

Minutes of Mississippi Board of Education Meeting

January 15, 2026

The members of the Mississippi Board of Education met at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2026, 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. Bill Jacobs, Mr. Matt Mayo, Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, Mr. Matt Miller, Mr. Mike Pruitt, Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, and Ms. Mary Werner. Board member attending virtually: Dr. Wendi Barrett (Biloxi, 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 10:00 a.m., after determining that a quorum of the Board existed for the purpose of conducting a meeting.

II. National Anthem

Oxford High School Chamber Choir

Oxford School District

Dr. Thomas Ardrey, Choir Director

Dr. Dana Bullard, Oxford High School Principal

Bradley Robertson, Superintendent

III. Mr. Mike Pruitt led the Pledge of Allegiance and Mr. Bill Jacobs gave the Invocation.

IV. On a motion by Dr. Ronnie L. McGehee, seconded by Mr. Bill Jacobs, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of December 18, 2025, Board meeting and the minutes of December 17, 2025, Board Work Session.

V. On a motion by Ms. Mary Werner, seconded by Mr. Matt Mayo, the Board approved the agenda as presented.

VI. Recognition Ceremony

Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History

State History Teacher of the Year for Mississippi

Kreissa Reed

Neshoba Central High School

Neshoba County School District

- VII. Dr. Lance Evans gave the following report as the State Superintendent of Education:
- He presented the progress on the Mississippi State Board of Education's Strategic Plan.

- VIII. Report of the Chair
- None.

- IX. Reports of Student Representatives

Mr. Crosby Parker stated he is still working on the Mentorship Program Implementation Binder. He stated he learned that the Madison School District created a class where the mentoring program is taught, whereas in Gulfport it is an extracurricular activity. They have the same outcome and that is mentoring to students.

Ms. Michelle Xie spoke about her goals for the new year, including expanding her STEM journey initiative.

- X. Reports on State Board of Education Subcommittee meetings

Ms. Mary Werner, Chair of the Workforce/Career and Technology Education Subcommittee, stated they met today and were given information about the K-12 Workforce Development Plan. The work on the middle school band (grades 6-8) is nearing completion. MDE is revising the current middle school Exploring Careers courses to be taught as either a 6th grade exploratory or 7th grade elective. Districts will be able to tailor topics and instructions to expose students to the priority workforce sectors associated with their region and community. She stated that MDE in conjunction with the RCU created the CTE Pathway promotional flyer and planning documents to be used in middle school as a workforce recruitment resource in Exploring Careers. She stated the CTE and Workforce Development are partnering with the RCU to provide three regional one-day workforce conferences free of charge with one in North, Central, and South Mississippi. She stated that CTE is partnering with Junior Achievement about workforce resources so we can align their resources to our programs.

- XI. Discussion and/or Approval of Board Items

01. Information: Progress on the Mississippi State Board of Education's (SBE) Strategic Plan [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan]
(Lance Evans)

Dr. Lance Evans presented the information earlier about the Strategic Plan during his Superintendent Report.

02. Action: Approval of a temporary rule and to begin the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) process: To revise Miss. Admin. Code 7-24: *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2025*, specifically Appendix H, in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6 [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, the Board unanimously approved item 02. (copy attached).

03. Information: Update on Internal Audit Charter [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Sam Atkinson and Matt Mayo)

Mr. Matt Mayo provided an update on the Internal Audit Charter and stated an Attorney General's Opinion has been requested, and no action will be taken until the Opinion is received.

04. Action: Approval of the MDE Contracts [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Kym Wiggins)

04.A. Action: Contract with Guidesoft Inc., d/b/a Knowledge Services under the terms of the Master Consulting Services Agreement to provide for the acquisition of Information Technology Professionals [Goal 5 – MBE Strategic Plan] (John Kraman)

04.B. Action: Contract with Bailey Education Group to provide an Interim Superintendent in Holmes County Consolidated School District [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (John Ferrell)

On a motion by Mr. Mike Pruitt, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board unanimously approved items 04.A. and 04.B. (copy attached).

Mr. Matt Miller recessed the meeting at 12:12 p.m. and reconvened at 12:17 p.m.

05. Action: Consideration and determination by the State Board of Education that the Wilkinson County School District is impaired with a history of serious academic deficiencies which warrants their placement into a District of Transformation in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii) [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

05.A. Information: History of serious academic deficiencies in the Wilkinson County School District which warrants their placement into a District of Transformation in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii) [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan] (Paula Vanderford)

Dr. Paula Vanderford and Ms. Kym Wiggins gave a history of the serious academic deficiencies in the Wilkinson County School District which warrants their placement into a District of Transformation in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii).

