

Board of Education
March 17, 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, Mr. Randy VanAntwerp
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ms. Lynne Cowart
- ADMINISTRATION/STAFF:** Dr. Dedrick Martin, Ms. Mindy Miller, Mr. Brian Schupbach, Mr. Scott Thomas, Mr. Eric Stewart, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Sarah Mansberter, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, Mr. Brad Storms, Ms. Jackie Martell

CALL TO ORDER

I. Mr. Knowles called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. Sarah Dickman made comments in regard to staff attrition.
- B. Ben Bierlein made comments in regard to overall experience as employee and accountability around tax payers money spending.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – February 17, 2026
- B. Approval of Special Board of Education Closed Meeting Minutes – February 3, 2026
- C. Approval of Monthly Financial Report
- D. Approval of Head Start Financial Report

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

IV. PRESENTATIONS

No presentations this month.

V. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE UPDATE

A. Early Childhood Update –Rachel Roberts

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Final Spring Count window closed on February 18. The Unofficial Quality Data Report indicates we served 211 more students with GSRP funding than last 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

Improving Program Systems

Valley Center School initiated a focused effort to strengthen the foundational systems that support student behavior and learning. The goal was to ensure that all students—particularly those with intensive support needs—had consistent access to effective reinforcement and skill-building supports that promote positive behavior, safety, and inclusion.

Key System Improvements

Staff identified that the existing Tier 1 behavior system did not consistently provide meaningful, function-based reinforcement, resulting in limited impact for students with the highest needs. In collaboration with Positive Behavior Supports Corporation, Valley Center redesigned its school-wide behavior reinforcement system to:

- Individualize reinforcement based on student preferences and behavioral function
- Increase student access to reinforcement
- Improve consistency and fidelity of implementation
- Shift staff focus to understanding *why* behavior occurs

In parallel, Valley Center implemented the Inclusive Skill-Building Learning Approach, an evidence-based framework that provides structured, one-to-one instruction in replacement skills. This approach emphasizes direct teaching, restorative practices, and relationship-building, allowing staff to focus on *what skills students need to learn* to be successful.

Outcomes (as of March 2026)

Early results indicate meaningful improvements in student access, behavior, and safety:

- More than 20% of students are accessing educational environments outside of Valley Center School, including work-based learning, KRESA Career Connect Center, and local resident districts
- 11.3% reduction in peer conflict
- Over 50% reduction in seclusion and restraint

Next Steps

Valley Center School will continue refining behavior reinforcement and skill-development systems to ensure they are implemented with high fidelity and aligned to each student's unique needs. As these systems mature, staff will deepen their understanding of how students apply skills during periods of increased stress and demand, further improving student outcomes, independence, and access to inclusive learning opportunities.

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

Career Connect Campus Principal: After a robust interview process, we have concluded the search for our next principal of the Career Connect Campus. Mr. Kyle Shack, current Assistant Principal of Instruction at the CCC, will be assuming the role of principal in the coming months.

Kyle brings with him a strong commitment to student success, a collaborative leadership style, and a deep belief in the power of CTE. He will take the helm formally on April 6 following spring break. This timing allows for some overlap with interim principal Mr. Mark Palmer to support the transition this school year. We will be posting the Assistant Principal of Instruction soon to backfill the position.

Career Champion Fellowship:

In its sixth year, the Career Champions Fellowship program continues to be a strong driver of career development efforts across the county, expanding both impact and engagement.

New for the 2026–27 school year, a cohort of Career Champions will be selected through an application process open to educators from any of KRESA's nine school districts. Both returning members from previous cohorts and new applicants are encouraged to apply. District teams will be selected from all applications received by May 1, 2026.

Career Connect Campus Awards

The Career Connect Campus was honored with an Engineering Merit Award at the American Council of Engineering Companies annual gala held in Detroit on May 7. We

have also received notification that the project has won an award from the American Public Works Association and will be honored at a banquet in Boyne Mountain on May 21.

D. Educator Supports Update –Stephanie Brown
Social Studies

Educator Supports Social Studies strengthens evidence-based instruction across the Greater Kalamazoo Region to ensure all students access rigorous, inquiry-driven learning. Core priorities include skill development, content knowledge, and disciplinary literacy.

Targeted Professional Learning, Coaching, & Consulting

Educator Supports Social Studies provides direct instructional support and coaching to several districts, including Parchment, Portage, Comstock, Galesburg-Augusta, KRESA CCC, Kalamazoo, and Berrien Springs. Further, KRESA provides consulting services to Parchment, Portage, Galesburg-Augusta, the Juvenile Home, Berrien Springs, & Comstock.

