A completed student health form.
- A completed home-language survey.
- Proof of current residence.
- Other District enrollment forms, as applicable.

Program locations, screening dates, enrollment timelines, and available spaces may change from year to year. You can find current information on the District's [KinderSprouts webpage](#) or by contacting the District at 406-324-2032.

KinderSprouts is distinct from the District's preschool special-education program. Families who have concerns about the development of a child between three and five years of age may contact the District's Child Find program to request information about developmental screening and possible special-education services.

The District's Child Find program provides scheduled screenings for children ages three through five who may have developmental delays or disabilities. It is recommended that families contact the Special Education and Student Services Department for more information on yearly updated Child Find dates and processes.

See: Board Policy 2165- Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Programs

Libraries

The library is an integral part of the educational program of each elementary student. School Libraries are staffed by certified professional librarians who provide instruction in information research skills and serve as a resource person for the educational program. In each library, circulation procedures follow standard library practices.

All school library collections are accessible via the District website at the following address:

https://hsd1.follettdestiny.com/common/welcome.jsp?context=saas32_2532340 .

Additionally, you can access periodical databases, World Book Online Encyclopedia, and Tumblebook Talking Book Library via the District web site.

Drop by your school library and check out what your library can do for you!

Multi Linguistic Learners

Helena Public Schools has the responsibility under federal law to serve students who have limited English and need English instructional services. The District will ensure opportunities are provided for parents to meet with building principals and teachers, provide information how parents can be

involved in their child's education, and how parents can help their child attain English proficiency and succeed in school. The District works hard to provide information to parents in a format and language that they can understand.

Each year, within 30 days of the start of the school year or the student's enrollment if after the start, the District will notify parents of a student identified as limited English proficiency of the reasons their child has so been identified, the child's level of English proficiency and how it was assessed, the methods of instruction used in its programs and others, how its program will help their child, and when the child is expected to gain English proficiency.

The District will provide notice to parents of limited English students when the child fails to make progress on annual achievement objectives within 30 days of learning of such status.

Parents seeking more information about the District's identification of and programs for students with limited English proficiency should contact Kaitlyn Hess at 406-324-2027.

Montessori Charter School

The Helena Public School's Montessori Program became a Charter School during the 2024-2025 school year. The Montessori Charter provides an alternative instructional model for students who are enrolled in the school district for grades Kindergarten through grade five.

To allow each child to develop emotionally, intellectually, and physically at the child's own pace, the Montessori classroom is organized to provide freedom of movement and selection of activities. Within a framework of respect for the rights of others, the child learns to take responsibility for his/her own actions and learning. The teacher's job is to observe the child, to prepare the environment to meet each child's needs, to guide the child in the use of learning materials, and to be a positive role model in interpersonal relationships. Parents are strongly encouraged to participate extensively in a support system both within and outside of the classroom.

Montessori classrooms are currently located at Broadwater, Central and Smith Schools and only two Kindergarten classrooms, one at Smith and one at Central. Selection for enrollment in the Montessori Charter School is determined by lottery drawing. The lottery is held annually in the spring to determine Kindergarten and first grade enrollment depending on available seats.

Families should know some important information about the lottery:

- A student entering the Montessori program as a Kindergarten must meet the enrollment requirements (5 before September 10th) and will be placed with same-aged peers in the program.
- If a student's name is selected during the lottery process, the spot offered is the spot available at the selected school; transfer requests are not available.
- If a family chooses to forgo their spot because they would like a spot at a different school, the student's name will be placed last on the waitlist for the desired location and grade.

- Waiting lists are maintained for parents interested in Montessori enrollment in grades two, three, and four.

Special Education Services

Helena Public School District #1 is committed to the rights of ALL children and to providing specially designed programming to meet their individual needs.

