



## **February 18, 2026 Agenda Regular Meeting of Trustees**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of School District #35 has been scheduled for **2.18.26 at 6 pm. in the library and via Google Meet.**

### **Call to Order**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Presiding Trustee's Explanation of Procedures**

**Public Comment- Non Agenda Items**

**GUESTS:**

### **Special Topics (to include Public Comment)**

Information from Community Requests

Foundation Proposal for Consulting

Review of Proposals/Scenarios for Staffing/Budget for 26-27

### **Consent Agenda**

**Minutes:** 01.21.2026 -Regular Meeting, 02.10.2026 Agenda Setting, and 02.04.2026 Work Study Session;

**Finance:** Warrants; Operational Budget by Object Code; Cash Reconciliation; Extra-Curricular Expenditure and Reconciliation Report

### **Superintendent Report**

**District Clerk-Business Manager Report**

### **Old Business**

Discussion Items:

Committee Updates

Board Self-Evaluation in March, due April

Open Ed Update

Calendar Discussion

Action Items:

Dates for Special Board Meetings

Second Reading of December Policy Updates

### **New Business**

Discussion Items:

MTSBA Services Survey

Action Items:

Foundation Proposal - Strategic Planning

Foundation Proposal - Marketing and Enrollment

Levy for May 2026

Butte and DC/NYC Field Trip Dates

Booster Club Support for Athletic Director Stipend

## Adjournment

### Excerpt from GGS Policy #1441- Audience Participation

#### Audience Participation

The Board recognizes the value of public comment on educational issues and the importance of involving members of the public in its meetings. The Board also recognizes the statutory and constitutional rights of the public to participate in governmental operations. To allow fair and orderly expression of public comments, the Board will permit public participation through oral or written comments during the “public comment” section of the Board agenda and prior to a final decision on a matter of significant interest to the public. The Chairperson may control such comments to ensure an orderly progression of the meeting.

Individuals wishing to be heard by the Chairperson shall first be recognized by the Chairperson. Individuals, after identifying themselves, will proceed to make comments as briefly as the subject permits. The Chairperson may interrupt or terminate an individual’s statement when appropriate, including when statements are out of order, too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant. The Board as a whole shall have the final decision in determining the appropriateness of all such rulings. It is important for all participants to remember that Board meetings are held in public but are not public meetings. Members of the public shall be recognized and allowed input during the meeting, at the discretion of the Chairperson.

Cross Reference: 1420 School Board Meeting Procedure

Legal Reference: Article II, Section 8, Montana Constitution – Right of participation  
Article II, Section 10, Montana Constitution – Right of privacy  
§§ 2-3-101, et seq., MCA Notice and Opportunity to Be Heard

## Special Topic Materials

Information Presentation:

 Information Requests

### Foundation Request

#### 1. Discussion of Engaging a Consultant for Long-Term Planning

The Foundation would like to propose a board-level discussion on whether the district wishes to engage an external consultant with demonstrated experience supporting small, rural school districts navigating declining enrollment and budget pressures. Through recent outreach, some potential resources have been identified. The hope would be to find someone who specialize in long-range financial planning, enrollment sustainability, and operational resilience.

If the Board and school leadership determine that this type of support would be beneficial, the Foundation is prepared to look at financially supporting the cost of such consulting services. This discussion would be forward-looking in nature and focused on identifying the appropriate scope, expertise, and objectives to help inform long-term decision-making.

Governing Board Questions:

#### 2. Marketing and enrollment strategy

Separately, the Foundation would like to propose a discussion regarding marketing, community engagement, and enrollment strategy. Recognizing the connection between enrollment trends and long-term financial health, the Foundation with GYG and the Boosters is willing to help develop and support a marketing and outreach plan, in coordination with the district and school leadership.

The intent of this agenda item would be to align on priorities, roles, and expectations, and to ensure that any Foundation/parent-led efforts are supportive of the district's goals and direction.

Governing Board Questions:

### Scenarios

In creating the scenarios for the budget development, we looked at a variety of options to include elimination of pre-K, Middle School, No administration. Staff have given feedback and input on the options individually.

