

**Board of Education
May 20, 2025 – 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, Dr. Delores Myers, Ms. Lynne Cowart, Mr. Randy VanAntwerp

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Dr. Dedrick Martin, Mr. Tom Zahrt, Ms. Mindy Miller, Mr. Scott Thomas, Mr. Brian Schupbach, Mr. Eric Stewart, Ms. Sarah Mansberger, Ms. Paige Daniels, Ms. Stephanie Brown, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, Ms. Bethany Foote, Mr. Kyle Fall 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 – April 15, 2025
- B. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2025
- C. Approval of Board of Education Closed Meeting Minutes – May 8, 2025
- D. Approval of New Hire
- E. Approval of New Position
- F. Approval of Tenure Position
- G. Approval of Monthly Financial Report
- H. Approval of Head Start Financial Report

Mr. VanAntwerp moved; Mr. Webster supported approving the consent agenda.
Motion carried unanimously.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

- A. PAC Awards – Mindy Miller

The recipients of the KRESA Parent Advisory Committee Excellence in Special Education Award for 2025 were honored.

B. Head Start Continuous Improvement Update – Bethany Foote & Kyle Fall

The continuous improvement update for the Head Start Program was presented.

V. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE UPDATE

A. Early Childhood Update –Rachel Roberts

KRESA'S Kalamazoo County Great Start Collaborative's Highlights were attached to the board agenda.

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
Honoring Excellence in Special Education

The recipients of the KRESA Parent Advisory Committee Excellence in Special Education Award for 2025 were honored. These outstanding individuals have gone above and beyond in their roles, demonstrating unwavering commitment, compassion, and dedication to supporting students with disabilities.

2025 Award Recipients

- Krystina D'Arcy, Teacher – KRESA Specialized Instructional Supports at Amberly Elementary, Portage Public Schools
- Karen Raffenaud, Teacher – WoodsEdge Learning Center
- Rhonda Sturgeon, Teacher – Valley Center School
- Delaney Wilkins, Teacher – WoodsEdge Learning Center

This year, a total of 18 KRESA staff members were nominated for the Excellence in Special Education Award. We celebrate all nominees for their contributions to creating inclusive and enriching learning environments.

These Kalamazoo RESA staff members were nominated for the award this year:

KRESA Specialized Instructional Supports

Mark Boothby, Teacher (Parchment Middle School)

Elise Pickard, Paraprofessional (Amberly Elementary, Portage Public Schools)

Valley Center School

Shelby Bishop, Coordinator

Terasa Reurink, Teacher

WoodsEdge Learning Center

Chae Dorer, Teacher

Sydney Koob, Paraprofessional

Sherry Lloyd, Paraprofessional

Megan Lozen, Coordinator

Dianne Scoffin, Teacher

Kayla Sword, Teacher

Britnee Watson, Paraprofessional

Trista White-Welch, Paraprofessional

Jessica Woodard, Paraprofessional

Tesla Wright, Teacher

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), established under the Michigan Mandatory Education Act, plays a crucial role in ensuring parental input into the countywide plan for special education programs and services. Open to representatives from all nine local districts, PAC actively advocates for students with disabilities and their families.

Each year, PAC sponsors the Excellence in Special Education Award to recognize individuals who make a profound impact in the lives of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Nominations are submitted by parents, family members, guardians, and students and collected by the KRESA Special Education Office. PAC members carefully review each nomination and vote to determine the winners across the nine local districts and Kalamazoo RESA.

This award is open to all individuals who positively impact students with disabilities, including educators, administrators, support staff, volunteers, and more.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the nominees and award recipients for their extraordinary contributions. Their work transforms futures, and we celebrate this extraordinary work.

