

Minutes of Mississippi Board of Education Meeting

November 20, 2025

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

- I. Mr. Matt Miller called the Board meeting to order at 10:04 a.m., after determining that a quorum of the Board existed for the purpose of conducting a meeting.
- II. Mr. Glen V. East led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Matt Mayo gave the Invocation.
- III. On a motion by Dr. Wendi Barrett, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of October 16, 2025, Board meeting and minutes of November 14, 2025, Special-Called Board meeting.
- IV. On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Glen V. East, the Board approved the agenda as presented.
- V. Recognition Ceremony

Grenada High School Navy JROTC Program Distinguished Unit with Academic Honors for the 2024-25 school year

- VI. Dr. Lance Evans gave the following report as the State Superintendent of Education:
 - The MDE notified the superintendents about the actions the U.S. Department of Education took to transfer the management of several of its programs to other federal agencies.
 - He and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) members held a work session with Studer Education to prioritize the Strategic Plan goals and review input from the focus groups. The Board was provided with an Executive Summary that describes the focus group activities and their results. The next steps will be finalizing the strategic goals and objectives

based on stakeholder feedback. He stated some time will be reserved during the Board's training with National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) in December to get feedback on the plan.

- He and Ms. Holly Spivey met with Senator Rod Hickman to discuss the support MDE is providing to the Noxubee County School District to improve student outcomes.
- The first Principal Advisory Council meeting of the year was held at MDE. He shared updates about MAAP achievement, school and district performance, and accountability changes.
- The MDE's Technical Advisory Committee held a two-day meeting which covered several topics including the administration of the 2025-2026 assessments, data analysis, and the accountability system.
- He met with William Carey University (WCU) President Dr. Ben Burnett and College of Education Assistant Dean Dr. Eddie Peasant on the WCU campus to discuss teacher preparation and retention efforts to build a strong educator workforce.
- He attended the Mississippi Council on Economic Education's (MECC) Forum on American Enterprise in Jackson. MECC works to enhance economic and financial literacy throughout Mississippi by equipping K-12 educators with resources and training.
- He attended the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Annual Policy Forum this week with three members of the Executive Leadership Team. This year's event focused on ways state leaders are seizing the opportunity to lead and design systems to improve student outcomes and meet the demands of the future.
- He attended the ExcelinEd National Summit on Education with several MDE staff. He stated the sessions focused on several topics that align with our current priorities including adolescent literacy, improving mathematics and college and career readiness, and maintaining strong accountability systems.
- The MDE has been supporting the newly appointed Interim Superintendent of the Holmes County Consolidated School District and assisting the district and community in managing the transition to a new district leader.
- Mr John Ferrell has been serving as Interim Superintendent in the Okolona Separate School District since last Friday when the Board placed the district into a District of Transformation.
- He and several MDE leaders conducted an on-site visit in the Clarksdale Municipal School District to begin the process for the district to implement an 18-month plan to address its history of failing academic performance. Clarksdale has received an F rating for five of the past seven years. The MDE will provide strategic support to the district, coordinated across multiple offices.
- He spoke to the media:

- Interviewed by MPB about Okolona becoming a District of Transformation.
- Interviewed by Oklahoma City, KWTB News 9, about the steps Mississippi has taken to strengthen education and literacy outcomes for students.
- He had the honor of presenting the Milken Educator Award to Mannsdale Upper Elementary School third grade teacher Kayla Saxton. The prestigious Milken Educator Award comes with an unrestricted \$25,000.00 cash prize and is given to outstanding educators across the country each year for their exceptional dedication, innovation, and leadership.

VII. Report of the Chair

- Mr. Miller stated that he attended the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA) Conference along with Mr. Matt Mayo and Mr. Bill Jacobs. They attended two sessions on AI. Pearl Superintendent, Mr. Chris Chism, presented at the conference and has presented nationally on the subject. He stated that the Board needs to get behind the use of AI and establish some guidance.