 Scenarios.xlsx

## Consent Agenda:

 Meetings 1\_21\_26.pdf


 Work Study 2/4/26

 Agenda Setting Minutes.pdf

 budgetexp.pdf

 checkregister126.pdf

 revenuerece.pdf


 warrantcashtran.pdf

## Superintendent's Report

February 18, 2026

### Strategic Goals

#### Individual Student Success

- Special Education students - 13; we currently have three students in the evaluation process.
- Students with 504's - 24
- Check In/Check Out - no students on formal check in check out process
- No disciplinary actions to report
- Current Enrollment - 123; we have 25 out of district enrollments and 15 students attending other districts. Our county has 824 homeschooled students and 1,116 students attending the 22 private schools. We have enrolled 184 students in Open Ed digital learning.  
 Countywide Enrollment 25-26.pdf
- Compiled and reviewed student data and learning impacts to improve student learning

#### Staff and Volunteers

- PLC meeting topics: Standards based grading and instruction, data compilation and analysis, planning for spring events, handbook suggestions.

#### Student Events

- We have been invited to a Women in Construction event on March 5th. Ms. Barry and Mrs. Phelps will be taking our 6-8 grade girls to this event.
- Swimming Lessons begin after spring break for our K-2 students.

### Discussion Points:

- We did an opt in or out for maturation classes this year based on our understanding of policy 2335. This policy amendment gives the parents the option of opting out of maturation classes. For the entire 4-6th grade we only received 6 responses to the class with two families opting out. With the lack of engagement by the parents, we opted to not offer the class to three 4th grade students and one 6th grade student.
- I am currently working on the reunification plan for evacuations where parents need to pick up their children. I'm coordinating with the Gallatin County Sheriff's Department.
- We are finishing MAST testing Window 2 for all our students in grades 3-8.
- Spoons Across America - grant to receive the curriculum and supplies for preschool gardening and food prep

- Updated Guidance for Montana School Districts on Immigration Enforcement Activities February 2, 2026 from MTSBA:

In years prior, schools have been classified as safe spaces for children prohibiting immigration enforcement. This is no longer true as the Department of Homeland Security rescinded this order. While no raids have been conducted at Montana public schools to date, the change in federal policy raised concerns about how school districts should respond to such situations while remaining compliant with state and federal laws.

#### Federal Law and ICE Authority

Federal law, notably 8 USC 1357, provides ICE agents with the authority to interrogate individuals without a warrant if they are believed to be aliens regarding their right to remain in the United States. However, this authority is subject to constitutional protections under the Fourth Amendment, which prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures. While ICE agents may legally question individuals in public spaces without a warrant, their access to nonpublic areas within schools—such as classrooms, lockers, and personal belongings—requires a valid judicial warrant or consent from school officials.

However, it is important to note that under Montana law (§ 45-7-302, MCA), the illegality of an officer's actions is not a defense against obstruction charges. School personnel could still face criminal liability for knowingly refusing to comply with directives from ICE agents acting under their official authority, even if those directives are later found to be unlawful.

While it is important to ensure that law enforcement actions comply with legal requirements, outright refusal to comply with a directive from an ICE agent—even if the directive is potentially unlawful—could result in obstruction charges. School staff must carefully balance their responsibility to protect the rights of students and staff with their obligation to cooperate with law enforcement.

#### Practical Guidance for School Officials

To help school districts prepare for and respond to potential immigration enforcement activities, we recommend the following steps:

1. Prepare and Train Staff
2. Verify Warrants<sup>[i]</sup>
3. Escalate to Supervisors and Legal Counsel
4. Document Interactions
5. Protect Student and Staff Rights
6. Avoid Obstruction
  - Staff should not disobey specific directives from ICE agents. However, they may politely request a delay in compliance to refer to administration or legal counsel.
  - Actions taken to verify warrants, request legal guidance, or document requests are protective and lawful when done in good faith. Outright refusal to comply with a specific directive or deliberate delays intended to obstruct enforcement may result in obstruction charges under Montana law.

