



Governing Board

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2022

Phyllis J. Washington Education Center

University of Montana

Attendees

Members

Present	Absent	Member
X (at 11:40am)		Sharyl Allen , Deputy Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction
X		Joel Graves (Chair), Superintendent, Eureka Public Schools
X		Anthony Lapke (Vice Chair), Teacher, Glacier High School
X		Adrea Lawrence , Dean, Phyllis J. Washington College of Education, University of Montana, Non-Voting
X		Luke Muszkiewicz , Chair, Board of Trustees, Helena School District No.1
X		Brock Tessman , Deputy Commissioner, Academic, Research & Student Affairs, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
X		Jason Neiffer , Executive Director, Ex Officio, Non-Voting
X		Mike Agostinelli , Assistant Director/Curriculum Director, Ex Officio

Staff and Guests

- Christen Cole, Instructional Registrar, MTDA
- Anna East, Student Support and Content Specialist, MTDA
- Kate Peterson, Student Support and Content Specialist, MTDA - via Zoom
- Ryan Schrenk, EdReady Program Manager, MTDA
- Jason Leonard, EdReady Instructional Registrar, MTDA - via Zoom
- Virg Hale, EdReady Lead Ambassador, MTDA - via Zoom
- Jodie Hirsch, Instructional Projects Coordinator, MTDA - via Zoom
- Julia Troisi, Administrative Associate, MTDA

Minutes

- I. Chair Graves called the meeting to order at 10:31am
- II. Introduction and Agenda
 - A. Director Neiffer explained the agenda for the day and then gave a tour of the MTDA office suite in the Phyllis J. College Education Center.
 - B. Board members and staff introduced themselves.
- III. Approve Minutes of the March 14, 2022 meeting
 - A. Board member Muszkiewicz moved to approve the minutes; Board Vice Chair Lapke seconded. It was approved unanimously.
- IV. Approval of Expenditures Through March 31, 2022
 - A. Director Neiffer discussed the state of the current budget, and highlighted the work MTDA is doing on indigenous language course development.
 - B. Board member Tessman asked about the costs of development, and suggested discussion points internally and with Legislators regarding the costs of course development. Director Neiffer discussed his efforts to secure additional funds via grants to allow a member of the MTDA team to focus exclusively on indigenous language course development along with tribal outreach.
 - C. Board member Muszkiewicz asked about the next fiscal year's budget. Director Neiffer commented that we will present the board with our budget overview in our a summer-time board meeting.
 - D. Board member Tessman moved to approve the expenditure report; Board Member Muszkiewicz seconded. It was approved unanimously.
- V. Update on March 15, 2022 Interim Budget Committee Section E and Education Interim Committee
 - A. Director Neiffer updated the board on MTDA's presentation in front of the joint Interim Budget Committee Section E and Education Interim Committee.
 - B. Director Neiffer presented a document to the board that he created to send to Representative Beady explaining MTDA's EdReady Montana program. Director Neiffer discussed a brief history of the use of EdReady across Montana, and Vice Chair Lapke discussed how he utilizes EdReady as part of his work in the Kalispell School District.
- VI. Board Strategic Planning Workshop
 - A. Director Neiffer led a "SWOT" analysis exercise with members of the board, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding MTDA's current program as of 2022.
 - B. Board members offered comments on each category, summarized on these charts:

C.

Strengths



Weaknesses

Have to always
worry about
FUNDING

Funding stream
ultimately requires
legislative buy-in,
one way or another.

Local
infrastructure?

Under-developed
presence in areas
w/ highest growth
potential
(DE, computer)

Not enough
data on
student outcomes
(esp. post secondary)

Widespread public
understanding

Opportunities

EXPANSION
(out of state)

Expand offerings to include out of state instruction

College offerings?
(not dual credit)