- C. Career Connect Update – Eric Stewart, Paige Daniels & Sarah Mansberger
Career Connect Campus: The time has come! We are so excited to welcome everyone to the Career Connect Campus on May 22. We can't wait to show it off.
- D. Educator Supports Update – Mindy Miller & Stephanie Brown

All Michigan school districts use the Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP) to develop goals, strategies, and plans in order to ensure improvement focused on student achievement. Educator Supports works with all of our local districts in developing and implementing these plans. Our Educational Improvement Consultants support school districts in understanding and using continuous improvement tools and processes. We help districts create plans that are tailored to their specific needs and are realistic to implement. In some of our districts we serve as thought partners for the district leadership, while in others we facilitate the process for their improvement teams. This includes working together to analyze data, identify root causes, set clear goals, and choose strategies that match the district's capacity to carry them out effectively. Once a plan is in place, we continue to support the work through coaching, building leadership and staff capacity, and tracking progress. Every district is different, so the support we provide looks a little different in each case and often evolves over time. Below are a few examples of how we have partnered with districts to support their improvement efforts.

One district has the following strategy to address their main goal: Create and implement a system to conduct rounds and utilize the data to include timelines, schedules, securing substitute teachers, processing rounds data, and sharing information. Buildings and districts will use the data to both monitor and drive areas of focus.

To support this work, our Educational Improvement consultant, Paul Holbrook, met with each of the school's improvement teams throughout the year to help develop and carry out the instructional rounds model. He also served as the district facilitator for the rounds allowing all of the district teachers and leaders to be full participants within the process. Paul worked with school leaders and teams to define the focus of the work, set clear expectations, build a schedule, and identify a specific problem of practice for each school. He provided training for multiple teams on how to conduct instructional rounds, led the classroom observations to gather data, and facilitated the debrief sessions to help teams analyze the information. The insights gained were used to identify strengths and areas for growth and to support the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the district's improvement plan. Another district we are working with has a building where our work has focused on strengthening systems that support student belonging, cultural awareness, high expectations, and engagement. The leadership team centered their work around three key initiatives: developing a House System to build school community, enhancing Team Time to raise academic and behavioral expectations, and implementing the Character Strong SEL curriculum to foster a deeper understanding of cultural awareness among staff and students.

Our early work focused on establishing new structures, including daily SEL/WIN time, integrated Team Time, and consistent planning and intervention cycles. An implementation plan was developed, aligning key strategies with measurable outcomes and integrating data tools like Panorama, SWIS, and PBIS to monitor progress. As the

work evolved, the team recognized the need for stronger action plans, particularly around resource allocation, staff capacity, and the sequencing of key activities. In response, our KRESA team worked with school leadership to create documents that outlined and articulated a firm plan for each initiative to ensure that implementation would be sustainable and impactful.

Most recently, our collective team selected SEL as the initial focus for deeper work and began researching ways to enhance or complement their current program. Through collaborative planning, honest reflection, and an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, the school has laid a strong foundation for building a more connected, supportive, and high-expectation culture for students and staff this year.

As previously mentioned, we are honored to get to work with all of our districts on continuous improvement. The examples above showcase some of that progress. We strive to build and maintain trusting relationships with our locals in order to continue being able to partner with them in this work.

E. Operational Supports Update

1. Business Services Update – Scott Thomas

KRESA is required to provide our draft General Fund original budget to local districts by May 1 and local districts are required to pass a resolution in support or not in support of our budget by June 1.

Attached please find the General Fund budget narrative and supporting documents that were provided to districts on April 25, 2025.

2. Deputy Superintendent Update – Tom Zahrt

Union Negotiations – We have been notified of a request for a decertification vote and there is enough support from the bargaining unit that the request was approved by the state. A vote will be conducted between May 22nd and June 11th. The bargaining unit will be able to vote either to have no union or to have the MEA represent them as a bargaining unit. Whichever vote receives 50% +1 or more, will decide which way the vote goes. We will meet with the unit before the ballots are received to explain why we don't believe a union is necessary for their group.

Career Center Construction – We have moved furniture and equipment into the building and more equipment is being installed. We are behind on construction cleaning, touchups, and final cleaning. We will be working on punch lists for all systems and all portions of the building. Our big disappointment is that our construction management firm has not lived up to our recently updated contract, GMP4, and that we will only have approximately 2 weeks to allow staff to train on the new equipment before the leave for summer break per their contracts.