## CAMPS PROPOSAL

As the School Funding Interim Commission begins the second half of its work starting this week ([Wednesday and Thursday, February 11-12](#)), including a presentation by MTSBA Executive Director Lance Melton on Levy

Elections Thursday afternoon), we want to emphasize the importance of unity and focus on our advocacy efforts. We have a unique opportunity to shape a funding formula that addresses the needs of every Montana student, and the best way to achieve this is by rallying around the proposal from the Coalition of Advocates for Montana's Public Schools (CAMPS).

This proposal is the product of extensive collaboration among education leaders, stakeholders, and experts. It checks all the boxes for what Montana's schools need: equity, adequacy, innovation, and educationally relevant simplification of the funding formula. It is critical that we tie every element of our advocacy back to this proposal to ensure consistency, clarity, and impact.

### **Why the CAMPS Proposal is the Right Solution**

The CAMPS proposal is a comprehensive, forward-thinking plan that addresses the most pressing challenges in Montana's school funding system. Here's how it meets the needs of our schools and students:

#### **Educationally Relevant Simplification**

- **Unified Funding Structure:** The proposal eliminates the outdated BASE and maximum budget constraints, replacing them with a single "Quality Assurance" (QA) funding amount that reflects the true cost of quality education.
- **Streamlined Formula:** By consolidating funding mechanisms like the Guarantee Account, Direct State Aid, and Guaranteed Tax Base Aid into a single stream, the proposal simplifies the formula while maintaining equity and adequacy.
- **Transparent and Predictable:** The QA funding model ensures clarity and stability, making it easier for districts to plan and budget effectively.

#### **Equity**

- **Addressing Unique Needs:** The proposal consolidates and enhances funding streams for at-risk students, special education, and American Indian education into a single block grant, ensuring targeted support for those who need it most.
- **Poverty-Based Weighting:** The proposal replaces the At-Risk Payment with a 25% weighting for students in poverty, ensuring resources are allocated where they are most needed.

#### **Adequacy**

- **Fair Per-Pupil Funding:** The proposal eliminates decrements and provides flat per-pupil funding rates that reflect the true cost of educating students at different grade levels.
- **Support for Educators:** Increased funding for quality educators incentivizes compliance with STARS and raises base teacher salaries to competitive levels, ensuring Montana can attract and retain high-quality teachers.
- **Facility Funding:** The proposal calls for increased state support for building and maintaining school facilities, addressing Montana's aging infrastructure.

#### **Innovation**

- **Discretionary Funding Enhancement (DFE):** The proposal introduces a voter-approved 10% discretionary funding mechanism to foster creativity, growth, and excellence in education.
- **Pathways to Graduation:** Expanded funding for middle school career exploration and pathways programs prepares students for college and career success.
- **Learner-Centered Design:** The proposal supports the development of a roadmap for learner-centered models aligned with Graduate Profiles, empowering districts to implement innovative instructional practices.

## US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NOTICE

On the 12th of February, the US Department of Education issued guidance based on their review of prayer and religious expression in school. Here are the guidelines we are to follow:

Today, the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) issued [guidance \[t1.info.ed.gov\]](https://www.ed.gov/guidance/t1.info.ed.gov) on constitutionally protected prayer and religious expression in public elementary and secondary schools.

The guidance, required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to be updated periodically, makes clear that parents and children have a constitutional right to take part in public school in ways that align with their sincerely held religious beliefs. School officials should allow members of the public school community to act and speak according to their faith, as long as:

- They respect the rights of others;
- The school itself does not engage in religious activities or speech as an institution; and
- The school does not favor secular views over religious ones or one religion over another

### Upcoming Events:

March 2, 1:30pm - 5th Grade Tribes Reports

March 2 - Read Across America Day

March 4, 9am - 4th Grade NAEP Exam

March 5, 9am - Women In Construction Field Trip - girls 6-8

March 5-6, Music in Our Schools

March 6, 3:30pm - Greenhouse Work Party

March 13, 1 pm - Career Fair

March 16-20 - Spring Break

## **District Clerk-Business Manager Report**

Reconciliations for December reports from the County Treasurer

Preliminary Budget information to begin 26-27 school year planning

- Transportation Analysis
- Food Service Analysis
- Overall Budget Analysis with the Superintendent

MASBO Communications and planning with mentor

Old Business  
DISCUSSION ITEM

**Committee Updates**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

Our last meetings took place in January. The next set of meetings will take place the first week of April.