A child's educational future depends on active parent participation and commitment to this important educational process. It is important to take an active role to ensure that your child, if eligible, fully benefits from the many Special Education services available in Helena. If you are concerned with your child's progress in school, please contact the appropriate school staff and share your concerns. Refer to Procedural Safeguards in Special Education for students identified as having a disability under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

<https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page%20Files/Special%20Education/Guides/ProceduralSafeguards.pdf?ver=2020-12-22-085315-637>

PreK -12th Grade Child Find

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires Helena Public School District #1 to have a practical method to locate, evaluate, and identify all children who have a disability and need special education and related services.

Child Find includes:

- Preschool transition from the IDEA Part C Early Intervention Program;
- Preschool screening activities that reach out to the community at large, including private and home schools, as well as local Head Start programs; and
- School-based pre-referral activities for school-age students (K – 12th grade).

Preschool Child Find Clinics, for children aged 3 to 5, are scheduled 8 times a year to identify, locate, and evaluate all children suspected of having a disability. Screening is by appointment only and can be made by calling 324-1200.

Trailhead Program

Trailhead early intervention ~~programing~~ programming is designed for eligible preschool and elementary school students who have an autism diagnosis, average to high cognition, present with significant behavioral challenges, and meet other established criteria related to communication needs and adaptive skills. The program prepares them for a successful journey through school and in life. As part of the ~~programing~~ programming, children will be taught skills that will allow them to develop friendships, communicate with others, meet classroom expectations, and access the curriculum in more generalized settings. Students who have been referred by their IEP teams and who meet the entry criteria enter the Preschool/Kindergarten Trailhead 1 program at Ray Bjork Learning Center or the elementary Trailhead 2 program at Central School beginning in first grade.

Functional Life Skills Program

The purpose of the Functional Skills program is to provide intervention and support necessary for students on IEPs with intensive academic, physical, social communication, and regulation needs. Functional Life Skills programs are designed to serve students who may have significant cognitive delays, intensive physical needs, mobility and transfer needs, significant communication needs, multiple disabilities or significant adaptive skill deficits Kindergarten through fifth grade students who have been referred by their IEP teams and who meet the entry criteria attend the elementary FLS program located at Central School.

Day Treatment Program for Students in Need of a Therapeutic Setting

Helena Public School District #1 and Shodair work together to serve children in Kindergarten through fifth grade who have a high level of behavioral needs in combination with emotional disabilities that impact their successful functioning in their home, school, and community. The purpose is to work collaboratively, with families, schools, and communities, to support the child in the most normative home and school environment possible. This is accomplished through relationships that are formed in the classroom and psychotherapy settings. The program's goal is to help children and their families before more restrictive and expensive levels of care are needed. The Day Treatment Therapeutic Learning Center supports and empowers children to attain increased social integration, normative functioning, and self-sufficiency. Kindergarten through fifth grade students who have been referred by their IEP teams and who meet the clinical criteria attend the elementary Day Treatment TLC program located at Ray Bjork Learning Center.

Special Education K – 12th Grade Programming

Helena Public School District #1 offers a continuum of special education services in each of our elementary, middle and high schools for children who have been identified with a disability and are eligible for special education and related service under IDEA). If you are concerned with your child's progress in school, please contact the appropriate school staff and share your concerns.

Screening Services for Helena Students

Speech & Language - Kindergarten students may be screened for speech and language problems based on consultation between the educator and the speech language pathologist.

Vision & Hearing – PreK – 12th Grade students may be screened for vision & hearing concerns based on consultation between the educator, school nurse and/or speech language pathologist (hearing).

Academic - Students K - 12 will be screened through the referral process for any academic difficulties.

Methods of screening may include checklists, observations, and formal instruments. Parents will be notified of any unusual performance and recommendations will be offered for further evaluation.

For further information contact the Special Education Office at 324-2005.

Student Assessment

Student assessment is recognized as a fundamental approach to providing information about individual differences, scholastic aptitude, readiness, interests, and achievement as well as curriculum development and program evaluation.

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), each school is required to teach a rigorous curriculum aligned to the state academic standards and ensure a high-quality education for all students through a system of assessment and accountability. The results of both district and state assessments inform instructional decisions at the classroom and building level. Ongoing classroom assessments are also utilized to further inform instructional decisions.

