

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Navigating Change: The State of Student Enrollment at Roberts Schools

As we move through the 2025-2026 school year, it is important for our community to have a clear understanding of the shifts happening within our hallways and our budget. This year, Roberts Schools has an enrollment of **60 students**, a significant change from our population of **110** just one year ago.

This decrease is part of a larger trend influenced by Montana's new **Open Enrollment laws**. Currently, a majority of our in-district students who have chosen to leave Roberts are attending school in Red Lodge. While we always wish our local students the best, these laws have created a new and challenging financial reality for our district and our taxpayers.

The Financial Impact: A "Tuition Tax"

Under the current law, when a student residing in the Roberts district chooses to attend a different public school, Roberts Schools is responsible for paying tuition rates set by the state to that receiving school.

- **The Cost:** This year, the total amount Roberts is required to pay out in tuition to other districts is **over \$70,000**.
- **The Funding:** This money does not come from the state; it is funded through **permissive tuition levies** on our local taxpayers.
- **The Trade-off:** To put it in perspective, \$70,000 is equivalent to roughly **two full-time teacher salaries** that are leaving our community to support other districts.

The "Snowball Effect" of Declining Enrollment

A drop in enrollment creates a difficult cycle for any rural school. Lower student numbers lead directly to:

1. **Decreased State Funding:** Montana's school funding formula is heavily based on the number of students "belonging" to the district.
2. **Reduced Staffing:** As the budget tightens, we face the difficult reality of decreasing our teacher count.
3. **Fewer Offerings:** With fewer staff, it becomes harder to maintain a wide variety of elective courses and extracurricular programs.

Unfortunately, when these offerings decrease, more parents may look elsewhere for opportunities, further fueling the enrollment drop.

The Good News: Roberts is Still a Solid Choice

Despite these hurdles, it is important to clarify that **Roberts Schools remains a viable, high-quality educational option**. We refuse to let "smaller" mean "lesser."

School Board News

Over the past seven months the school board has been working with the superintendent on a few different fronts. First of all, the school board has been working to develop positive relationships with the staff and community. They have come to various staff meetings, worked to develop a breakfast day with students, staff, and community members, and they have been working on a new strategic plan for the district. The strategic plan they are working on is based on surveys submitted by the community, staff, and students, as well as district finances, student population, and student assessment results. As you can see by the attached graphic, there are a lot of moving parts to the plan. The goal is to have the strategic plan completed by March.

As noted above, finance is a part of the strategic plan. The other article that talks about the district population notes that a declining enrollment does negatively impact the district's budget. Last year in an attempt to perhaps soften that financial impact, the district asked for a general fund levy that included money for technology. Previously, the technology fund had been a separate fund that was approved by vote for a 10 year period. It expired last year and we are definitely feeling the impact of not having that fund. The Technology Fund covers tech support, programming licensing costs, and replacement computers. We have not replaced Chromebooks for several years now and it is causing issues with our state testing as our older machines do not meet tech requirements for the new assessments. This May we will be asking for a levy to get our tech fund going again. The final amount still needs to be set but we are estimating it at roughly \$30,000 per year. That would be roughly \$12.50 on a \$100,000 taxable value home, or \$75.50 on a \$600,000 taxable value home. That levy would be a 10 year levy.

Voices for the Future: Roberts Schools Strategic Plan Feedback

This infographic summarizes key themes from community, staff, and student surveys to guide Roberts Schools' strategic planning, highlighting common ground and unique perspectives across all three groups. Responses reveal a deep connection to the school's small size and personal feel, balanced by concerns about future viability, academic offerings, and community perception.



From the Library.....

The next couple of months are going to be busy.

The Star of the West Masonic Lodge in Red Lodge offers Kindles for reading during the third quarter, starting January 19. We will have paper basketballs for the students to put into a basket. One basketball will equal one book. At the end of the quarter, there will be an assembly for the give away of the Kindles and other library prizes. There will be a drawing on Tuesday, Thursday April 9.

We will be having a reading bracket contest. Staff or high school students will read books, the elementary students get to vote and eventually we will be down to 1 winner. There will be a mystery reader or two as well.

We will have another Scholastic Book fair the first week of April, just in time for Easter gifting. During this time we will welcome all of our elementary students and their families for a literacy night. More information later. Be on the lookout!