Retirement Transition – I continue to work to transition my work over to Meredith, Sandy, Brian, Scott, Mindy, and Dedrick prior to my retirement. The group is outstanding and has picked up on their responsibilities quickly and efficiently. My largest concern is the loss of history for why things have evolved to where they are so it will serve them well to ask a lot of questions prior to making big changes and to be curious about their new work enough to seek out KRESA veterans to get the why behind things. Our culture is strong and we are gaining respect and awareness in the community and we don't want to lose that momentum. The centers of excellence will provide a good framework for keeping that momentum going forward.

3. Communications & Community Engagement

Career Connect Campus Private Ribbon Cutting and Community Grand Opening Events
Our Career Connect Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will be held on Thursday, May 22nd from 1-3 PM. We are expecting over 300 community members to attend this invitation-only event. The planned program is below.

Board members are invited to arrive by 12:00 PM for a pre-event photo.

May 22, 2025 | 1 PM Doors Open

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - RUN OF SHOW

1:30 PM - Welcome | Eric Stewart, KRESA Assistant Superintendent of Career and Talent Development

- Video | *A look at the campus from concept to completion [3:30 minutes]*

1:40 PM - KRESA Superintendent's Welcome | Dr. Dedrick Martin

1:45 PM - Remarks | Bobbi Jo Stoner, Career Connect Campus Principal

1:50 PM - Student Alumni Speakers

- Hope Lim, CTE and Early Middle College Alumna
- Eddie Ricardo, CTE and Work Based Learning Alumni

2:00 PM - Dedication | Anna Cool, Community Engagement Specialist, Office of Governor Gretchen Whitmer

2:03 PM – Closing | Sarah Mansberger, Executive Director Career Connect Secondary Programs

Conclusion – Move to Tours

The Grand Opening is open to the public and will run 4-7 PM.

4. Human Resources Update – Meredith Lewis

Employee Contract Renewal Process

The HR Department is making steady progress in the Employee Contract Renewal Process for all non-bargaining employees. New 2025-26 contracts will be distributed to employees on May 30, 2025.

Special Education Paraprofessional Pathway Rollout

The HR Department is continuing to implement the new Special Education Paraprofessional Pathway to support a smooth transition for all impacted employees. To ensure paraprofessionals understand the new program and have all their questions answered, HR conducted in-person sessions at each site. The sessions provided detailed explanations of the new process and offered opportunities for employees to engage directly with members of the HR team.

Culture and Belonging Team

On February 4, the Culture and Belonging Team officially launched with the onboarding of 23 members. Since then, the team has participated in monthly team building and learning activities. Throughout the 2024–25 school year, team members — including the Director of Culture and Belonging — have designed and facilitated a series of professional learning opportunities tailored to various departments:

- Operational Supports: A five-session series for staff in the Business Office, Communications and Community Engagement (CCE), and Human Resources (35 participants)
- CCE, Transportation, Facilities, and Technology: A three-session series (75 participants)
- Cross-Functional KRESA Staff: A four-session series for a diverse group of employees (20 participants)
- Administrative Team: A five-session series co-facilitated with the Executive Director of Human Resources (30 participants)

Survey results from these sessions indicate that KRESA staff feel better equipped to approach their work through the lens of culture and belonging. This progress directly supports KRESA's Continuous Improvement Focus Area #1: cultivating a positive, welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment for all.

5. Technology & Operations Update – Brian Schupbach

We are pleased to announce that we will be adding Allegan Public Schools to our The Service Center entrance sign was updated with our new logo this month. However, the color of the base and surround were incorrect, so the vendor will be updating that later this month to a darker “ocean blue” color.

This past month, we rolled out our new visitor management system called Raptor to our WoodsEdge and Valley Center locations. This system will allow us to run a quick check

on the sex offender database for every visitor in our buildings. This system will also help us identify exactly who is in our buildings in the event of an emergency.

In preparation for the open house at the Career Connect Campus, we have been busy installing computers, monitors and phones. Vendors are also very busy installing building technology systems including audio visual, surveillance cameras, access controls, and wireless access points. As of 5/13/2025, technology systems are at about 85% complete

In effort to improve our emergency notification systems as recommended by our building security consultant SEC. This proposed project would install new clock/bell/paging/strobe units at WoodsEdge Learning Center, Commons, South Street, Valley Center, and West Campus locations. Not only will this improve emergency notification, but it will create a unified system across all our buildings. Funds have been allocated in the 25/26 school year budget. We received (4) competitive bids from vendors, with Buist Electric as the low bid. This project will not start until July 1.