VIII. Reports of Student Representatives

Mr. Crosby Parker reported on the importance of guidance counseling.

Ms. Michelle Xie reported about AI in the classroom.

IX. Reports on State Board of Education Subcommittee meetings

Mr. Glen V. East, Chair of the Academic Achievement PreK-12/Early Childhood Subcommittee, met yesterday via Teams. He stated that two reports have been released: Chronic Absenteeism Report, School Year 2024-2025 and Literacy Based Promotion Act Annual Report of Performance and Student Retention. He stated that MDE analyzed the chronic absenteeism data to see what changes could be made such as coding and training. The MDE has some proposals to address the growing chronic absenteeism and are working on some technical amendments for the upcoming Legislative session. The Third Grade Reading Assessment for Promotion has an 84.6% pass rate after the retesters were figured in for the 2024-2025 school year.

Mr. Matt Mayo, Chair of the Internal Accountability Subcommittee, met this morning and worked on a revised internal charter to define responsibilities, approved it during the subcommittee meeting, and will be recommended for approval at the next Board meeting. He stated they also worked on an operations manual and a couple of revised policies that will move forward later.

Mr. Matt Miller reported on the newly formed State Schools Subcommittee which met recently with himself, Mr. Bill Jacobs, and Mr. Mike Pruitt who is the Chair. He stated that the Subcommittee is helping to fill the gap between the Board and the state schools and the District of Transformation. This was an organizational meeting to discuss what the subcommittee wants to do and wants to accomplish. Another meeting is planned soon.

X. Discussion and/or Approval of Board Items

01. Information: Report on Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) achievement gap results by subgroup [Goals 1, 4, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Paula Vanderford and Mr. Alan Burrow reported on Mississippi Academic Assessment Program achievement gap results by subgroup.

02. Information: Spring 2025 ACT Results [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Vanderford and Mr. Burrow presented the Spring 2025 ACT Results.

03. Information: Fall 2025 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment results [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Vanderford, Ms. Melissa Beck, and Ms. Wendy Clemons presented the Fall 2025 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment results and provided next steps.

04. Action: Approval of A-F performance level cuts for schools and districts as established in the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System, effective with the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(5) [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Bill Jacobs, the Board unanimously approved item 04 (copy attached).

05. Action: Approval of the MDE Contract [Goal 1 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Kym Wiggins)

- 05.A. Action: Award contract to Sivic Solutions Group, LLC to provide services to the Mississippi Department of Education for School Based Administrative Claiming Support and Nurse Database Software Solution [Goal 1 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

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On a motion by Mr. Glen V. East, seconded by Dr. Wendi Barrett, the Board unanimously approved item 05.A. (copy attached).

- 06. Action: Approval of the MDE Grant Awards [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Kym Wiggins)
 - 06.A. Action: Award competitive grants for the Cohort 9 Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Program [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Wendy Clemons)
 - 06.B. Action: Award renewability grants for the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program [Goals 1 and 2 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Wendy Clemons)

On a motion by Mr. Glen V. East, seconded by Dr. Wendi Barrett, the Board unanimously approved items 06.A. and 06.B. (copy attached).

- 07. 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 to adopt policies required by state statute for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to be placed on the District Policy Service website established by the Mississippi School Boards Association (Wendy Clemons)
 - D. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-24: *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2025*, Appendix A-8 and Miss. Admin. Code 7-163: *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2025*, Appendix A-8
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Wendy Clemons)
 - E. Approval to readopt Miss. Admin. Code 7-169: *2018 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Science* and to repeal Miss. Admin. Code 7-28: *2010 Mississippi Science Framework*
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Wendy Clemons)

