

Minutes of Mississippi Board of Education Meeting

August 21, 2025

The members of the Mississippi Board of Education met at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, August 21, 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: Dr. Wendi Barrett, Mr. Bill Jacobs, Mr. Matt Mayo, Mr. Matt Miller, Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, Mr. Mike Pruitt, and Ms. Billye Jean Stroud. Board members attending virtually: Mr. Glen V. East (Gulfport, Mississippi) and Ms. Mary Werner (Salitillo, Mississippi). Student Representatives present: Mr. Crosby Parker and Ms. Michelle Xie. Dr. Lance Evans, State Superintendent, was also present.

- I. Mr. Matt Miller called the Board meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., after determining that a quorum of the Board existed for the purpose of conducting a meeting.
- II. Mr. Mike Pruitt led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Bill Jacobs gave the Invocation.
- III. On a motion by Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board unanimously approved the amended minutes of July 17, 2025, and minutes of August 4, 2025, Special-Called 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 Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, seconded by Mr. Glen V. East, the Board approved the agenda as presented.

- V. Recognition Ceremony

American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) Designation 2024-2025

East Central Upper Elementary School
Jackson County School District

- VI. Dr. Lance Evans gave the following report as the State Superintendent of Education:
 - He stated he joined U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon's visit to Oxford yesterday as part of her 50-state tour of school systems. He stated they visited the Oxford Early Childhood Center and had a roundtable discussion with Oxford teachers and school and district leaders.

- He stated last week Ms. Mary Werner, Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, Mr. Matt Mayo, and Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee joined MDE staff and himself on a visit to the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS). He stated that they toured the residence halls and academic buildings and heard presentations from parents and student leaders. He stated they also had a Q&A with the students. He thanked all the Board members that joined this visit.
- He stated that he and Ms. Wendy Clemons, Dr. Michelle Nowell, Ms. Holly Spivey met with House Speaker Jason White to brief him on MDE's mathematics initiative and adolescent literacy initiative. He stated that MDE will be seeking state funds in the upcoming Legislature session to expand both programs.
- He stated that he met with Commissioner Andy Gipson about several Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) initiatives that MDE can support. He stated these include the Great American Fair 250 celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States, expanding the Future Farmers of America (FFA), and growing the Farm-to-School program.
- He attended the Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA) inaugural luncheon featuring Morgan Freeman, who is a strong early childhood advocate. The MELA is a statewide organization that focuses on improving the health, education, and well-being of children 0-5 years old in Mississippi.
- He attended the Mississippi Department of Health Child Health Roundtable event with leaders from agencies and organizations that serve children.
- He stated that Ms. Holly Spivey represented MDE at Governor Reeves' press conference about MDE's partnership with Canopy Children's Solutions for the launch of Canopy Anywhere platform, which will give middle and high school students access to digital screenings, a wellness curriculum, in-school therapists, and family support services. MDE is partnering with Canopy to implement the Canopy Anywhere program in 29 districts. He stated that MDE will have our kick-off meeting with Canopy and participating school districts next week.
- He stated MDE received notification from the U.S. Department of Education in late July that it would award states all federal Fiscal Year 2025 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding that had been withheld pending review since July 1. MDE informed local districts about this announcement. For Mississippi, this affects approximately \$68 million in grants for Migrant Education, Support for Effective Instruction, English Language Acquisition, Student Support and Academic Enrichment, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.
- He stated that MDE has issued about 100 education stakeholders to participate in role-alike focus groups to provide input for the updated Strategic Plan for education in Mississippi. He stated the focus group meetings will be held in late September/early October. Executive Leadership Team members will co-facilitate focus groups made up of

students, teachers principals, superintendents, legislators, business leaders, and other education stakeholders.

- He, Ms. Kym Wiggins, and Dr. Judy Nelson, attended an ExcelinEd meeting for state chiefs and deputies in Washington, D.C., about education agency flexibility under the ESEA. He stated that with the current presidential administration signaling openness to expanded state authority, ExcelinEd is supporting states in defining their priorities and barriers regarding additional flexibility.
- He and Dr. Paula Vanderford attended the Chief Council of State School Officers (CCSSO) Summer Leadership Convening, which focused on state chiefs' roles as leaders and tactics to stay focused on the most impactful priorities MDE has identified to improve student outcomes.
- He and several team members met with National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) ambassador Mike Ward, former state superintendent of education for North Carolina. The meeting was to secure the input of chief state school officers and their colleagues about NAEP.
- He was interviewed by:
 - MPB Radio,
 - Arizona's ABC15 Phoenix; and
 - News National show, The Hill Sunday with Chris Stirewalt.
- He held an all-staff meeting to introduce new staff and provide updates on legislation, policy, and initiatives that are being implemented in 2025-2026.

VII. Report of the Chair

- Mr. Miller stated he has been working on the subcommittees, which he sent to Board members to review and send him any changes or suggestions. He stated that he and Dr. Evans have been talking about one thing the Board is in control of and that is two sets of schools where they serve as their Board. He stated one is the state schools, and the other is schools that have been taken over by MDE. The Board needs to come up with some review and oversights and there may be another subcommittee created. He stated that Dr. Evans has been working on this, and Mr. Ferrell has been working on an evaluation piece. He stated that within the next 30 days that hopefully they will have something to present so the Board will be doing what they are supposed to do.

VIII. Reports of Student Representatives

Mr. Crosby Parker reported on cell phone usage during the school day and how his school is helping students be more attentive in class.

Ms. Michelle Xie reported on the limited number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes that are being offered to students.

