



School Funding Interim Commission

69th Montana Legislature

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AGENDA

School Funding Interim Commission

February 11-12, 2026 Room 317, Montana Capitol and Zoom

Note: Agenda times are approximate. Some agenda items may require more or less time than indicated.

Wednesday February 11

- 8:00 a.m. Call to order – roll call – *Chairman Bedey*
- 8:05 a.m. Review Agenda and Updated Work Plan – *Commission staff*
- 8:10 a.m. Brief introduction of Phase II consultants – Justin Silverstein, Co-CEO, and Dr. Amanda Brown, Vice President, APA Consulting
- 8:15 a.m. School Funding – Big Picture and District General Fund – *Commission staff*
- Big picture – all funds
 - District general fund deeper dive – mechanics and evolution
 - Review components and budget limit calculations
 - Review basics of funding the adopted budget
 - Preliminary budget data sheet walkthrough and exercise
- 10:00 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. Inflationary analysis – *Julia Pattin and Kate Johnson, LFD*
- Explain methodology
 - Review results
 - Commission discussion of implications and cost-driver changes
- 11:45 a.m. Public comment*
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Cost of living in MT / HB 863 Study– *Dr. Josh Poulette, LFD*
- Measuring cost of living
 - Regional cost differences
 - Housing costs
 - Commission questions/discussion

- 1:45 p.m. Special education – trends in state funding approaches; funding high-cost IEPs
- Isaiah Torres, State Relations, and Chris Duncombe, School Finance, Education Commission of the States
 - Public comment*
 - Commission questions/discussion
- 2:45 p.m. Break
- 3:00 p.m. Student Mental Health and Behavior
- Analysis of data from Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) – OPI (Sarah Music)
 - School-based behavioral health inventory – Dr. Rob Watson, School Administrators of Montana (SAM)
 - Panel discussion –
 - Dr. Laurie Barron, Superintendent, Evergreen School District (Kalispell)
 - Rae Cooper, Principal, Lowell Elementary School (Missoula)
 - Lona Carter, Student Health Services Director, Helena School District
 - Kelsey Gummer, Montana Healthcare Foundation (MTHF)
 - Public comment*
- 4:15 p.m. English Learners
- State landscape and recent changes – OPI (Katie Bloodgood, Krystal Smith)
 - Panel discussion with district leaders –
 - Casey Bertram, Superintendent, Bozeman Public Schools
 - Kaitlyn Hess, Data and Assessment Administrator, Helena School District
 - Bianka Rock Above, Indian Education Coordinator, Hardin School District
 - Violet Sinclair-Boggs, Test Coordinator and Title III Student Support, Browning Public Schools
 - Public comment*
- 5:15 p.m. Public comment*
- 5:30 p.m. Recess for the day

Thursday February 12

- 8:00 a.m. Successful Schools Cost Study – *Justin Silverstein, Co-CEO, and Dr. Amanda Brown, Vice President, APA Consulting*
- Introduction of study team
 - Overview of methodology
 - Considerations and limitations
 - District vs School level analysis
 - Data needed for the analysis
 - Options for defining success
 - Commission discussion/input
 - Next steps and expectations for April
- 11:45 a.m. Public comment*
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch

- 1:00 p.m. School facilities
- Review current facilities funding and recent changes – Pad
 - State of our Schools 2025 – Mary Filardo, Executive Director, 21st Century School Fund
 - Panel discussion on school facility needs, trends, and funding challenges
 - Andy Fors, Superintendent, Polson School District
 - Stacy Auck, Business Manager, Hobson Public School
 - Todd Verrill, Facilities Director, Helena School District
 - Bob Moore, Senior Account Executive, McKinstry
 - Bridget Ekstrom, Managing Director, D.A. Davidson & Co.
- 2:30 p.m. School levy passage rates – *Lance Melton, Executive Director, MTSBA*
- 3:00 p.m. School Funding – other fund overviews – *Commission staff*
- Transportation
 - Bus Depreciation
 - Technology
 - Flexibility
- 4:00 p.m. Public comment*
- 4:30 p.m. Adjourn

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