

**Board of Education
September 15, 2026 – 5:30 PM
Conference Room A/B/C
1819 East Milham Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Virgil “Skip” Knowles, Mr. David Webster, Mr. James Devers, Ms. Lynne Cowart, Mr. Randy VanAntwerp

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Dr. Dedrick Martin, Ms. Mindy Miller, Mr. Eric Stewart, Ms. Sarah Mansberger, Mr. Brian Schupbach, Ms. Stephanie Brown, Ms. Angela Telfer, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, Ms. Bethany Foote, Mr. Kyle Fall, Ms. Shelly Hawthorne, and Ms. Jackie Martell

OTHERS PRESENT:

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Knowles called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments

III. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – August 18, 2026
- B. Approval of New Hire
- C. Approval of New Position
- D. Approval of Monthly Financial Report
- E. Approval of Head Start Financial Report

Mr. Webster moved; Mr. VanAntwerp supported approving the consent agenda.

Motion carried unanimously.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

- A. Head Start Continuous Improvement Update – Bethany Foote / Kyle Fall
Head Start Continuous Improvement update was presented to the Board of Education.

B. Program Improvement & Accountability Continuous Improvement Update – Shelly Hawthorne

Program Improvement & Accountability Continuous Improvement update was presented to the Board of Education.

V. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE UPDATE

A. Early Childhood Update –Rachel Roberts

Head Start hosted their annual *Back to School “Sweet Start”* at the new Kalamazoo Farmer's Market Don Cooney Cultivation Center on Tuesday, August 18 to welcome students and families, as they enjoyed a special sweet treat - cupcakes. There were several community partners in attendance such as the Family Health Center providing dental exams and the Kalamazoo Public Library providing early childhood books. The family event was a tremendous success and true reflection of the program's passion, dedication and commitment to the children and families we serve! The event welcomed a record breaking **433 children and family members!!** It was definitely a sweet start to the 2026 – 2027 program year!

The Governing Body's Monthly Report for ongoing monitoring in accordance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) were attached to the board agenda.

B. Special Education Update –Angela Telfer

The 2025-26 Core Skills Outcome data demonstrate several notable areas of growth across KRESA Special Education programs, particularly in communication, independence, community participation, self-advocacy, and student safety. While some measures highlight areas for continued attention, the overall data show meaningful progress in helping students access inclusive opportunities, build independence, and prepare for successful transitions.

Summary of Key Improvements Across Programs

Increased Communication Supports and AAC Access

A significant positive trend is the increased use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) supports.

- KRESA Transition Services increased the percentage of non-oral communicators using AAC from 86% to 98% over three years.
- Early Intervention & Special Services increased the percentage of non-oral communicators using dedicated speech-generating devices from 8% to 30% since 2022-23.

Strong Growth in Community Participation and Transition Readiness

Students are increasingly connected to community experiences and adult service

systems.

- KRESA Transition Services increased community agency connections from 39% to 42%.
- Work-Based Learning participation increased from 70% to 77%.
- Students accessing community-based opportunities increased from 91% to 97%. These indicators support improved post-secondary readiness and independent living outcomes.

Reduction in Restrictive Practices and Behavior Incidents

Several programs show improvements in student safety and behavioral outcomes.

- WoodsEdge Learning Center reduced incidents resulting in emergency seclusion/restraint from 709 incidents in 2021-22 to 26 incidents in 2025-26, representing substantial long-term improvement.
- Valley Center reduced total behavior incidents from 2,416 to 1,973 during the past year. The reduction in the number of incidents is significant, and an indicator that the new behavior support systems are starting to work. The increase in emergency seclusion and restraint this past school year were mostly due to multiple student incidents happening at the same time, and the fact that a few students were participating in a high rate of instigating dysregulation and behavior incidents in others.
- Juvenile Home Schools reduced student altercations/fights from eight in 2024-25 to zero in 2025-26.

Growth in Self-Advocacy Skills

The Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Blind/Low Vision programs demonstrated gains across all age bands in self-advocacy outcome mastery.

Improvements include:

- Ages 0-3: 66% to 74%
- Pre-K: 51% to 81%
- K-2: 55% to 74%
- Grades 3-5: 40% to 65%
- Middle School: 52% to 59%
- High School: 63% to 76%

These gains indicate stronger student capacity to communicate needs, advocate for supports, and participate actively in educational planning.

Additional Positive Outcomes

WoodsEdge Learning Center

- Five students transitioned back to local districts during 2025-26, continuing the program's emphasis on building student independence and successful reintegration opportunities.

Valley Center

- The percentage of students accessing their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) increased substantially from 12% in 2023-24 to 26% in 2025-26, despite a slight decline from the previous year's peak.

Juvenile Home Schools

- Maintained a 100% graduation rate for eligible students in 2025-26.