Our schools administer the following District benchmark assessments:

Acadience is a reading assessment for students in kindergarten and first grade. The assessment is given three times a year and identifies specific areas to improve student's reading ability.

iReady is a criterion-based assessment given to students in grade 1 (math only), and grades 2-5 that includes diagnostic assessments given three times a year to identify student's areas of improvement as well as regular progress monitoring between benchmarks that determine if the instructional programming is on target for filling gaps in student learning.

NWEA MAP is designed to measure student achievement and academic growth in reading and mathematics given to students in grades 9 and 10.

Our schools administer the following State standardized assessments:

Montana Aligned to Standards Through Year Assessment (MAST~~S~~) is a ~~new~~ state assessment for grades 3-8 in math and reading. It replaces the former SBAC assessment. These assessments are given throughout the year in the form of test lets.

Montana Science Assessment (MSA) is given each year in grades 5 and 8. It is the general science assessment for academic state achievement reporting in Grades 5 and 8. The MSA is aligned to Montana Content Standards (2016) in Science. It is used to provide state, district, school, and individual student achievement information on the state- adopted content standards in science

College Board ACT (ACT) is given to all 11th graders. The ACT serves as Montana's statewide high school assessment under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as well as a National College Admission Exam that tests areas of English, Math, Reading, Science and Writing. This is a great opportunity for students to take a college entrance exam, at no cost, during the school day.

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) and Alternative Montana Science Assessment are two assessments offered to special education students who meet criteria. These assessments are offered in reading, math, and science and are alternatives to the MAST and/or ACT.

Student Support: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Helena Public Schools uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, commonly referred to as MTSS, to help meet the academic, behavioral, attendance, and social-emotional needs of students. MTSS is a general-education framework that combines high-quality instruction, early identification of student needs, evidence-based supports, collaborative decision-making, and ongoing progress monitoring.

The goal of MTSS is to provide students with appropriate assistance as early as possible and to adjust instruction or intervention based on each student's response.

Identification of Student Needs

Schools use multiple sources of information to identify student strengths and needs. These may include:

- Classroom assignments and assessments.
- Teacher observations.
- Universal screening and benchmark assessments.
- Diagnostic assessments.
- Attendance and engagement information.
- Behavioral and social-emotional information.
- Progress-monitoring results.
- Information provided by students and families.

No single assessment or source of information is used by itself to make instructional decisions.

Levels of Instruction and Support

MTSS includes multiple levels of support:

- **Tier 1 — Core instruction:** All students receive high-quality, standards-aligned instruction in the general-education classroom. Teachers use differentiation, flexible grouping, and other instructional strategies to address differences in student readiness and learning needs.
- **WIN and flexible-group support:** Elementary schools may use What I Need, or WIN, groups to provide additional instruction, practice, reteaching, enrichment, or extension based on current student needs. Group membership is flexible and may change as students demonstrate growth or develop different needs.
- **Tier 2 — Targeted support:** Students who need additional instruction receive targeted, evidence-based support in addition to core classroom instruction. Tier 2 services may be provided individually or in small groups.
- **Tier 3 — Intensive support:** Students with significant or persistent needs may receive more intensive, individualized, and frequent intervention in addition to core instruction.

Movement among levels of support is flexible. Decisions are based on the student's needs, progress, and response to instruction rather than on a fixed sequence or a predetermined amount of time.

Collaborative Student-Support Teams

A school-based student-support team may assist in reviewing student information, identifying needs, selecting appropriate strategies, and monitoring progress. Depending on the student's needs, the team may include:

- The student's classroom teacher.
- Interventionists or instructional specialists.
- School counselors, psychologists, nurses, or social workers.
- Special-education or related-service personnel.
- The building principal or designee.
- Other staff members with relevant knowledge.
- The student's parent or guardian.
- The student, when developmentally appropriate.

The team develops or recommends supports, identifies how progress will be measured, and reviews whether the support is producing the intended results.