IX. Report on State Board of Education Subcommittee meeting

Mr. Glen V. East, Chair of the Legislative Subcommittee, stated they met yesterday, and discussed taking care of the schools that are under our preview.

X. Discussion and/or Approval of Board Items

01. Information: Update on Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science (MSMS) and the Mississippi University for Women (MUW) [Goals 2, 4, and 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Wendy Clemons)

Ms. Ginger Tedder, Executive Director of MSMS, and Dr. Thomas Easterling, Director of Academic Affairs for MSMS, gave an update on the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

02. Information: Discussion on proposed reorganization within the Mississippi Department of Education, related to Educational Accountability [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Lance Evans and Erin Meyer)

Dr. Lance Evans and Ms. Erin Meyer discussed the proposed reorganization within MDE related to Educational Accountability.

03. Information: 2024-2025 Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) Results [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Paula Vanderford and Mr. Alan Burrow presented the 2024-2025 Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) results. Ms. Wendy Clemons gave the next steps for improvement.

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

04. Action: Approval of the MDE Grant Awards [Goal 4 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Kym Wiggins)

- 04.A. Action: Award grants for special projects appropriated by the Mississippi Legislature to the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) with a World Class Teacher Program (WCTP) site in House Bill 42, 2025 Legislative Session [Goal 4 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board unanimously approved item 04.A. (copy attached).

05. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of monthly expenditures for the Mississippi School of the Arts (Wendy Clemons)
- B. Approval of monthly expenditures for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (Wendy Clemons)
- C. Approval of dyslexia screeners for use in kindergarten and first grade (Wendy Clemons)
- D. Approval to revise the *Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children (2025)* (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with one public comment) (Wendy Clemons)
- E. Approval to adopt the *Grant Funded Program Quality Assessment for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old Children (2025)* (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Wendy Clemons)
- F. Approval to revise Title 7 of the Miss. Admin. Code: Part 142: Career and Technical Education (CTE) Licensure Guidelines K-12: To revise the “Special Notes” section to include a sixth (6th) “Special Note” that would establish criteria for obtaining certain Career and Technical Education (CTE) License types after an Initial Standard Renewable CTE License has been Granted: These Criteria will be referenced as applicable throughout the Official CTE Guidelines Document and shall Only Apply to certain CTE Licensure Pathways (Has cleared the Administrative Process with public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- G. Approval to revise student teacher ratio requirements beginning with the 2025-2026 school year to include the following:
 - A. To revise State Board Policy Chapter 19, Rule 19.1 – Class Size
 - B. To revise the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024* specifically, Process Standards 2, 28.1, 28.2, 28.3, and 28.4, and the Glossary
 - C. To revise the *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2024* specifically, Process Standards 2, 24, 24.1, 24.2, 24.3, and 24.4, and the Glossary
 - D. To establish Process Standards 28.6 and 28.7 of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2024*

- E. To establish Process Standards 24.7 and 24.8 of the *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2024* (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- H. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7 – 4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to remove references to and associated requirements related to the Highly Qualified Teacher Status as formerly defined and required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- I. Approval of Mississippi Valley State University's request to establish a licensure-track Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Elementary Education (K-6) program (Paula Vanderford)
- J. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To revise Title 7 of the Miss. Admin. Code: Part 142: Guidelines and Clarification of Requirements for Issuance of Career and Technical Education (Occupational Educator) Licenses: To include a new pathway to licensure in the area of Driver Education (Licensure Endorsement Code 114) (Paula Vanderford)
- K. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code: 7 – 4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to require all candidates seeking initial licensure in the area of Elementary Education (K-3/K-6/4-6) to earn a passing score on either the Foundations of Reading assessment or Pathways to Proficient Reading following a Foundations of Reading assessment attempt and to establish a Three-Year Entry-Level Elementary Education Non-Renewable License option to allow completion of the Pathways to Proficient Reading while in-service for the purpose of obtaining a standard renewable five-year license (Paula Vanderford)
- L. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act Process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code: 7 – 4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to amend the Foundations of Reading assessment requirement by removing the assessment from being required as one condition for obtaining licensure in the endorsement area of Special Education Mild/Moderate (licensure codes: 221 (K-12) and 223 (K-8) (Paula Vanderford)

- M. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7 – 4: Part 4: *Licensure Guidelines K-12* to revise the acceptable degree requirement for Mississippi State Board of Education-approved nontraditional licensure pathways (Paula Vanderford)
- N. Approval to upgrade the accreditation status of one (1) nonpublic school accredited by the MDE (Paula Vanderford)
- O. Approval of methodology to award grant funds to local educational agencies for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Non-traditional Participation Grant Program (John Ferrell)
- P. Approval of methodology to award grant dollars appropriated from the Mississippi Legislature to local educational agencies for agricultural certification programs, and equipment upgrades for agricultural programs, computer science, engineering or robotic engineering programs, and Mississippi Elementary STEM and STEAM programs (John Ferrell)
- Q. Approval of Mississippi Seal of Biliteracy proficiency assessments and vendors for use in determining student levels of language proficiency (Wendy Clemons)

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

XI. No Executive Session.

XII. State Board of Education

- 1. No report on meetings attended.
- 2. No request to attend a meeting.

XIII. Other Business

Mr. Miller stated the September Board meeting will be held on September 25, 2025 in Jackson, Mississippi at the Central High School Building in the 4th Floor Boardroom starting at 10:00 a.m.

August 21, 2025

XIV. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:24 p.m.

Approved:



Matt Miller, Board Chair
Mississippi Board of Education



Lance Evans
Executive Secretary
Mississippi Board of Education