These results demonstrate the impact of targeted supports designed to increase student independence, inclusion, communication, and successful transition outcomes. The attached graphs show the full results over time.

C. Career Connect Update – Eric Stewart, Sarah Mansberger & Paige Daniels

Successful Start to 26-27 School Year for Secondary Programs: We are thrilled to report the start to year two of operations at the Career Connect Campus kicked off with a very smooth start. At current count, enrollment has held steady year-over-year, with 1137 students enrolled. The drop/add period extends through September 11; enrollment numbers will be finalized on that date. Education for the Arts (EFA) and Early/Middle College (EMC) have also started the year off strong with students returning to classes across the County for EFA and at the CCC and KVCC for EMC.

Career Connect Superstar: We recently celebrated our newest Career Connect Superstar, Career Coach Katie McCuen. Jim Benton, former Program Coordinator of Youth Services, nominated Katie, sharing:

"Katie's work strongly advances Career Connect's mission by delivering a deeply personalized, holistic approach that empowers learners to overcome barriers and build a sustainable career pathway."

Summer Programs: This summer, Career Connect staff delivered three signature learning experiences designed to help youth explore careers, build workplace readiness skills, and strengthen connections to their community and future educational pathways. Programs were hosted at the Career Connect Campus and in partnership with numerous local employers, educators, and community organizations. Throughout the summer, participants engaged in hands-on, career-connected learning experiences that emphasized self-discovery, career exploration, employability skills, and meaningful relationships with industry professionals.

MyCITY

This summer, MyCITY provided 103 learners with immersive opportunities to connect career exploration to their local community through project-based learning and internship experiences. Masterclass participants explored Western Michigan

University's campus, engaged with downtown Kalamazoo businesses, and collaborated on a Kalamazoo Food Tour project that challenged them to think as chefs, event planners, and marketing professionals. Participants received mentorship and feedback from community partners and industry professionals as they developed their projects. Over 40 local employers hosted interns, offered project mentorship, supported mock interviews, and/or served as guest speakers.

2Gen

The 2Gen summer program combined career readiness, personal development, and postsecondary exploration in a supportive learning environment. Seven families explored career-planning tools such as Xello and O*NET, engaged in activities centered on identity development, and built strong peer connections throughout the program. Guest speakers shared insights on entrepreneurship, business planning, college opportunities, and emerging workforce trends, including the impact of artificial intelligence on future careers. These experiences helped participants strengthen both their confidence and their plans for future education and employment pathways.

CareerNOW

CareerNOW continued to provide valuable exposure to high-demand career pathways through healthcare and skilled trades cohorts. 20 participants engaged in career exploration activities, occupation fairs, virtual reality simulations, financial literacy training, mentorship opportunities, mock interviews, industry tours, and guest speaker presentations. Partnerships with regional employers and training providers gave students firsthand exposure to workplace environments and career opportunities. Industry tours included visits and learning experiences with healthcare, construction trades, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and postsecondary partners. The program concluded with a celebration recognizing participants' accomplishments and the meaningful experiences made possible through strong employer and community partnerships.

D. Educator Supports Update –Stephanie Brown

Multilingual Learner Update

- Continued focus on increasing equitable access for multilingual learners (MLs) through collaboration with district coaches, ML program leads, curriculum directors, content teachers, and special education teams county-wide
- Collaboration with Calhoun ISD and St. Joseph ISD as a part of the EL Consortium of Southwest Michigan (ELCSWM) supporting 26 low incidence districts across the region
- Introduction of Community Interpreter Training for school staff this fall to be able to support language access and eliminate communication barriers for families in school-based settings, the training will include an application for the Global Seal of Biliteracy for all participants

- Launch of a new protocol for MLs with suspected disabilities, developed through a year-long collaborative effort focused on shared learning and protocol development among Eastern Service Area teams

E. Operational Supports Update

1. Communications & Community Engagement – Sandy Barry-Loken Digital Accessibility Compliance and Staff Readiness

KRESA is preparing for new federal digital accessibility requirements that take effect in April 2027. These requirements are designed to ensure digital content is accessible to all users, including individuals with disabilities. The Communications & Community Engagement team is supporting compliance efforts by providing staff training, consultation, and resources to help departments develop and maintain accessible documents, presentations, and other digital communications.

MiCareerQuest Southwest 2026

MiCareerQuest Southwest will be held October 21-22, 2026, at the Kalamazoo Expo Center. Join us on either or both days between 9 AM and 3 PM. This event is the region's premier career exploration event designed to ignite the imaginations of thousands of eighth grade students across the region.