- **Instructional Frameworks:** Training centers on the C3 Framework, inquiry-based learning, and productive academic discourse.
- **Inquiry By Design:** New K–12 educator cohorts are learning to design and implement inquiry-based lessons, supported through a partnership with Dr. Linda Doornbos of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies and Oakland University.
- **Full-Contact History:** The Full Contact History workshop at Tillers International immersed educators in hands-on historical craftwork—such as blacksmithing and woodworking—while applying the Inquiry Arc. Participants created classroom-ready “20 Questions Artifact” toolkits and experienced how experiential projects deepen engagement and critical thinking.
- **Student-Centered Focus:** Professional learning emphasizes questioning strategies and reflective practice to drive student learning.
- **K-5 Integration - Enhancing Literacy through Social Studies:** KRESA supports K–5 teachers in integrating social studies within existing literacy programs, helping them move beyond comprehension and fluency to build content knowledge and contextual understanding.
- **Curriculum Innovation & Advocacy:** Through needs assessments, expert review, and adoption processes, KRESA ensures districts have access to high-quality, vetted materials that promote consistent, rigorous instruction.
- **Regional Leadership & Collaboration:** Educator Supports Social Studies serves as a hub for excellence across the Southwest Michigan region and the State through the development and implementation of the **Social Studies Summit, The SW Michigan Social Studies Network**, and **county-wide collaborations**.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

This year's work has centered on building county-wide capacity to support multilingual learners, both within KRESA programs and across partner districts. Through targeted collaboration and professional learning, we are breaking down silos and creating more cohesive, comprehensive support for multilingual learners in classrooms:

- Professional development for paraprofessionals on strategies and supports for ML students in the classroom
- Partnership with ML coaches at Kalamazoo Public Schools to enhance co-teaching efforts, and learning for ML teachers around the WIDA English Language Development Standards
- Personalized in-district professional development for teachers at Comstock, Parchment, and Kalamazoo Public Schools
- Comprehensive review of processes to identify suspected disabilities for students that are Multilingual Learners with the Eastern Service Area Special Education district teams
- Targeted networking of ML educators through the EL Collaborative to build capacity through shared learning, lesson sharing, and opportunities for support from like districts/roles
- A year-long professional development series building capacity and partnerships with content area and ML teachers to support co-teaching, including a proposal submission to co-present with KPS ML Coaches at Michigan Association for Bilingual Educators (MABE) Conference in May
- Collaboration with Calhoun ISD and St. Joseph ISD as a part of the EL Consortium of Southwest Michigan
- Integration of Career Champions work with initiatives in districts to support career development for MLs that includes strategically recruiting and welcoming ML families at the upcoming Career Connect Open House in February

As we continue strengthening practice and building knowledge with all stakeholders, not just EL educators, we are able to continue to go deeper in our learning and create comprehensive systems and classrooms that support English Learners across the county and beyond.

E. Operational Supports Update

1. Communications & Community Engagement Update – Sandy Barry-Loken KRESA Foundation Transforming Futures Brunch

On February 27, the Foundation hosted its first-ever Transforming Futures Brunch, marking an important milestone in advancing philanthropic support for KRESA's programs and services. The event brought together more than 120 community and business leaders and featured powerful impact stories from three program participants representing KRESA's student-facing Centers of Excellence, along with performances by Education for the Arts students. With the generous support of 13 corporate sponsors, the brunch raised just over \$54,000. Special thanks to James Devers for serving as our emcee.

Outstanding Achievement Awards

Please mark your calendar for Thursday, April 30 for our annual Outstanding Achievement Awards. The event begins at 7:15 AM at the Radisson Plaza Hotel.

In the News

We've enjoyed recent media coverage of some of our programs and services:

- [Kalamazoo's Career and Technical Center Off to A Flying Start](#)
- [Kalamazoo County pre-K enrollment opens](#)

2. Human Resources Update – Meredith Lewis

Union Negotiations

On February 19th, KRESA participated in a hearing to address the ULP charges filed by the union. Additional hearing dates will be required, and we are currently coordinating with relevant parties to arrange these sessions. Our most recent bargaining session with the union took place on March 11th.

Culture & Belonging

The Director of Culture and Belonging with support from the C&B Team facilitated professional learning sessions focused on application of trained practices including:

- Early Childhood (115 staff) 2.5-hour session focused on empathy for ourselves and others
- Business Office, Communications & Community Engagement, and Human Resources (38 staff) 90-min session on supporting high-quality customer service (session 2 of 3 in the series)

- Autism Supports and Interventions (17 staff) 1-hour session focused on the 10 Dimensions of Belonging for staff and students (session 5 of 6 in the series)
- WoodsEdge Learning Center (110 staff) 6-hour session on managing conflict effectively and positively navigating difficult conversations
- Four Pivots reunion retreat (17 staff) full day retreat aligned with the Courage to Teach work by Parker Palmer and The Four Pivots by Dr. Shawn Ginwright

The Director is supporting various departments with implementing mid-year and/or quarterly “pulse surveys” as part of Continuous Improvement goal monitoring related to Culture & Belonging. The C&B Team continues to collaborate with the Human Resources Team on several Continuous Improvement projects.

