

Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative  
Regular Council Meeting  
1/15/2026

The Regular Council meeting of the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative was held at the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative Office on January 15, 2026 for the purpose of considering business to come before the Council. Chair, Laura Axtman, presided over the meeting.

**1. Call to Order**

Laura Axtman called the meeting to order at 11:05 am.

Members Present

- Amsterdam**– Marisa Stewart
- Anderson**– Spencer Johnson
- Big Sky**–Dustin Shipman
- Ennis**– Jared Moretti
- Gallatin Co. Supt.**– John Nielson
- Gateway**–Kelly Henderson
- Harrison**–Stephanie Stephens, Designated Harrison Board Representative
- LaMotte**– Scott Poloff
- Monforton**– Laura Axtman
- West Yellowstone**– Kevin Flannigan
- Willow Creek**– Bonnie Lower

Visitors:

**2. Public Comments**

Staff Present                      Kim Wegner-McCauley, Director; Joyce Schmidt, Clerk & Business Manager;  
Riley Russell, Executive Assistant

Staff Absent

**3. Consent Agenda**

- Approval of                      a.            Approval of November 6, 2025 and November 25, 2025 GMSEC Board Meeting Minutes
- Minutes &                              b.            Approval of expenditures: (#318272, 318304)-Nov, Dec
- Expenditures
- Motion to approve minutes and expenditures with adjustment of the November 25th meeting identified as a special board meeting.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Spencer Johnson

- Passed Unanimously.

#### **4. New Business:**

a.) **Business Manager's Report:**

*(Informational)*

The cash reconciliation totals by fund for October 2025 were provided to the Board as well as tentative totals for November & December 2025. The GCFD reports for November were received & reconciled with the GMSEC books just prior to the meeting & Joyce confirmed that the tentative totals provided for November were firm. The Cash Reconciliation Report for November will be included in the packet for the next meeting.

The delayed release of the November reports that were expected the third week of December were due to the combined impact of the holidays; the personnel changes in the GCFD most notably the abrupt resignation of the Chief Financial Officer at the end of September; coordinating the departments involved in the many layers of review as well as approval in the current process. Joyce also shared information gleaned from state news publications relevant to the matter with the board.

Cash requests have been submitted to OPI for costs incurred through December 2025 for both the IDEA-B & Preschool Incentive grants. All requests have been approved by OPI as well as paid with the most recent payments being received by the GCFD on January 10th.

The cooperative expenditure comparison for November continues to show our shortage of school psychologists & SLPs in the current FY. November also saw the first two Rock Creek invoices for SLP teletherapy. Other differences of note were discussed previously—not using an independent contractor for SLP services; timing difference of paying the annual hearing conservation invoice; director mentor costs; a vehicle purchase in the previous FY & moving from Goalbook to Playground IEP.

Building on the November numbers of note, December saw the payment of a third Rock Creek Teletherapy invoice in the amount of \$9,541. With this invoice we have expended 30% of the amount budgeted for this line item, averaging \$12,915 per month.

Spending through December across all three funds is less than the same period in the previous FY.

We have received the 2025 audit draft from Strom & Associates & expect to have our portion completed by month end.

Joyce alerted the board that the Montana claiming system window for submitting August-December financials is now open & the reports are due by February 6th. Board members discussed an interest in increasing their knowledge & access to the system. Training options as well as access to the program will be provided to the board members.

b.) **Director's Report**  
(Informational)

i. Staff Recruitment

On Friday I will be finishing the postings for our open school psychologist and speech language pathologist positions. At this time, I would hope to hire two full time school psychologists and one speech pathologist. Riley sent out the "intent to return" letters to current staff this week. As we receive those letters back from staff I will be able to better determine the FTE needed for both positions. I hope that by posting these open positions on more platforms we will have qualified applicants who can join our team here at the coop.

We had an SLP reach out just before the holiday break and I was able to meet her on Tuesday. She is from Glasgow and has recently moved back to the area. She has worked as a private SLP in Washington DC as well as in private and charter schools. She is currently certified in Montana as well as a few other states. She is interested in supporting the coop and helping out with West Yellowstone's speech caseload (starting on 2/2) for the remainder of this school year. She is also interested in applying for the SLP position for next school year. She will be recommended for hire later in our meeting.