- Safety Committee - April 6th at 3:30pm
  - AED's are here.
  - Continuing work on the reunification plan
- Facilities Committee - April 6th at 4:30pm
  - Aaron and I are still working on meeting with Mr. Eykelbosch on the locker room renovation
- Whole Child Committee - April 9 at 3:30pm (Parent Teacher Conference Day)
- PDAC Committee - April 9 at 4:30pm (Parent Teacher Conference Day)
  - We will be sending out the staff survey and gathering information for this meeting on differentiated professional development

Items for the agendas? Please let Kelly know.

Old Business  
DISCUSSION ITEM

**Board Self-Evaluation**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

We typically complete the evaluation in March and discuss the results in April. We should review the form and provide feedback or suggestions for improvement.

 Strategic Plan 25-26.docx

 2025 School Board Self Evaluation - Google Forms.pdf

Old Business  
DISCUSSION ITEM

**Open Ed Update**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

As a reminder, I have done all the Open Ed work on my own personal time. Ms. Brown is the only one who completed the Infinite Campus work during the school day with Mrs. Hancox assisting with the calendar set up..

Here is the email I recently received from Grant Hewitt at Open Ed:

Hi Kelly,

I wanted to provide a clear update on where things stand and how we're proceeding.

We've intentionally paused all new activity until we can run our current efforts to ground with OPI and fully exhaust the available paths for funding and compliance for the students already being served.

Following our most recent outreach, OPI indicated that—based on what we provided—they were not prepared to deem the offering “unique” at this time. That said, they did **explicitly open the door for us to submit additional information**, which we are in the process of preparing. Our immediate goal is to get OPI to clearly outline *what questions they need answered* in order for the uniqueness provision to be applied, rather than continuing to operate in ambiguity.

However, we've temporarily put that workstream on hold to focus on a more urgent issue: **testing**. We are actively pushing OPI to allow our students to participate in the second testing window. We believe this is critical for families and students, and that testing participation is **not connected in rule or statute to funding or ANB eligibility**. Before pivoting back to providing additional detail on uniqueness, we feel it's important to put the testing issue to bed.

At the same time, we are **simultaneously exploring district attendance agreements** as a parallel path for the majority of students. Where we continue to lack clarity—and are pressing for guidance—is how to address students who have *never been in the public system before*. Because those students are not currently funded, it remains unclear how agreements would apply to them, and we want to ensure any approach is defensible and consistent.

Our focus right now is protecting families, supporting your district, and resolving these issues the right way—even if it takes a bit more time.

We truly appreciate your patience and continued support, and we'll do our best not to overburden you as we work through this. We'll keep you closely informed as things progress and will reach out as soon as we have clearer direction from OPI.

Respectfully,  
Grant Hewitt

Old Business  
DISCUSSION ITEM

**26-27 Calendar Discussion**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

I'd like to discuss the flexibility for the number of school days. We currently are meeting the minute requirement. Is it acceptable to get out of school before Labor Day?

We are required to provide 1,080 hours of instruction for a school year. The staff supports increasing the school day and getting out of school before Memorial Day.

Old Business  
ACTION ITEM

**Dates for Special Board Meetings**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

In order for contracts to be issued by spring break, we need to have additional meetings to discuss the scenarios. This will be a formal board meeting with action items. There will also be an agenda item for approval of staffing.

Possible dates: 2.24.26 3:30pm-5pm; 2.25.2026 3:30pm-5pm; 2.26.2026 3:30pm-5pm.

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval of the additional board meeting on February \_\_\_\_, 2026 to discuss and approve the staffing allocation and staffing for 26-27 school year..