We are in the process of securing vendors and sponsors for the event. See highlights in our MiCareerQuest video here: [MiCareer Quest Video](#)

2025-2026 Partner Engagement with Career Connect

The Communications & Community Engagement team plays a key role in cultivating and sustaining KRESA's network of business, industry, and community partners. Working in close collaboration with Career Connect staff, the team helps identify and recruit Career and Technical Education advisory board members, guest speakers, mentors, volunteers, and sponsors. These efforts help expand career-connected learning opportunities for students while ensuring strong community and industry involvement in program development and workforce preparation.

During the 2025-26 school year, 931 individuals representing 376 businesses and organizations engaged with Career Connect programs. In addition, 250 advisory board members from 185 companies helped guide program development, with more than half of advisory companies (55.6%) actively participating. Partner satisfaction remained exceptionally high, with 94% satisfied with communication, 89% satisfied with preparedness, and 97% satisfied with their overall experience.

2. Technology & Operations Update – Brian Schupbach

We reviewed six RFP responses for architectural engineering services for the new KRESA Transitional Services Building and the renovation of West Campus into an Early Childhood Center of Excellence. After narrowing the pool to four firms, we invited each to present in person so the team could further evaluate their qualifications and experience with special education and early childhood learning environments. Following the presentations, the guide team unanimously selected TMP Architecture based on its highly qualified team, relevant experience, strong references, and competitive fee proposal. We recommend the Board approve moving forward with a contract with TMP for architectural engineering services.

To address failing roofs at multiple locations, we worked with Tower-Pinkster and Triangle to develop and post RFPs for two phases of roofing work. Phase 1 includes WoodsEdge Learning Center and West Campus, while Phase 2 will address the Service Center. We received six bids for Phase 1 and recommend the Board award to the lowest qualified bid, Versatile Roofing Systems for \$529,975. We also recommend approval of \$15,000 in owner allowances. Please see the attached recommendation letter from Triangle for additional details.

Renovations to the new Conference Room H, formerly Wile Auditorium, are nearly complete. Remaining work includes installing wall graphics and adding acoustic treatments to the space.

VI. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin

Governor Visit

Sandy and I were fortunate to receive an invitation from KPS to attend a September 8 reception for Governor Whitmer at Woods Lake Elementary as part of the Governor's *Every Kid Eats, Reads, Succeeds* visit. State Senator Sean McCann was also in attendance. The Governor and Senator briefly worked the lunch line serving students and visited a classroom reading lesson before joining State Superintendent Dr. Maleyko to speak about the importance of improving literacy in Michigan and investments in public education.

Start of School

The stars are here! From our back-to-school event through the first couple of weeks, our staff and students have returned with great energy, and we are off to a strong start. I have had the opportunity to visit all our buildings and programs and am happy to report that, overall, the start of school has been smooth. Our staff have done a phenomenal job welcoming students back and quickly establishing a positive learning environment.

I am also pleased to share several long-overdue improvements to the facility housing the Valley Center program, thanks to the work of KPS and our operations department. Each room now has air conditioning, along with new windows, more secure doors, and a secure vestibule for building entry. Improvements extend outdoors as well, with a resurfaced blacktop area for students and new playground equipment on the way. I want to say thank you to the board members for taking time to attend our Back-To-School Ice Cream Social. Your presence and support are always welcome and appreciated by me, our administration team, and our staff.

Career Connect Campus Tour

Last week, we provided a tour of the Career Connect Campus for Southwest Michigan First President Jennifer Owens. The visit offered an opportunity to showcase the new facility and the world-class learning environments and professional training programs available to our students. The tour also reinforced the value of continuing our partnership with Southwest Michigan First and the important connection between career and technical education, workforce preparation, and the region's economic development.

VII. Thrun Law Notes

A. Correspondence/Informational

VIII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

A. Approve Policy 5714 – Threat Assessment and Response

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval of policy 714 – Threat Assessment and Response.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approve moving ahead with contract negotiations with TMP Architecture for architectural engineering design services for the new KRESA Transition Services building and the Early Childhood Center renovation.

Mr. Webster moved, Ms. Cowart supported the approval of moving ahead with contract negotiations with TMP Architecture for architectural engineering design services for the new KRESA Transition Services building and the Early Childhood Center renovation.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Approve the Phase 1 roofing bid from Versatile Roofing for \$529,975.

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval of the Phase 1 roofing bid from Versatile Roofing for \$529,975.

Motion carried unanimously.

- D. Approve a \$15,000 owner allowance for the Phase 1 roof project.
- E. Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of a \$15,000 owner allowance for the Phase 1 roof project.
Motion carried unanimously.
- F. Approve the change to a biannual evaluation for the superintendent due to 3 continuous excellent evaluations.
- Mr. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of the change to a biannual evaluation for the superintendent due to 3 continuous excellent evaluations.
Motion carried unanimously.

IX.ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Cowart
Board Secretary

Jackie Martell
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on