Progress Monitoring and Family Communication

Student progress is monitored regularly to determine whether instruction and interventions are effective. Based on the information collected, the school may continue, adjust, intensify, or discontinue a support.

Parents and guardians will be informed when their child receives targeted or intensive research-based interventions, in accordance with applicable law and District policy. Families are encouraged to share relevant information, ask questions, and participate in planning and reviewing supports for their child.

Participation in MTSS does not mean that a student has a disability. MTSS does not replace or limit the rights of a student or parent under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504. A parent or guardian may request an evaluation when they believe their child may have a disability and need special education or accommodations.

[See Board Policy 2130, Response to Intervention.](#)

Title I

Title I is a federally funded program authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that provides additional educational support to elementary and secondary schools. The program is designed to help students who are at risk of academic difficulty meet challenging state academic standards. Title I funds are used to provide supplemental instruction, interventions, and support services to improve student achievement.

District Title I allocations are based on the socioeconomic status of students, as determined by participation in the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program.

Helena Public Schools operates schoolwide Title I programs. In a schoolwide program, all students are eligible to benefit from Title I services, while additional supports and interventions

are provided to students identified as having the greatest academic need.

We invite you to visit our Title I schools and classrooms. If your child attends a Title I school, please consider getting involved with parent and family engagement activities. We also want to encourage you to volunteer in your child's school. If you wish to be a volunteer, you may complete the Volunteer Registration included in this handbook, or it is available online at <http://www.helenaschools.org>.

Helena School District #1 2026-2027

Technology Use Agreement for Students in Grades K-5

Helena School District #1 uses voice, data, and video electronic communication systems, including but not limited to devices, networks, servers, and hosted services, that allow educational opportunities for students and staff to communicate, collaborate, learn, and publish information. These system resources must be used to support education and/or research, and all student use must adhere to the educational goals and objectives of the district. Communications using the district systems are not private. Systems support and maintenance may require review and inspection of network activity, to include but not limited to student files and email.

21st Century Learning Skills require that students collaborate, think critically, communicate, create and innovate. There are many technological tools that support the development of 21st century skills (e.g., blogs, wikis, social networking sites, etc.). The district supports the use of these tools to enhance and enrich the learning and teaching environment. These tools must be used in support of education and not interfere with other student use of the systems.

Internet Filtering Statement

To comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act and to the extent practical, technology protection measures shall be used to block or filter as defined by law. Filtering is by no means meant to supersede the guidelines and requirements described in this document. Filtered access to some sites may still violate the Technology Use Agreement.

Appropriate Use of the Internet, Systems, and Technology Equipment

Students are responsible for appropriate behavior when using District technology systems. The lists below do not cover every possible situation. If you have any question about appropriate behavior, ask your teacher, librarian, or technology teacher. I will:

- use and access Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools responsibly.
- limit my bandwidth use on shared networks.
- use district and school technology to advance my education.
- use extreme caution when giving out personal information on the Internet, such as full name, address, telephone numbers, etc.
- take care of the equipment and leave it in good condition for the next student.
- follow instructions related to technology of all school personnel.
- use chat, email, and online discussions appropriately. (Remember that chats are not private.)
- ask for help with or report equipment or software problems.
- respect classroom expectations for technology use.

- only print what is necessary or assigned.
- immediately report any inappropriate email, chat, websites, etc. to school personnel.
- sign out/log off when finished using a shared device.
- cite my digital sources correctly.
- follow local, state, and federal copyright laws.
- return all borrowed technology equipment promptly and in the same condition as I received it.
- follow these expectations at school and at home.

