



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

Board of Trustees – Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 5, 2021 – 12:00pm

MINUTES - DRAFT

ATTENDANCE

Trustees:

Sarah Sullivan, Committee Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Committee Member
Jennifer McKee, Committee Member
Jennifer Walsh, Committee Member

Others:

Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent
Barb Ridgway, Chief of Staff
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Stacy Collette, Human Resources Director
Sean Maharg, Special Education Director
Tim McMahon, Activities Director
Joslyn Davidson, Curriculum Director
Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator
Rex Weltz, Incoming Superintendent
Jill Nyman, Smith Elementary School Principal
Cal Boyle, Helena Middle School Principal
Chrissy Murgel, Helena High School Counselor
Jane Shawn, HEA President

I. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 12:05pm by Committee Chair, Sarah Sullivan.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the agenda.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the March 3, 2021, committee meeting were reviewed.

IV. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

A. District Overview: Social-Emotional Support Services

Dr. Ream likened school culture to a theme park: above ground were highly engaged students; below ground, staff worked to keep kids above ground and supported by the intervention work below the surface.

Dr. Ream shared the pyramid of support services embedded within the continuous improvement philosophy and practices and based on the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) used by districts across the nation. This pyramid was composed of:

- Tier III (top of pyramid): “Intensive” supports as schools sought to match the intensity of a student’s needs – about 5% of students.
- Tier II (middle of pyramid): “Targeted” interventions that may be required for small groups and/or individual students – about 10-15% of students.
- Tier I (base of pyramid): an “all students” tier supporting all students to build skills, provide information, and focus on preventative support – 80-90% of students.

Dr. Ream shared a few slides from Helena High’s presentation from the previous board work session to illustrate how the school utilized their MTSS model as a foundation for Tier I expectations. This included the BEST (Begin strong; engage everyone; skills and strategies; takeaways) framework for students and staff which provided students with structure and routine when walking into the school and in classrooms throughout the day.

Mr. McKay introduced the guests to committee members and provided an overview on Tier I support systems across the district, which included general school orientations, Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI), PAX, Second Step, mental health screenings, signs of suicide, and Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM). These services were school-wide preventative programs focusing on building skills and providing needed general information.

Mr. McKay highlighted a Tier I spotlight practice: MBI. This practice took a proactive approach to designing and implementing Tier I support with clear, school-wide goals and expectations that aligned with the school’s mission.

Mr. Boyle described implementation of Tier I support at Helena Middle School (HMS). He said a set plan helped students stay engaged; if there wasn’t engagement, there could be behavior issues. If expectations were consistent across the building, all students benefited, which expanded the reach of Tier I support. Mr. Boyle added there was a lot of crossover between good instruction and good social/emotional support.

Specific programs at HMS within Tier I support included meeting students at the door each morning: it showed students that teachers were ready for the day and provided educators with a good gauge of students’ wellbeing while making sure students felt cared about. Educators also posted agendas for classes with learning points. Mr. Boyle emphasized the need for consistent philosophy across the building.

Ms. McKee whether transition activities were being planned for incoming 7th and 8th graders since the beginning of this school year hadn’t been the same this year as previous years. Mr.

Boyle responded HMS was planning activities, though not as significant as those for incoming 6th graders, and they would be designed to further wrap students into the HMS culture.

Mr. McKay provided information on another Tier I practice: the PAX good behavior game. This program had been piloted by Smith Elementary and was now utilized in almost all elementary schools.

Ms. Nyman told the committee part of the PAX vision was incorporating students into the planning: what students wanted to see, hear, feel in the classroom. All educators at Smith had been trained on the program. Some keys to success included consistency of routine and language in every classroom across the building. Ms. Nyman continued that with inclusion in developing classroom expectations, each student was invested in aligning with the vision: being a PAX leader and feeling positive about themselves knowing they were following expectations.

Ms. Nyman told the committee Smith educators found instructional time was more efficient because PAX reduced behavioral issues. She added it took time for teachers to feel proficient incorporating the program into their classrooms, like any new routine. Mr. Weltz added framework and consistency were key for students to know their expectations.

Mr. McKay introduced another Tier I spotlight practice: YAM. This school-based program focused on students ages 13-17 and was designed to introduce and explore the topic of mental health in an age-appropriate manner. Counselors and/or educators were trained on the program to help students actively engage with the topic of mental health through role playing and student-led discussions about everyday situations relevant to teens, and all 9th Grade students were taught the program in PE classes.

Ms. Murgel provided information on how Helena High utilized the research-based program that originated in Sweden. She added Helena High focused on how students could respond if they recognized a mental health concern or issue with themselves or a friend. She added the program also focused on help-seeking behaviors.

Ms. Davidson informed the committee that results from a recent study showed an increase in help-seeking behaviors and a decrease in suicide idealization. The study recommended the district implement a support system for trainers to collaborate and troubleshoot, but with a smaller school district, that was difficult.

Mr. McKay agreed that the program had been successful, and the district would continue to work with the trainers who received the best results.

Dr. Ream asked for feedback from the committee regarding whether would like to continue discussing one tier per committee meeting or present a shortened presentation on all tiers at the next board meeting. The committee agreed to present a shortened presentation at the next board meeting.

V. BOARD COMMENTS

No additional comments were offered.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:04pm by Ms. Sullivan.