3. Technology & Operations Update – Brian Schubbach

This past month, we continued implementing the Informacast emergency alerting system to improve emergency management. With this system, staff can quickly alert everyone in a building using mobile phones or laptops, and the system also generates visual and audible alerts via paging. Informacast is now active at CCC, Valley Center, West Campus and the Juvenile Home School. Next month we will focus on deploying at WoodsEdge Learning Center, and Commons.

Miller-Davis's facility assessment identified three roofing projects: a full replacement for the Service Center roof, and repairs or partial replacements at WoodsEdge Learning Center and West Campus. Earlier this month, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was released to find construction management and architectural services for these projects. By the end of the month, we'll choose both a construction manager and an architectural firm. After that, we'll finalize the design and issue another RFP for construction. Construction work is expected to begin either this Fall or early Spring 2027, depending on contractor availability.

Over the years, we have reduced our server infrastructure significantly by moving to AWS for cloud based server hosting. However, we still have several systems that must run on local servers. Our current servers are over 8 years old and need to be replaced. The request below will replace the servers with (2) new HP Enterprise servers.

VI. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin

Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC) – Trend in Educational Funding:

I have shared a combined presentation from EPIC that was provided to superintendents

during a recent meeting of ISD/RESA leaders across the state, along with a presentation delivered to the Michigan House Appropriations Subcommittee. This new EPIC research, together with the independent School Finance Research Collaborative (SFRC) study conducted in 2018, formed the basis for the March 3rd presentation to the subcommittee on School Aid.

The goal of the School Aid Subcommittee presentation was to reflect a collaborative effort among education organizations—including MASA, MASSP, charter schools, and ISDs—to advocate for a simplified and more consistent weighted funding model, as compared to the current system, which relies on a complex and expanding set of categorical funding streams.

The presentation includes a link to the full discussion with the School Aid Committee, as well as a link to the 2018 SFRC study.

Key Findings of the EPIC research:

- The demographics of Michigan’s student body have shifted significantly, increasing the cost of providing education. This includes a substantial rise in at-risk and ESL students, along with a moderate increase in students requiring special education.
- In inflation-adjusted terms, per-pupil revenues increased through the early 2000s (peaking in 2002), declined for nearly two decades, and have begun to recover in recent years but still hasn't reached the 2002 peak funding level.
- Despite recent recovery, districts now face greater restrictions on how revenues can be used due to an increase in categorical and restrictive funding.
- Districts are also expected to provide a broader range of services beyond instruction, such as universal meals and student mental health supports, with funding that has been inconsistent and unstable.
- Overall, per-pupil spending on basic instruction has remained roughly flat in real terms over the past three decades. Spending for special populations declined during the 2000s before rebounding in recent years.
- These trends are further complicated by sharp increases in mandatory benefit costs, such as retirement contributions set by state law, which have reduced the resources available for classroom instruction.

Single Election Dates: (may change due to vote – may need to adjust or eliminate

The Michigan House has passed [House Bills 4583-4584](#), which would restrict all millage elections for schools and local governments to the November ballot only. Proponents argue that voter participation is higher in November than at other times of the year. However, this change could result in millages—including the required 18-mill assessment—expiring in the year between elections if an initial proposal were unsuccessful. Testimony presented in committee emphasized that millages supporting bonds and sinking funds are the sole mechanisms available to districts to address infrastructure and capital needs, as there is no corresponding state funding. Additionally, Michigan already limits elections to three dates per year and has expanded access to voting,

underscoring that there are no so-called “stealth” elections. Right now, the bill seems to be held up in the Senate. This current bill is largely opposed from the education community.

Building Purchase:

As previously mentioned, we have moved forward with the process of purchasing the Commons building to address the growing needs of the Head Start and Transition Service program (formerly YAP). Our team, along with our attorney and the seller, has been working collaboratively to ensure the parcel is properly separated, recognized by Oshtemo Township, and supported by the necessary easement rights for building access. At this time, I anticipate that we may be ready to complete the purchase sometime in April.

VI. Thrun Law Notes

A. Correspondence/Informational

VII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

Approval for the purchase of (2)HPE servers from SEHI in the amount of \$39,244.

Mr. Webster moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval for the purchase of (2)HPE servers from SEHI in the amount of \$39,

Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Wage Recommendation for the 2026-2027 School Year as presented.

Mr. Webster moved, Mr. VanAntwerp supported the approval of Wage Recommendation for the 2026-2027 School Year as presented .

Motion carried unanimously.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Cowart
Board Secretary

Jackie Martell
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on