I have two other SLP's who I spoke with in the fall and are interested in working with the coop. So I will reach out to them in the next few weeks to gauge their interest in the position for next year. I do not have any school psychologists in my pocket but will continue to search and reach out to colleagues.

ii. MCEC Conference

The Montana Council for Exceptional Children Conference is in Bozeman April 8 & 9 this year. Sessions will be held downtown at The Ellen and Marriott hotel. This conference is great for special education staff as sessions are focused on topics related to special education. Rob Watson, Elizabeth Kaleva and Lisa Waterman are some of the speakers at the conference. Since it is in Bozeman this year I shared it out with our coop staff and Shannon, Nicole and I are planning to attend.

iii. Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program

You may have heard about this through SAM but Montana is launching an exciting new Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program that is designed to grow local teaching talent and help schools address teacher shortages across the state. It is funded by a \$4 million federal grant that was awarded to the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. This is an "earn while you learn" program for school employees and aspiring to become licensed K-12 teachers, with tuition support through this apprenticeship grant.

Interested schools should attend a Pre-Proposal Webinar. Register for one of the pre-proposal webinars offered in January. (12, 13, & 21) These sessions will cover the grant's goals, application process, scoring guidance, timelines, and a Q&A. SAM is also hosting a webinar on Feb. 2 at 10:00 am.

iv. Ukeru

Ukeru is a restraint-free crisis management system for behavioral health, rooted in the Japanese word for "receive," that teaches staff to de-escalate crises by focusing on comfort, communication, and trauma-informed care rather than physical control, using protective equipment and techniques to ensure

safety for both caregivers and individuals. It's a system of training, tools, and philosophy designed to replace physical restraints and seclusion with compassionate, effective interventions Built on comfort, not control, and backed by neuroscience and trauma-informed care. Ukeru includes verbal/nonverbal communication, redirection, blocking, and physical release techniques, along with specialized pads for protection

Staff learn to "receive" behavioral cues and respond with empathy

- Train the Trainer at MCEC-\$800 (\$950) April 7th & 10th (before and after MCEC conference)
- Billings Jan 20 & 21
- Meridian, ID Feb 18 & 19
- Bozeman has talked about hosting a training but they are working out the logistics of proper certification to train other district and staff
- Bozeman has shared that the initial cost is spendy mainly because of the investment in the pads. Staff who have been trained have pads that they can access in their classroom and/or throughout the school building and I guess they are an investment. The training itself is comparable or cheaper than MANDT or CPI training.

Kim will research cost and training for Ukeru and the Board will discuss this again in February.

c.) **2025-2026 Personnel Offer of Contract, Speech Language Pathologist:**

i. 1st Contract offer for Rose Reyling, Speech Language Pathologist

*(Motion/Discussion/Action)*

Rose Reyling, is a certified SLP who has recently moved back to Montana after working in Washington DC. She plans to stay in the area and is looking for SLP work. She is a CAP mentor in Bozeman and also teaches ski lessons in Big Sky. She has experience with private speech services as well as in private and charter schools. She is available to work one day for the coop to support Amber's caseload and is interested in applying for the position for next school year. I recommend the board consider the hiring of Rose as a speech language pathologist for the coop for the remainder of this school year.

Motion to offer first contract as presented.

Motion: Marisa Stewart

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously

d.) **Director Performance Review**

*(Executive Session)*

The Board and Director entered a closed Executive Session at 11:53am and ended at 12:35pm.

6. **Board Meeting Schedule: Projected 2025-2026 Third Thursday of the Month (Zoom/In-Person) \*no less than 5 meetings per year**

- a. February 19th
- b. April 16th (could be removed)
- c. May 21st
- d. June 18th **In Person**

5. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn meeting at 12:35 pm.

Motion: Kevin Flanagan

Second: Spencer Johnson

-Passed Unanimously.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_