- F. Approval of list of evidence-based academic interventions for use in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade (Wendy Clemons)
- G. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-24: *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2025* specifically Accreditation Policy 2.9: *Conditions of Emergency Status, Placement in a District of Transformation and Withdrawal of Accreditation*, in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6
(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 establish criteria for obtaining a supplemental endorsement in the area of Athletic Administrator that may be added to a valid five-year standard Class AA or higher license type upon completion of a Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE)-approved program in Interscholastic Athletic Administration
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- I. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-4: Part 4: *Licensure Guidelines K-12* to update Appendix I: Glossary
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- J. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code: 7-4: Part 4: Licensure Guidelines K-12 to establish criteria for the issuance of a Two-Year Provisional license via Reciprocity to individuals seeking Mississippi educator licensure through the use of certain valid license types that are less than standard and issued by an educator licensing authority outside of Mississippi
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)
- K. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-4: Part 4: *Licensure Guidelines K-12* to expand existing criteria related to the one-time one-year extension of a provisional nonrenewable entry-level teaching license obtained by way of completion of prelicensure requirements as part of nontraditional teacher preparation programs that lead to a standard Mississippi teaching license
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (Paula Vanderford)

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- L. Approval to revise student teacher ratio requirements beginning with the 2025-2026 school year and begin the Administrative Procedures Act process for the following:
 - A. To revise the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2025* specifically, Process Standard 28.6
 - B. To revise the *Mississippi Nonpublic School Accountability Standards, 2025* specifically, Process Standard 24.7
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with one public comment) (Paula Vanderford)
- M. Approval to revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-24, *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2025*, Process Standard 3.1
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process without public comments) (John Ferrell)
- N. Approval of one certified personnel contract and one resignation for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind
(Wendy Clemons)

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

XI. Consideration of Executive Session¹

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

Mr. Matt Mayo then moved that the Board go into Executive Session for the discussion and/or deliberations for a strategy session or negotiations with regards to prospective litigation involving the MDE or the issuance of an appealable order in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(b) related to the Appeal of the decision of the Licensure Commission filed by Gwen Rice Educator Licensure No. 237096; discussion of discrete personnel matters regarding the employment or job performance in the Districts of Transformations in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(a) and (k); and discussion with respect to investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct or violations of law in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(d), specially related to school districts' violations of state and federal law regarding financial audits and process standard 4. Dr. Wendi Barrett seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote. Ms. Erin Meyer informed the public of the Board's vote to go into Executive Session for the above stated reasons.

¹ At 11:30 a.m.---Ms. Stroud and Ms. Werner left the meeting and did not participate in Executive Session.

Minutes of the Executive Session

During the Executive Session, the Board discussed and/or deliberated for a strategy session or negotiations with regards to prospective litigation involving the MDE or the issuance of an appealable order in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(b) related to the Appeal of the decision of the Licensure Commission filed by Gwen Rice Educator Licensure No. 237096; discussed discrete personnel matters regarding the employment or job performance in the Districts of Transformations in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(a) and (k); and discussed with respect to investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct or violations of law in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(d), specially related to school districts' violations of state and federal law regarding financial audits and process standard 4.

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Glen V. East, the Board voted unanimously to come out of the Executive Session.

The public came back into the Board meeting and Mr. Miller reported that during the Executive Session the Board took the following action.

1. On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Bill Jacobs, the Board unanimously granted the Motion to dismiss the appeal of Gwen Rice, Educator License No. 237096.

XII. State Board of Education

1. No report of meetings attended.
2. On a motion from Mr. Glen V. East, seconded by Mr. Matt Mayo, the Board voted unanimously for Mr. Matt Miller to attend the USM MCARE meeting.

XIII. Other Business

Mr. Miller stated the Board will attend the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Training and conduct the SBE Work Session on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, in Jackson, MS at the Central High School Building in the 4th floor Boardroom starting at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Miller stated the December Board meeting will be held on December 18, 2025, in Jackson, Mississippi at the Central High School Building in the 4th Floor Boardroom starting at 10:00 a.m.

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XIV. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Mr. Glen V. East, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 1:16 p.m.

Approved:



Matt Miller, Board Chair
Mississippi Board of Education



Lance Evans
Executive Secretary
Mississippi Board of Education