I will not:

- engage in academic dishonesty, violate the law, or access or disseminate harmful or inappropriate materials.
- share passwords.
- try to gain unauthorized or illegal access to district technology.
- access, distribute, download, or store any illegal, pornographic, abusive, obscene, or harassing materials on any District network or device.
- cyber-bully. Examples of cyber-bullying include but are not limited to sending threatening emails, posting derogatory or personal comments and/or photos or videos about or of someone on any online platform, sending harassing text messages, threatening, or intimidating someone, and/or spreading rumors about someone. (See Board Policy: 4.22 Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Prevention Policy)
- plagiarize others' work and present it as my own.
- access, delete, or change files created by other students, faculty, or staff without their permission.
- participate in any online for-profit activities.
- download and/or install software.
- unplug or change lab devices without permission.
- create or distribute malicious software.
- stream video for personal use while connected to district networks.
- connect personal devices to any network other than the guest wireless as outlined below.
- eat or drink while using any school computer.

Guest Wireless Access (HSD-Guest)

Helena Public Schools provides wireless network access to students, staff, and guests who wish to use their personal devices while in district owned facilities. The following will apply:

- All users must follow the Technology Use Agreement when using a personal device on HSD-Guest.
- HSD-Guest is a public network, and as such there should not be an expectation of privacy or secure communications and no guarantees of service.
- Users are responsible for maintaining up-to-date antivirus software, firewalls, etc. on their personal devices.
- Printing is not available on HSD-Guest. Only those district systems that are publicly accessible via the internet will be accessible using HSD-Guest.
- Helena Public Schools will not provide technical support for users' personal devices on HSD-Guest.

Consequences for Violating the Student Technology Use Agreement

Depending on the age of the student and the severity and frequency of the misuse or abuse, one or more of the following consequences will occur:

- The student will receive a warning that includes specific discussion of the infraction.
- The student will be referred to the principal/administrator for discussion of the infraction.
- The student's parent/guardian will be notified by phone, personal conference, or official discipline referral.
- For serious or repeated internet misuse/abuse, students may lose access to the internet. (The terms of this restriction will be determined by the administrator or school board policy.)
- For serious or repeated technology equipment misuse/abuse, students may lose access to district technology and may need to develop a plan for restitution. (The terms of this restriction will be determined by the administrator or school board policy.)
- In some cases, a referral to proper authorities for disciplinary and/or legal action may be required.

Note: Depending on the circumstances, students who have lost district system or internet privileges may not use personal devices in lieu of district devices.

2026-2027



July 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

District Calendar

Holiday and Student Dismissal Dates

August 24 & 25	Staff Orientation
August 26	First Day of School for Grs 1-5, Gr 6 CRA & HMS, Grs 9-12 PAL, Gr 9 CHS & HHS
August 27	First Day of School for Grs 7-8 CRA & HMS, Grs 10-12 CHS & HHS
August 31	First Day of School for Kindergarten & KinderSprouts*
September 7	Labor Day - No School - District Closed
October 15 & 16	Educator Conferences-No School
November 2	2nd Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
November 25-27	Thanksgiving Break - No School
November 26 & 27	District Closed
November 30	Trimester 2 Begins: Grades K-5
December 4	12:00 P.M. Grades K-5 Student Early Dismissal
December 4	Grades 6-12: Full Day of School
December 4	P.M. K-5 Staff Records Day
December 21 - January 1	Winter Break-No School
December 24, 25 & January 1	District Closed
January 18	Martin Luther King Jr. Day - No School - District Closed
January 20,21,22	High School Semester Testing
January 22	Grades K-5: Full Day of School
January 22	12:00 P.M. Grades 6-8 Early Dismissal
January 22	P.M. 6-8 Staff Records Day
January 25	No School K-12, HS Staff In-Service & Records Day
January 26	3rd Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
February 15	President's Day - No School - District Closed
March 15	Trimester 3 Begins: Grades K-5
March 29- April 2	Spring Break - No School
April 5	4th Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
May 7	Vigilante Day - No School Grades 9-12 / 11:00 AM Dismissal K-8
May 28	No School: Snow Day make-up day if needed
May 31	Memorial Day - No School - District Closed
June 5	High School Graduation
June 7,8,9	High School Semester Testing
June 9	Last Day & 12:00 p.m. Early Dismissal Students K-8
June 9	Last Day for Students 9-12
June 9	P.M. K-8 Staff Records Day: Last Day for Staff K-8
June 10	HS Staff In-Service-Records Day: Last Day for Staff 9-12

Mondays are Professional Release days for Helena School District staff. School for students will dismiss early. Please see below.

