

Minutes of Mississippi Board of Education Meeting

February 20, 2025

The members of the Mississippi Board of Education met at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 20, 2025, pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-5 for the purpose of conducting a regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The public accessed this meeting via livestream or in-person at the Central High School Building, 4th Floor Boardroom, 359 North West Street, Jackson, Mississippi. Board members physically present included: Mr. Glen V. East, , Mr. Matt Mayo, Mr. Matt Miller, Mr. Mike Pruitt, and Ms. Billye Jean Stroud. Board members attending virtually: Dr. Wendi Barrett (Biloxi, Mississippi), Mr. Bill Jacobs (Amelia Island, Florida), and Ms. Mary Werner (Salttilo, Mississippi). Board member absent: Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee. Student Representatives present: Ms. Kate Riddle and Mr. Crosby Parker. Dr. Lance Evans, State Superintendent, was also present.

- I. Mr. Glen V. East called the Board meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., after determining that a quorum of the Board existed for the purpose of conducting a meeting.
- II. Ms. Billye Jean Stroud led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Mike Pruitt gave the Invocation.
- III. On a motion by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of January 16, 2025 Board meeting.
- IV. On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Mike Pruitt, the Board approved the Consent Agenda.

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board approved the agenda as presented.

- V. Recognition Ceremony

2024 Mississippi History Teacher of the Year

Michelle Rafach
Pearl River Central High School
Pearl River County School District

- VI. Dr. Lance Evans gave the following report as the State Superintendent of Education:
 - Dr. Evans stated in Governor Reeves' State of the State Address he praised Mississippi educators and students and highlighted the significant gains students have made in recent years.

- Dr. Evans stated he presented the MDE's fiscal and legislative priorities to the House Appropriations Subcommittees.
- Dr. Evans attended the House Education Committee and Senate Education Committee meetings.
- Dr. Evans stated he attended meetings about school district consolidation with House Education Chairman Rob Roberson, Rep. John Hines, Rep. Willie Bailey, and Senator Derrick Simmons.
- Dr. Evans stated he met with Rep. Donnie Bell about HB 1621, which relates to CTE industry certifications.
- Dr. Evans stated Thursday, February 13, was the deadline for original floor action on general bills. He stated all MDE technical amendments passed the floor. Dr. Evans stated that Monday, February 24, is the deadline for requests for appropriations and revenue bills to be drafted.
- Dr. Evans stated the first meeting of the Superintendent's Advisory Council was held. Dr. Evans stated they discussed the proposed changes to the accountability system, potential education legislation, and MDE's current and future initiatives.
- Dr. Evans stated the Mississippi Student Advisory Council met virtually. He stated that the Woodward Hines Education Foundation's Get2College program shared information and resources about planning for postsecondary education.
- Dr. Evans stated he had meetings with partner organizations and stakeholders, including:
 - Accountability Task Force;
 - Mississippi Economic Council (MEC);
 - Office of the State Auditor;
 - Mississippi Superintendents Institute;
 - K-12 Workforce Development at Mississippi State University RCU;
 - Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB);
 - AP/College Board; and
 - ACT.
- Dr. Evans stated he had speaking engagements at:
 - Future Farmers of America (FFA) Legislative Breakfast;
 - Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Winter Conference;
 - Children's Foundation of Mississippi Annual Summit; and
 - Mississippi Parks and Recreation Association Conference.
- Dr. Evans stated he did a surprise presentation from the College Board of a \$40,000.00 scholarship to a Pearl High School student. The scholarship is part of the College Board's outreach to students to help them prepare for college and careers.
- Dr. Evans stated he helped deliver the surprise Milken Educator Award in the amount of \$25,000.00 to fifth-grade teacher Amanda Duplessy during a

schoolwide assembly at Oak Grove Elementary School in the Lamar County School District.