- 05.B. Action: Consideration and determination by the State Board of Education that the Wilkinson County School District is impaired with a history of serious academic deficiencies which warrants their placement into a District of Transformation in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii) [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan (Paula Vanderford)]

Mr. Matt Mayo moved the Board finds that the Wilkinson County School District has met the requirements in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii) for placement into a District of Transformation in that during each of the past two (2) consecutive school years, the Wilkinson County School District received an “F” designation; during two (2) of the three (3) past consecutive school years, The Wilkinson County School District received an “F” designation; and for the past two (2) consecutive years, the Wilkinson County School District has had more than fifty (50) percent of the schools within the District designated as Schools-At-Risk, and shall be placed into a District of Transformation, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, the Board unanimously approved item 05.B.

- 05.C Action: Consideration and determination by the State Board of Education to officially abolish the Wilkinson County School District [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan (Paula Vanderford)]

Mr. Matt Mayo moved that based on the State Board’s placement of the Wilkinson County School District into a District of Transformation due to its impairment with a history of serious academic deficiencies, in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-13(1), the State Board shall officially abolish the Wilkinson County School District, its school, school board, superintendent, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board unanimously approved item 05.C.

- 05.D Action: Adoption of resolution contingent upon the determination by the State Board of Education that the Wilkinson County School District is impaired with a history of serious academic deficiencies which warrants their abolishment and placement into a District of Transformation in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6(12)(b)(ii) and Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-13 [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan (Paula Vanderford)]

Mr. Miller read the Resolution (copy attached).

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

XII. Consideration of Executive Session

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 in accordance with Miss. Code Ann. § 25-41-7(4)(a) and (k) for discussion of discrete personnel matters related to Wilkinson County School District and the District of Transformation. Dr. McGehee 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.

Minutes of the Executive Session

During the Executive Session, the Board discussed discrete personnel matters related to the Wilkinson County School District – District of Transformation.

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, 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 no action.

05.E Action: Approval of the appointment of an Interim Superintendent for the Wilkinson County School District contingent upon the Board's abolishment of the school district [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan (John Ferrell)]

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Mary Werner, the Board unanimously approved item 05.E. (copy attached).

05.F Action: Approval of the employment agreement for the Interim Superintendent for the Wilkinson County School District contingent upon the Board's abolishment of the school district [Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 – MBE Strategic Plan (Paula Vanderford)]

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

06. 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 of list of professional vendors to provide educational consulting to schools and districts in the areas of English Language Arts (K-12) and mathematics (K-12) (Wendy Clemons)
- E. Approved to begin a temporary rule and to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: 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 to be effective the 2025-2026 school year (Wendy Clemons)
- F. Approval for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to receive a donation (Wendy Clemons)
- G. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To establish Miss. Admin. Code 7-3: 99.4, State Board Policy Chapter 99, Rule 99.4 – School Donations (Wendy Clemons)
- H. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To revise selected Mississippi Secondary Curriculum Frameworks in Career and Technical Education (John Ferrell)
 - 1. Advanced Manufacturing
 - 2. Diversified Agriculture - Agribusiness Core
 - 3. Diversified Agriculture - Animals Core
 - 4. Diversified Agriculture - Environment Core
 - 5. Diversified Agriculture - Mechanization Core
 - 6. Diversified Agriculture - Plants Core
 - 7. Principles of Agriscience
 - 8. Information Technology - Networking
 - 9. Lodging, Hospitality, and Tourism

- I. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process: To establish selected Mississippi Secondary Curriculum Frameworks in Career and Technical Education (John Ferrell)
 1. Information Technology - Cybersecurity
 2. Multimedia - Advanced Digital Design
 3. Multimedia - Advanced Digital Video Production
 4. Multimedia – Capstone
- J. Approval of the Invitation for BID for purchase of Apple Branded Products for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) (Wendy Clemons)
- K. Approval to begin the Administrative Procedures Act process to establish a new part number for the revised *Mississippi Administrator Professional Growth System Standards, 2025* (Paula Vanderford)
- L. Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and the Columbus Municipal School District for the use of their track and field facilities (Wendy Clemons)
- M. Approval of two certified personnel resignations for the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (Wendy Clemons)

On a motion by Mr. Glen V. East, 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).

XIII. State Board of Education

1. No report on meetings attended.
2. On a motion by Mr. Matt Miller, seconded by Mr. Matt Mayo, the Board granted permission for all Board members to attend any of the workforce meetings.

XIV. Other Business

Ms. Mary Werner, on a personal preference, stated that the *New York Times* had an article on January 11, 2026, titled “How Mississippi Transformed Its Schools from Worst to Best” and the *Wall Street Journal* had a follow up article on January 13, 2026, about Mississippi.

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Mr. Miller stated the February Board meeting will be held on February 19, 2026, in Jackson, Mississippi at the Central High School Building in the 4th Floor Boardroom starting at 10:00 a.m.

XV. Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Matt Mayo, seconded by Ms. Billye Jean Stroud, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 1:22 p.m.

Approved:



Matt Miller, Board Chair
Mississippi Board of Education



Lance Evans
Executive Secretary
Mississippi Board of Education