- Elementary School Student day ends 45 minutes early
- Middle School Student day ends 45 minutes early
- High School Student day ends 45 minutes early

* KinderSprouts attend the same days as Kindergarten

- First Day of School for Various Grade Levels
- Holiday or Break - No School-All Grades
- Staff Orientation
- ◇ Last Day of School 9-12 Students
- High School Semester Testing
- Early Dismissal Students K-5 ONLY/ Half Day K-5 Records
- Day Early Dismissal Students 6-8/ Half Day 6-8 Records Day
- Early Dismissal Students K-8/ Half Day K-8 Records Day
- △ HS Staff In-Service/Records Day - No School K-12
- ◇ Vigilante Day - K-8 Released 11:00 AM / HS No School

January 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2027

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Trustees Approved

2/10/2026

Helena Public Schools Central Administration

Superintendent	Rex Weltz	406-324-2001
Assistant Superintendent 6-12	Josh McKay	406-324-2004
Assistant Superintendent PK-5	Dr. Justine Alberts	406-324-2031
Federal and State Programs	Dr. Kaitlyn Hess	406-324-2027
Data and Assessment Administrator	Erin Hunt	406-324-2797
Director of Human Resources	Keri Mizell	406-324-2010
Student Services and Special Education	Jenny Jarvis	406-324-2005
District Clerk and Business Director	Sam Holman	406-324-2040
Director of Educational Technology	Gary Myers	406-324-2114
Facilities Director	Todd Verrill	406-324-1734
Athletic Director	Eric Peterson	406-324-2108

Helena Public School Elementary Principals

Broadwater	Kelly Connolly	406-324-1130
Bryant	Letitia Wilkins	406-324-1200
Central	Kellie Boedecker	406-324-1230
Four Georgians	Brittany Rutter	406-324-1300
Jefferson	Brice Burton	406-324-2060
Jim Darcy	Jill Nyman	406-324-1410
Kessler	Riley Thatcher	406-324-1700
Rossiter	Ericka Hutton-Parker	406-324-1500
Smith	Sarah Simpson	406-324-1530
Warren	Abby Kuhl	406-324-1600

Middle School and High School Principals

C.R. Anderson Middle School	Kathleen Prody	406-324-2800
Helena Middle School	Nick Radley	406-324-1000
Capital High School	Cal Boyle	406-324-2500
Helena High School	Brian Kessler	406-324-2200
Project for Alternative Learning (PAL)	Matt Carey	406-324-1630

**2026-2027 Helena Public School
Parent Permission Form Pre-K – 5 Elementary School Students**

Student Name: _____ School: _____ Grade: _____

This form is valid for the 2026-2027 school year in Helena School District. If you need to make changes at any time, please contact your child's school.

Parents/Guardians: Please review the handbook information for the topics listed below. Then make your selections, sign the form, and return it to the school.

___ Yes ___ No I have read, understand, and give my permission for my child to attend and participate in field trips.

___ Yes ___ No I have read and understand the information regarding weapons in school.

___ Yes ___ No I have read and understand the Technology Use Agreement.

___ Yes ___ No I give my permission for my child to use the internet for web-based instructional tools, applications, and Microsoft Office 365 collaboration tools, including district-issued email access. *A complete list is available on the district website (www.helenaschools.org).*

___ Yes ___ No I have read and understand the policy regarding cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and other non-school devices with access to online applications and resources. **These devices must be off and away during school hours.**

___ Yes ___ No I give permission for my child to be photographed or filmed by the district or its media partners. Photos or videos may be shared on district or school websites, social media pages, yearbooks, and by news media that repost district content.

___ Yes ___ No I give permission for my child's work and photo to be published in approved classroom apps. Only parents/guardians of the child will be invited to participate in the secure platform/app.