The Rock Creek Ranchers 4-H Club has been busy lately as we bring in the New Year. We have done food drives in Roberts as well as Red Lodge during the Christmas concerts and collected an exceptional amount of nonperishable items for the local food banks. On January 11, all beef members got to see how much their steer weighed, giving them a good look into how much they need to gain before the fair. A few of the members have started their bb gun and archery practices and are excited about the competitions. Many of our older members applied and went to interviews to be CIT or counselors for 4-H camp in June. Tassyn Wright went to Denver, Colorado to be a livestock judge for our county.
-Kelby Langager

FFA NEWS

The Roberts FFA Chapter is getting ready for District CDEs (Career Development Events) in Bridger on February 4 th and in Billings on March 2 nd . Members will be competing in Creed Speaking, Ag

Mechanics, Vet Science and Horse Evaluation. Students will be competing to see if they can qualify to compete at the State FFA Convention in Great Falls on March 31 st – April 4 th . Some members have already qualified in Agronomy and Floriculture. The Chapter will be celebrating National FFA Week February 21 st – 28 th . [The Chapter will be making and serving a pancake, sausage and egg breakfast for school staff and community members on Tuesday, February 24 th in the Ag Shop building at the school starting at 7:30 am. Community members are welcome to attend at no cost.](#) We look forward to seeing you. Finally, the students in the ag classes planted flower seeds in January that will be grown and then sold at the Roberts FFA Chapter flower sale and pancake breakfast on Saturday, May 9 th .

Luella Wallia – Chapter Reporter and Mr. Grove – Chapter Advisor



FACEBOOK

EMAIL

SPORTSYOU

SCHOOL WEBSITE (SPORTS SCHEDULES)

robertsrockets.org

You've been invited to join

Roberts School General School Information

Use your **unique access code** below and follow the instructions.



Access Code

WBPV-D3A9

Join via Website

New Users

1. From your computer, phone, or tablet, visit sportsyou.com
2. Click **Get Started** and enter your email
3. Go to your email and click **Confirm Your Email**
4. Click **Enter Access Code** to enter code, then finish setting up your account

Existing Users

1. From your computer, phone, or tablet, go to sportsyou.com and log in
2. In left column, click **Join Team/Group**.
3. Click **Enter Access Code** to enter code, then **Join Team** or **Join Group**

Join via App

New Users

1. On mobile device download **sportsYou app** from the **App Store** (iOS) or **Google Play Store** (Android)
2. Open the sportsYou app and tap **Create Account**
3. Tap **Enter Access Code** to enter code, then finish set up

Existing Users

1. On mobile device log in
2. In bottom tray, tap **Teams/Groups**
3. Tap **blue +** button, then tap **Join Team/Group**
4. Enter access code and click **Join**

visit us at www.sportsyou.com or in the app stores



SPORTS YOU APP

*GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

*COACHES AND SPORTS

We are doing our best to keep you informed. We try to post updates on these various ' applications. Make sure you are signed up for updates or check your email, Facebook and the school website.

A SEASON OF CELEBRATION AND GLOBAL DISCOVERY

Our combined 2nd and 3rd grade classroom was buzzing with holiday spirit as we closed out the year! We officially wrapped up our **Christmas Around the World** books, where we studied over a dozen countries and their unique traditions. The students won the **Christmas door decorating contest**. We are all eagerly looking forward to our victory reward of hot cocoa and donuts provided by the Student Board. To top it all off, the kids did a fantastic job at the Christmas concert. They performed their songs with such heart, and we are already looking toward the Spring concert, where we may even try our hand at the bells!

In between the festivities, we stayed busy with classroom growth and creativity. The students enjoyed hand-crafting **festive lanterns** as special gifts for their families. We've also seen a wonderful shift in classroom culture thanks to our new "**Star Student**" positive behavioral program. Each week, we focus on a specific goal—like quiet hallway transitions or not interrupting lessons. Two "mystery" students are picked, and if they meet the goal, they earn the Star Student desk for the next day, which is loaded with smelly markers, stickers, and fidgets. Plus, Star Students get to bring in a **Show and Tell**; we've already had several live animals visit the classroom! It has been a massive hit with great behavioral outcomes for all.

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE: BIOGRAPHY PROJECTS

Coming back from break, we are diving straight into our **Biography unit**, where students learn to research, organize information, and write a formal paper. We have a fantastic variety of subjects this year, ranging from historical icons like **Martin Luther King Jr.** to current stars like **Bo Nix**.

- **3rd Grade:** These students are preparing for a "grand finale" performance where they will dress as their character and perform for an audience!
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- **2nd Grade:** Our 2nd graders have paired up to research and present a brief synopsis of their chosen biographies. This is a wonderful way for them to practice their skills in preparation for the bigger performance project next year as 3rd graders.
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We are all enjoying learning together. Kind Regards, Ms. Atkins