VI. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin

- **Career Connect Campus Plaque:**
Attached you will find a draft of the Career Connect Campus plaque. This plaque should be ready by the open house date and placed near the entrance of the building. Additionally, there will be an enormous dedication wall honoring the Anonymous Donor as well as other major financial donors. The plaque is in the process of being priced and the Donor wall will begin taking shape this summer and will be ready for the opening of school. I will send an email of the donor wall PowerPoint that may provide an understanding of how the wall will look, recognize donors and grow over the years. If you have any questions or input that you would like to share, please feel free to contact myself or Sandy.
- **Certification under Title VI in Exchange for Federal Funding:**
On April 3rd, the Michigan Department of Education received a certification request from the U.S. Department of Education. This certification request is framed as a reminder to all State and Local Educational Agencies (SEAs/LEAs) of their binding legal obligations with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when receiving federal financial assistance. Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin, is a mandatory condition for funding. According to the U.S. Department of Education, all agencies are now required to certify that they have read and understood these obligations and are fully compliant as a precondition for funding.
Additionally, in light of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, the U.S. Department of Education has positioned that the use of race-conscious practices in educational programs, including certain Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, may violate Title VI. The Court clarified that race-based

actions are only permissible under extremely narrow exceptions, and even then, must meet strict scrutiny standards. Continued use of impermissible DEI practices can result in severe consequences, such as loss of federal funding, civil litigation for breach of contract, and liability under the False Claims Act.

Under the original email sent to the department of Education, MDE should sign this agreement on behalf of all schools in the state of Michigan. A follow-up email has given the department an additional 10 days to sign this letter and devise a system to have each SEA/LEA certify their compliance or face potential loss of funding. To date, MDE has not signed off on the certification request and has instead submitted a letter to the U.S. DOE indicating that Michigan is already in compliance with all applicable non-discrimination laws. This has set up a potential showdown between states that have already refused to sign the certification agreement and potential loss of federal funding. We are awaiting to see if there are further developments that would require each district to sign something from MDE and will consult with our attorney as needed.

- Resolution E:
The Michigan Department of Education recently opposed the House Joint Resolution E, which seeks to transfer the board's authority to hire the state superintendent to the governor. A few existing board members have argued that this transfer would negatively affect Michigan's public-school students and give too much power to governors. The board resolution states that frequent changes in education policy due to governors' four-year terms would lead to confusion and frustration among school officials. The resolution also mentions that newly elected governors might focus on short-term, flashy education policies harmful to long-term educational success. House Joint Resolution E requires approval by two-thirds of both the House and Senate to be put before voters in the next even-numbered November election, which would be in 2026. If approved, the State Board of Education would maintain authority over hiring or replacing the state superintendent until January 1, 2027, when Gretchen Whitmer's term as governor ends. However, at this time, it is viewed as unlikely to pass..

VII. Thrun Law Notes

A. Correspondence/Informational

VIII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

- A. Approval of the Ricoh Pro 8420s Black and White Copier Purchase in the amount of \$91,161.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of the Ricoh Pro 8420s Black and White Copier Purchase in the amount of \$91,161.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of the June Board of Education meeting starting at 5:00 pm.

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Ms. Cowart supported the approval of the June Board of Education meeting starting at 5:00 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Approve low bid by Bist Electir to install clock/bell/paging/strobe units at Woods Edge Learning Center, Valley Center and West Campus locations in the amount of \$225,899.30.

Mr. Webster moved, Dr. Myers supported the approval of the low bid by Bist Electir to install clock/bell/paging/strobe units at Woods Edge Learning Center, Valley Center and West Campus locations in the amount of \$225,899.30.
Motion carried unanimously.

D. Superintendent requests that the Board of Education adjourn into closed ssion to discuss contract negotiations.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the superintendent request that the Board of Education adjourn into closed ssion to discuss contract negotiations at 6:47pm.
Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Webster moved, Ms. Cowart supported the motion to move into open session at 7:18pm.
Motion carried unanimously.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Cowart
Board Secretary

Jackie Martell
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on