___ Yes ___ No I give permission to release my child's directory information as allowed by FERPA, including their name, contact information, grade level, birth date, parent/guardian information, awards, photograph, school activities, and dates of attendance.

___ Yes ___ No I have read and understand the 2026-2027 Student/Parent Handbook. Scan the QR code or visit <https://helenaschools.org/handbooks/>



SCAN ME

Parent Signature

Date

2026-2027 Helena Public Schools Parent Portal: Automated Notification System Opt-Out

The Federal Communications Commission requires Helena School District to obtain your consent to send outreach messages to you via our automated system [insert name of system]. Outreach message can include information about schedule changes, school events, parent reminders, cancelled activities, and other non-emergency messages.

The District wants to keep you informed in multiple ways. Our system allows us to send messages to you through different mediums – phone calls, texts, emails – regarding important school information. To ensure we are able to do this, please fill out this form. You have the right to not consent to receiving messages from our system – **you will continue to receive emergency calls even if you do not consent**. You can also revoke your consent to receive messages from our system at any time by contacting your building principal.

Student name: _____ School: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Please check:

☐ **I give the District and my child's school consent to send me outreach messages.**

The District can reach me via the following (check all mediums in which you request messages to be sent and enter the phone number/address):

☐ Telephone/cell phone: _____

☐ Text message: _____

☐ Email: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

OR:

☐ **I do not give the District and my child's school consent to send me outreach messages. I understand I will only receive emergency calls.**

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please copy this form, complete it, and return it to your child's school if you do NOT wish to receive automated information messages.

MISSING CHILD PHOTO REPOSITORY OPT-IN FORM

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) maintains an electronic directory photograph repository of all Montana students for the exclusive purpose of locating missing school-age children. The repository provides immediate and 24/7 year-round access to a child's school directory photograph to law enforcement should a child be reported missing. It uses students' current school photos that most schools take annually for school directories, ID cards, yearbooks, etc.

Complete and sign this form and return it to your school if you want your student's photograph included in the repository.

Student Name: _____

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Important Information for Parents & Guardians:

- Information about the electronic photograph repository: The repository is authorized by Montana Code Annotated ([20-7-1317](#), MCA) and requires the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) to create and maintain an electronic directory photograph repository of all Montana students for the exclusive purpose of locating missing school-age children. The repository provides immediate and 24/7 year-round access to a child's school directory photograph to law enforcement should a child be reported missing. Annually, districts must provide parents and guardians notice of the repository and a form to opt-in their student(s).
- Who will have access to my child's photograph in the photo repository? Your child's photograph will only be used by law enforcement for the express purpose of locating your child should he/she be reported to law enforcement as missing. No other use by OPI or law enforcement is permitted. Access by OPI staff will be strictly limited and controlled to staff or contractors creating and maintaining the repository.
- How do I remove my child's photograph from the photograph repository? A parent can opt-out at any time. Contact your school/district to request your child's photograph be removed.
- How long will my child's photograph be in the repository? Photos will be updated annually; if the photo is not updated and the parent doesn't opt-out, the photos will be purged from the repository after two years.
- Please visit <https://dojmt.gov/missing-persons/> to find more information about missing school-age children.

Montana Authorization to Possess or Self-Administer Asthma, Severe Allergy, or Anaphylaxis Medication

For this student to possess or self-administer asthma, severe allergy, or anaphylaxis medication while in school, while at a school- sponsored activity, while under the supervision of school personnel, before or after normal school activities (such as while in before- school or after-school care on school-operated property), or while in transit to or from school or school-sponsored activities, this form must be fully completed by 1) the prescribing physician/physician assistant/advanced practice registered nurse, and 2) an authorizing parent, an individual who has executed a caretaker relative educational or medical authorization affidavit, or legal guardian.