Old Business  
ACTION ITEM

**December Policy Updates - 2nd Reading**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

 December Policy Notes.pdf

Recommendations: Administration recommends the approval of the December policy updates with the noted changes.

New Business  
DISCUSSION ITEM

**MTSBA Services Survey**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

We complete this survey yearly and it's time again. Once we discuss, I'll submit the results on your behalf.

 2026 Annual MTSBA Membership Survey.pdf

New Business  
ACTION ITEM

**Foundation Proposal - Strategic Planning**

Presented by: Tim Melton

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

The Foundation would like to propose a board-level discussion on whether the district wishes to engage an external consultant with demonstrated experience supporting small, rural school districts navigating declining enrollment and budget pressures. Through recent outreach, some potential resources have been identified. The hope would be to find someone who specialize in long-range financial planning, enrollment sustainability, and operational resilience.

If the Board and school leadership determine that this type of support would be beneficial, the Foundation is prepared to look at financially supporting the cost of such consulting services. This discussion would be forward-looking in nature and focused on identifying the appropriate scope, expertise, and objectives to help inform long-term decision-making.

Could the focus be on engaging a consultant for Strategic planning in the Fall of 2026. Prior years, we have engaged MTSBA. What is the purpose of this proposal - Strategic planning or financial forensics? Is this to help create a new strategic plan or help us meet our goals within the strategic plan? What part of the strategic plan is not working?

[W Strategic Plan 25-26.docx](#)

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval of the Foundation proposal for Strategic Planning Consultant.

New Business  
ACTION ITEM

**Foundation Proposal - Marketing and Enrollment**

Presented by: Tim Melton

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

The Foundation would like to propose a discussion regarding marketing, community engagement, and enrollment strategy. Recognizing the connection between enrollment trends and long-term financial health, the Foundation with GYG and the Boosters is willing to help develop and support a marketing and outreach plan, in coordination with the district and school leadership.

The intent of this agenda item would be to align on priorities, roles, and expectations, and to ensure that any Foundation/parent-led efforts are supportive of the district's goals and direction.

Suggestion would be to include fundraising

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval of the Foundation proposal for marketing and enrollment to also include fundraising efforts.

New Business  
ACTION ITEM

**Levy for May 2026**

Presented by: Hannah Hancox and Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

<https://montanafreepress.org/2026/02/12/montana-schools-are-struggling-to-pass-funding-levies/>

Impact to the Budget:

We are eligible to request an additional \$102,152.66 for our over base budget from our tax payers.

This would increase our budget to \$1,425,221.66 with restrictions on a portion of the funding.

\$48,666.87 must go to staff housing

\$5,000 is the cost of the election

\$48,485.79 remainder that goes into our general fund budget. This could assist in general operating expenses or fund our school counselor.

As an essential part of its budgeting process, the Gallatin Gateway School District #35 Board of Trustees is authorized by law to impose permissive levies to support its budget. Per Senate Bill 307, State law requires the District to provide notice of its intent to increase/decrease these permissive levies in the upcoming fiscal year. To ensure financial transparency and avoid confusion, the District has chosen to analyze the estimated impact of all its levies, voted and permissive, across all funds.

[w SB 307 Notice of Intent Board.docx](#)

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval the 2026 Notice of Intent to Impose and Increase/Decrease in Levies to include an Over Base voted levy in the amount of \$102,52.66

New Business  
ACTION ITEM

**5th and 8th grade Field Trip Dates**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate)

5th Grade Butte Mining Field Trip - May 21-22, 2026

8th Grade DC/NYC Field Trip - May 18-22, 2026

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval of the Field Trips for 5th and 8th grades.

New Business  
ACTION ITEM

**Booster Club Support for Athletic Stipend**

Presented by: Kelly Henderson

Background: (Include funding sources as appropriate) The Athletic Director's stipend was absorbed into the Business Office in the amount of \$5,000 for the year. This position organizes and supervises all the games and athletic activities in the district to include hiring staff, scheduling games, finding referees and parents to assist with game day events.

Recommendation: Administration recommends approval of Booster supporting the Athletic Director stipend in the amount of \$5,000.