could be diff. experiential learning sites

grant in competency-based courses, subjects

Re-establish network of connections with large districts

mobile

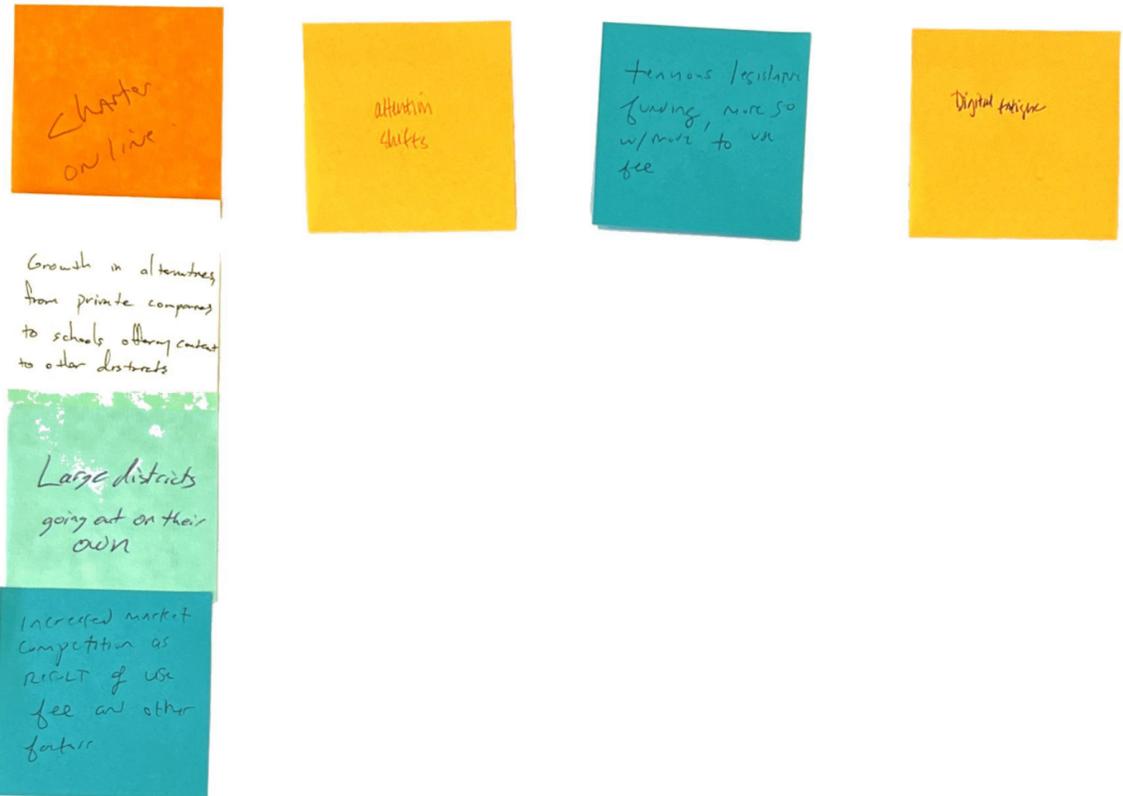
Expertise and innovative mindset is ~~core~~ to MT/D culture.

Professional Development for districts

Create an online school community
Students identify as belonging

focus on MT teachers as only members

Threats



- D. Director Neiffer provided the board with a draft copy of MTDA's "Project Sirius," a draft proposal that is the result of discussions with Rep. Llew Jones and Governor Gianforte's office.

Project Sirius

MTDA will expand services available to students through their local Montana public schools. *In addition* to our existing original credit, credit recovery, dual credit, and middle school courses, and EdReady programming, we will stand up an “Online Learning Clearinghouse” model to provide additional services. The clearinghouse will borrow from the [Wisconsin eSchool Network](#) model, and be built around the goals of providing choice and flexibility to build local capacity to serve students.

Through a new clearinghouse interface, schools can enroll students in additional services, including:

- **Digital Content and Platform Services** - Schools can purchase digital content, accessible through MTDA portals, for use for locally-taught online courses, blended learning formats, and personalized learning initiatives. The content will eventually include a variety of price points that provide for different needs.
- **Short Courses** - Schools can purchase short courses (ranging from an estimated one-hour completion time to twenty-five hours completion time) that serve unique student needs, including alternative discipline courses, certification prep, test prep, and others.
- **Third-Party Services** - Schools can purchase third-party courses and services in formats that differ from MTDA's traditional offerings, including compressed courses, alternative scheduling, and live instructional courses.
- **Proficiency Assessment Services** - Schools can purchase evaluation services allowing students to submit portfolios and take exams that are reviewed by a teacher to declare proficiency with a credit recommendation.

Centralizing these purchasing services provides advantages to schools, including group pricing, single points of purchase, minimized vendor relationships, and potential closer integrations with local school SISs/systems.

Clearinghouse staff will evaluate and monitor providers, courses, and services, along with providing expert guidance to schools on the implementation of these services in their local schools. MTDA will also provide technical guidance on evaluative standards to judge services, including, but not limited to, accessibility compliance (WCAG 2, ADA, etc.), standards integration, device compatibility, IEFA adoption, and student data privacy law compliance,

To complete the project, MTDA anticipates these milestones:

- Adapt GeniusSIS to include multiple enrollments and program pathways and a public-facing catalog.
- Work with the University of Montana and State of Montana procurement processes and procedures to assure compliance.
- Conduct market research to survey the market for services focused on areas where MTDA has limited expertise (short courses, alternative discipline coursework, certification prep, etc.).
- Develop and manage RFQs/RFTs for vendor services.