Student's Name: _____ School: _____

Sex: (Please circle) Female / Male

City/Town: _____

Birth Date: ____ / ____ / ____

School Year: _____ (Must renew annually)

Authorization by Physician/PA/APRN:

The above-named student has my authorization to carry and self-administer the following asthma, severe allergy, or anaphylaxis medication:

Medication:(1) _____ Dosage:(1) _____

Medication:(2) _____ (2) _____

I confirm this student has been instructed in the proper use of this medication and is able to self-administer this medication without school personnel supervision. I have formulated and provided to the parent/guardian or caretaker relative a written treatment plan for managing asthma, severe allergies, or anaphylaxis episodes and for medication use by this student during school hours and school activities.

Signature of Physician/PA/APRN

Phone Number

Date

Authorization by parent, individual who has executed a caretaker relative educational or medical authorization affidavit, or guardian:

As the parent, individual who has executed a caretaker relative educational or medical authorization affidavit, or guardian of the above named student, I confirm this student has been instructed by his/her health care provider on the proper use of this/these medication(s). He/she has demonstrated to me he/she understands the proper use of this medication. He/she is physically, mentally, and behaviorally capable to assume this responsibility. He/she has my permission to self-medicate as listed above, if needed. If he/she has used epinephrine during school hours, he/she understands the need to alert the school nurse or other adult at the school who will provide follow-

up care, including making a 9-1-1 emergency call.

I acknowledge the school district or nonpublic school and its employees and agents are not liable as a result of any injury arising from the self-administration of medication by the student, and I indemnify and hold them harmless for such injury, unless the claim is based on an act or omission that is the result of gross negligence, willful and wanton conduct, or an intentional tort.

I agree to work with the school in establishing a plan for use and storage of backup medication. This will include a predetermined location to keep backup medication to which the student has access in the event of an asthma, severe allergy, or anaphylaxis emergency. **I have provided the following back up medication:** _____

I understand in the event the medication dosage is altered, a new “self-administration form” must be completed, or the health care provider may rewrite the order on his/her prescription pad and I, the parent/caretaker relative/guardian, will sign the new form and assure the new order is attached.

I understand it is my responsibility to pick up any unused medication at the end of the school year, and any medication not picked up will be disposed of.
I authorize the school administration to release this information to appropriate school personnel and classroom teachers.

Parent/Caretaker/Guardian relative signature: _____ Date: _____

(Original signed authorization to the school; a copy of the signed authorization to the parent/guardian and health care provider)

Helena Public Schools Bell Schedules for 2026-2027

Mondays are Early Release for Students and Professional Learning Community (PLC) time for Staff.

2026-2027 Monday Student Schedule

Monday	Start Time	End Time
Elementary	8:30 a.m.	2:30 p.m.

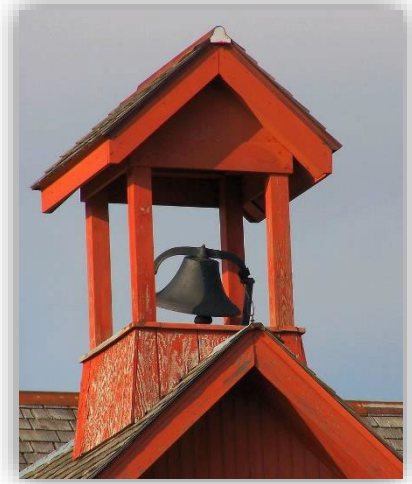
*Playground supervision starts around 8 AM for elementary schools.
Please do not drop your child off before the time designated by each school.*

Middle School	8:05 a.m.	2:05 p.m.
High School	8:20 a.m.*	2:30 p.m.**

*First period begins.

**Seventh period ends.

Zero period starts at 7:32 a.m. on Monday.



2026-2027 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday Student Schedule

Tu, Wed, Th, F	Start Time	End Time
Elementary	8:30 a.m.	3:15 p.m.
Middle School	8:05 a.m.	2:50 p.m.
High School	8:20 a.m.*	3:15 p.m.**

*First period begins.

**Seventh period ends.

Zero Period Starts at 7:25 AM on Tu, W, Th, F