2026 BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

Friday, January 30, 2026	Northern Cheyenne	Roberts	VB/VG	5:00/6:30
Saturday, January 31, 2026	Billings Christian	Roberts	VB/VG	2:00/3:30
Friday, February 6, 2026	Joliet-Fromberg	Joliet	VG/VB	5:00/6:30
Saturday, February 7, 2026	Custer/Hysham	Roberts	JVG/VB/VG	2:00/3:30/5:00
Thursday, February 12, 2026	Reed Point/ Rapelje	Roberts	JVG/VB/VG	4:30/6:00/7:30
Friday, February 13, 2026	Absarokee	Roberts	JVG/VB/VG	4:30/6:00/7:30
2/18-2/21	Girls & Boys District Tourna-	Laurel		
2/25-2/28	Girls & Boys Divisional Tour-	Lewistown		
3/11-3/14	Girls & Boys State Tourna-	Missoula		

2026 TRACK SCHEDULE

updated		1/26/2026			
Date	Day	Host	Location	Level	Start Time
3/16/2026	1st day of Practice				
4/7/2026	Tuesday	Railyard	Laurel	HS	3:30 PM
4/9/2026	Thursday	Columbus	Columbus	MS	9:00 AM
4/10/2026	Friday	Joliet/Park City	Laurel	HS	
4/14/2026	Tuesday	Beartooth Invite	Red Lodge	HS	
4/16/2026	Thursday	Laurel	Laurel	MS	9:00 AM
4/17/2026	Friday	Red Lodge Invite	Laurel	HS	
4/21/2026	Tuesday	RLHS Invite	Red Lodge	HS	2:00 PM
4/23/2026	Thursday	Shepherd	Sky View	MS	9:00 AM
4/29/2026	Wednesday	Tri-Valley	Laurel	HS	
4/30/2026	Thursday	Red Lodge	Red Lodge	MS	9:00 AM
5/2/2026	Saturday	Harlow/Park City		HS	
5/5/2026	Tuesday	Top Ten	Laurel	HS	4:00 PM
5/9/2026	Saturday	Al Walker	Laurel	HS	10:00 AM
5/15/2026	Friday	6C District Track	Laurel		

This is what we have so far—it will be updated as we get more information.



High school art class finished the sculpture unit with plaster mask totems. Each project was inspired by a core value of the artist. Meaning and form were discussed and explored.



8th grade acrylic sky paintings exploring and understanding colors and marks.

FEBRUARY MENU

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday	
BREAKFAST	2	Cereal	3	Biscuits N Gravy	4	Apple Danish	5	Egg Muffin
LUNCH		Chicken Sandwich		Walking Taco		Mac N Cheese		Pulled Pork
BREAKFAST	9	Cereal	10	Oatmeal	11	Mini Waffles	12	Bagels
LUNCH		Scalloped Potatoes & Ham		Taco Salad		Bologna or Egg Salad Sand		Sweet N Sour Chicken
BREAKFAST	16	Cereal	17	Poptart	18	Yogurt	19	Muffins
LUNCH		Chili N Cinnamon Rolls		Nachos		Spaghetti		Hot Ham & Cheese
BREAKFAST	23	Cereal	24	Cinnamon Swirl Toast	25	Breakfast Scramble	26	Sausage Biscuit
LUNCH		Riblet Sandwich		Burritos		Chicken Pot Pie		Chili Dogs

MARCH MENU

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday	
BREAKFAST	2	Cereal	3	Pancake on a stick	4	Yogurt Parfait	5	Breakfast Burrito
LUNCH		PB & J or Tuna Sand		Tacos		<u>Shepherds Pie</u>		Sloppy Joes
BREAKFAST	9	Cereal	10	Poptart	11	Mini Waffles	12	Egg Muffin
LUNCH		Stir Fry		Fajitas		KFC Bowls		Fish Sticks
BREAKFAST	16	Cereal	17	Yogurt	18	Oatmeal	19	Bagels
LUNCH		Chicken Strips		Enchiladas		Chili Frito Pie		Cheeseburgers
BREAKFAST	23	Cereal	24	Muffins	25	Cinnamon Swirl Toast	26	Mini Waffles
LUNCH		Sub Sandwich		Super Potato Oles		Breakfast for Lunch		Orange Chicken
BREAKFAST	30	Cereal	31	Sausage Biscuits				
LUNCH		Chicken Parmesan		Walking Taco				

FEBRUARY/MARCH NEWSLETTER

ROBERTS SCHOOL
PO BOX 78
ROBERTS, MT 59070

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ROBERTS SCHOOL
ROBERTS, MT 59070
Permit 1

Postal Customer
Roberts, MT 59070

Basketball Tournaments

Boys and Girl

Districts—2/18-2/21 @ Laurel

**Divisionals—2/25-2/28 @ Lewis-
town**

**State—3/11-3/14 @
Missoula**



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

The annual Trustee Election will be held on May 5, 2026. Two seats on the board are up for election for a three (3) year term. Declaration of Intent and Oath of Candidacy for Trustee Candidates forms are available at the office of the district clerk and must be completed and returned to the district clerk by February 9, 2026. Candidates must be registered voters of School District #5.

Ski Days: Friday, Feb 20, Tuesday Feb 24