- Potentially adopt specialized services, including federated LMS services and single sign-on services.

MTDA would need additional human resources to be able to expand in this way, including:

- Clearinghouse Manager: This individual would be responsible for the overall management of the program and strategic guidance to the MTDA leadership team regarding business and marketing strategy.
- Technical Integration Specialist and IT Lead: This individual would be responsible for the setup and maintenance of integrations, including integration of GeniusSIS with local districts and outside vendors.
- Data/Billing Specialist: This individual would be responsible for data recording and reporting, along with assisting with regular billing and invoicing of schools.
- School Training, Support, and Marketing Specialist: This individual would work directly with districts to implement expanded services, including providing professional development and expert implementation advice. This may also be accomplished through a regional ambassador model made up of part-time experts, borrowing from our successful EdReady Montana project.

DRAFT

E. Board Members ask questions and made comments regarding the proposal.

1. Board Member Allen asked about anticipated outcomes from this proposal. Director Neiffer answered that access and participation are the primary initial outcomes, and that outcome measurements are evolving broadly in education including MTDA's work in the "ungrading" movement. Board

Member Allen suggested that staff should connect with language programs in New Zealand for forward-looking work.

2. Board Member Muszkiewicz commented that he is impressed with the work that has been done with the proposal thus far and that the organization is poised to be part of the larger discussion in Montana. Director Neiffer commented he was pleased that the Governor has prioritized keeping MTDA staff at the table and that all of the players involved have been open to allowing MTDA to continue to do the work they have been doing in the last 12 years in addition to looking and new ways to provide services.
3. Board Member Allen asked about the timeline and projected costs. Director Neiffer reported that if we were able to start initial planning, an aggressive timeline would allow MTDA to offer services for Fall 2023. He also proposed that minimally, the project could be administered and funded from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. Board Member Allen also suggested that the organization keep an eye on changes to Chapter 55 and Chapter 57 that will start in 2023.
4. Board Member Tessman commented that MTDA must be mindful of our organization's mission and be sure that any proposal fits within our mission. He also suggested that we need to consider increasing our suggested budget ask to make sure we have appropriate capacity. Director Neiffer discussed some of the complexities of capacity and that any expansion in this direction would necessitate additional human resources.
5. Board Member Allen commented on the budget and capacity of the organization. She noted her agreement with Board Member Tessman that our initial budget was likely too low to accomplish the goals of the project. She suggested that we look at outside models for guidance and take advantage of the opportunities of having the support of both legislators and the Governor's office.
6. Board Chair Graves complimented the Director for looking ahead and working within the current environment to find a path forward.
7. Vice Chair Lapke commented that there is a need for these services that aren't congruent with MTDA's existing model. He said that there isn't capacity in most districts to do the planning and implementation work that could be accomplished centrally.
8. Director Neiffer that MTDA has the capacity in its current biennial budget to hire a project manager to start the work as soon as Summer 2022. Even if there isn't interest in the project in the long-term, the process of planning around the expansion has dual-purpose activities that would benefit MTDA either way. Assistant Director/Curriculum Director Agostinelli noted that we have had encouraging meetings GeniusSIS, our SIS vendor, on how we might

be able to do the technical integrations without moving to entirely new systems.

9. Board Member Tessman commented that MTDA needs to be aware of its brand, and the “Montananness” of the program. Director Neiffer responded that there is definitely a marketing and professional development challenge and that would be an important part of the successful implementation of the project. Board Member Allen noted the availability of these types of models elsewhere. Vice-Chair Lapke commented that MTDA can go in this direction with careful attention to what schools are actually purchasing to manage expectations. Director Neiffer also commented that this project will require careful outreach, including all education groups to manage expectations. Board Member Allen also suggested that MTDA be proactive about market research and connect with schools.
10. Board Member Muszkiewicz commented that he believed MTDA is headed in the right direction. He expressed concern that the project could risk the core program. Director Neiffer responded that he does not see this project as a replacement proposal and would not be interested in a discussion of this as a replacement for MTDA’s existing services with a long track record of success.

VII. EdReady Montana’s Pathway-to-Placement Programming with Montana State University and the University of Montana

- A. Dr. Schrenk, the EdReady Montana program manager, provided an update to the board regarding pathway-to-placement efforts in both higher education and middle school/high school.

VIII. Public Comment

- A. No members of the public were present at the meeting.

IX. Adjournment - Chair Graves adjourned the meeting.