- Dr. Evans stated he was interviewed by WLBT about Mississippi's NAEP results and the state's improvements in education.
- Dr. Evans stated the Board will hear a presentation about NAEP today, but he wanted to share a few highlights: 4th grade reading scores are now No. 9 in the nation (up from 49th in 2013); and 4th grade math scores are No. 16 in the nation (up from 50th in 2013). Dr. Evans stated when we look at the student subgroups these rankings are even higher:
 - African American 4th graders rank No. 3 among their peers nationally for reading and math scores;
 - Hispanic 4th graders rank No. 1 among their peers nationally for reading scores and No. 2 for math scores; and
 - Economically disadvantaged 4th graders rank No. 1 in the nation among their peers in reading and No. 2 for math. Dr. Evans stated that 8th grade scores held steady as nationally, scores have declined.
- Dr. Evans stated on the agenda today is the hiring of literacy coaches and the changing of the Educator-in-Residence (EIR) model. He stated he wanted to shout out to Dr. Michelle Nowell, Ms. Jill Hoda, Ms. Kelli Crain, and Ms. Monique Corley for their work on getting this new coaching model created.
- Dr. Evans stated the Portfolio Option in lieu of End of Course Assessment(s) is on the agenda today for approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process. He stated that this will help students who cannot pass an end of course assessment. He stated there are some restrictions and once approved a set of standards will be written and disseminated to districts for their use.
- Dr. Evans stated this would be Dr. Felicia Gavin's final State Board meeting. He thanked Dr. Gavin for her incredible work at MDE.

VII. Report of the Chair

- Mr. East thanked Dr. Felicia Gavin for being a valuable resource for superintendents to call. He thanked her for getting the information into the districts. Mr. East thanked Dr. Evans for his work.

VIII. Report of Student Representatives

Ms. Kate Riddle spoke on national recognition.

Mr. Crosby Parker provided an update on the mentoring journey.

IX. Report on State Board of Education Subcommittee meeting

Mr. Glen V. East, Chair, Academic Achievement PreK-12/Early Childhood Subcommittee, met via Teams yesterday. Mr. East stated he and Ms. Billye Jean Stroud were in attendance. Mr. East stated that Dr. Jill Dent went over the changes to the *Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines Serving Classrooms of Three- and Four-Year Old Children* that will come to the Board in March to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process. Mr. East stated the College- and Career-Readiness Unit 8: Digital Literacy and Citizenship course is on the agenda for today to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process. Mr. East stated the course was updated to incorporate AI components as it related to the CCR framework and ensure the AI objectives are appropriately integrated.

X. Discussion and/or Approval of Board Items

01. Action: Approval of the amendment to Mississippi’s ESSA Consolidated State Plan [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Ms. Mary Werner, seconded by Mr. Matt Miller, the Board unanimously approved item 01. (copy attached).

02. Information: Report of the 2025 graduation rates for the state, district, and school levels [Goal 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Paula Vanderford and Mr. Timothy Scott reported the 2025 graduation rates for the state, district, and school levels.

Ms. Mary Werner left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

03. Information: 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Results [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Vanderford and Mr. Alan Burrow gave the results of the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and Dr. Donna H. Boone gave the next steps.

04. Action: Approval to suspend the personnel edit review process for the 2024-2025 school year and hold schools and districts harmless during the assignment of statuses in Fall 2025 for noncompliance based on MSIS 2.0 data for the following process standards:

- A. *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024*:
- 2, 2.2 and 2.3 (Certified Staff)
 - 24, 24.1, and 24.2 – (Instructional Planning Time)
 - 25 (Individual Course Preps for Teachers Grades 9-12)
 - 26 (High School Curriculum)

- 28, 28.1, 28.2, 28.3, 28.4, and 28.5 (Student-Teacher Ratios)
- B. *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2024:*
- 2, 2.2, and 2.3 (Certified Staff)
 - 20, 20.1, and 20.2 – (Instructional Planning Time)
 - 21 (Individual Course Preps for Teachers Grades 9-12)
 - 22 (High School Curriculum)
 - 24, 24.1, 24.2, 24.3, 24.4, and 24.5 (Student-Teacher Ratios)
- [Goal 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Lance Evans)

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board unanimously approved items 04. (copy attached).

05. Action: Approval of the MDE Contract [Goal 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)
- 05.A. Action: Modify contract with the National Student Clearinghouse to provide post-secondary data on the enrollment status and educational achievement of students throughout Mississippi [Goal 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (John Kraman)

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Matt Miller, the Board unanimously approved item 05.A. (copy attached).

06. Action: Approval of the MDE grant awards [Goals 1, 2, and 4 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Felicia Gavin)
- 06.A. Action: Award Educator-in-Residence (EIR) grants to school districts for literacy coaching supports [Goals 1, 2, and 4 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Donna Boone)

On a motion by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, seconded by Mr. Mike Pruitt, the Board unanimously approved item 06.A. (copy attached).

07. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of monthly expenditures for the Mississippi School of the Arts (Donna Boone)
- B. Approval of monthly expenditures for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (Donna Boone)
- C. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-191: *MS Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year Old Children* to amend criteria regarding the Rate of Readiness Determination to

hold harmless grant programs if a program does not meet a successful score and is placed on probation for the 2025 – 2026 academic year (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Donna Boone)

- D. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code: 7-24, *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024*, Appendices A-5 – A-10, A-12, A-13, B-2, and Glossary, and Miss. Admin. Code 7-163: *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2024*, Appendices A-6 – A-10, A-12, A-13, B-2, and Glossary (Donna Boone)
- E. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To revise the Unit 8: Digital Literacy and Citizenship of the College- and Career- Readiness course (Donna Boone)
- F. Approval to revise the title of twelve (12) endorsement areas; to change the title “Vocational” to Career and Technical Education (CTE) throughout the CTE Licensure Guidelines Document; to add approval by CTE statements” to endorsement areas that are no longer being issued; to add the veteran teacher experience statement to Career Pathway: Software Development CTE endorsement area; to add additional occupational experience options to two (2) CTE endorsement areas; and to remove the approved courses from all CTE endorsements throughout the CTE Guidelines Document (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- G. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code Title 7: Part 240: Minimum Bus Specifications by amending certain existing criteria and establishing new criteria for minimum bus specifications for the sale of new buses effective July 1, 2025 (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act Process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- H. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code 7 – 4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to establish a new supplemental endorsement licensure option in the area of Mild/Moderate Disability 7-12 that may be added to a valid three (3) year internship license or valid five (5) year standard license by obtaining a passing score on the appropriate Praxis Subject Assessment (Paula Vanderford)
- I. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code 7 – 4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to

amend the Principles of Learning and Teaching Praxis assessment requirement for license 211 Special Education/Birth to Kindergarten (Early Intervention) to align with the associated grade span (Paula Vanderford)

- J. Approval of Belhaven University’s initial-level preparation programs as a result of state standards-based educator preparation program reviews and national accreditation decisions (Paula Vanderford)
- K. Approval of William Carey University’s initial-level preparation programs as a result of state standards-based educator preparation program reviews and national accreditation decisions (Paula Vanderford)
- L. Approval to upgrade the accreditation status of two (2) nonpublic schools accredited by the MDE (Paula Vanderford)
- M. Information: Annual School Board Meeting Attendance Report in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-6-13 (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Mr. Matt Miller, seconded by Mr. Matt Mayo, the Board unanimously approved items A., B., C., D., E., F., G., H., I., J., K., L., and M. (copy attached).

XI. Consideration of Executive Session

Mr. Matt Miller moved that the Board consider making a closed determination of the need to go into Executive Session. Ms. Billye Jean Stroud seconded the motion, and the motion passed by unanimous vote. Mr. Glen V. East asked for legal counsel to remain in the room.

Mr. Matt Miller, then moved that the Board go into Executive Session in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7 (4)(a) and (k) for discussion of discrete personnel matters and Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7 (4)(b) for discussion of strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, ongoing litigation, or issuance of an appealable order. Mr. Matt Mayo seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote. Ms. Jennifer Nichols informed the public of the Board’s vote to go into Executive Session for the above stated reasons.

Minutes of the Executive Session

During the Executive Session, the Board discussed discrete personnel matters and strategy sessions or negotiations with respect to prospective litigation, ongoing litigation, or issuance of an appealable order.

01. On a motion by Mr. Matt Miller, seconded by Mr. Matt Mayo, the Board voted unanimously to deny the resignation of a Mississippi School for the Blind certified teacher and submit their license to OEM for revocation due to violation of Standard 10 of the Code of Ethics (abandonment of contract).

On a motion by Mr. Matt Miller, seconded by Mr. Bill Jacobs, the Board unanimously voted to come out of Executive Session.

The public came back into the Board meeting.

XII. State Board of Education

1. No report on meetings attended.
2. On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board voted unanimously for Mr. Glen V. East, Ms. Kate Riddle, and Mr. Crosby Parker to attend the Mississippi School Boards Association Conference on February 24-26, 2025.

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Matt Miller, the Board voted unanimously for Ms. Kate Riddle to attend the Consortium of State School Boards Associations National Conference in Atlanta, Georgia on March 21-23, 2025.

XIII. Other Business

Mr. East stated the March Board meeting will be held on March 20, 2025 in Jackson, MS at the Central High School Building in the 4th Floor Boardroom starting at 10:00 a.m.

XIV. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, seconded by Mr. Matt Miller, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:37 p.m.

Approved:



Glen V. East, Board Chair
Mississippi Board of Education



Lance Evans
Executive Secretary
Mississippi