

**Board of Education  
January 20, 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. Stephanie Brown, Ms. Angela Telfer, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Sarah Mansberter, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, Ms. Jackie Martell

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approval of Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – December 16, 2025
- 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. Devers supported approving the consent agenda.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**III. PRESENTATIONS**

- A. KRESA Bargaining Update – Eric Stewart

#### **IV. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE UPDATE**

##### **A. Early Childhood Update –Rachel Roberts**

*Enrollment as of 1/15/2026*

	<b># of Children Enrolled</b>	<b>% of Children Enrolled</b>
<b>Head Start</b>	459*	95%
<b>GSRP</b>	1,017	80%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,476</b>	<b>84%</b>

GSRP has onboarded two (2) new Sub-recipients. One begins programming 1/19/2026, and the second program will begin 2/2/2026, which will potentially add another 36 students enrolled.

*\*Out of the 485 students funded through the Head Start grant.*

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**

#### **KRESA Transition Services – Highly Individualized Programming Driving Student Success**

##### **Overview**

KRESA Transition Services (KTS) continues to lead the way in creating highly individualized programs for young adults ages 18–26. Our approach centers on each student's goals for a meaningful life in the community, ensuring that programming reflects their aspirations and strengths. Staff expertise, combined with family and community partnerships, allows us to design innovative solutions that remove barriers and promote inclusion.

##### **Student Success Story**

Last year, KTS welcomed a 24-year-old student from another county who had previously received homebound services due to challenges with emotional regulation in traditional school settings. Recognizing the importance of equitable access to education and community life, the KTS team collaborated with the student, family, and group home staff to design a program tailored to the student's preferences and needs. This individualized plan focused on:

- Reducing environmental stressors by scheduling instruction after hours in the KTS building.

- Building self-advocacy and emotional regulation skills through strategies that empower the student to express authentic feelings and use coping tools.
- Expanding community engagement by introducing volunteer opportunities at a local farm, with plans to add experiences at a food bank and greenhouse.
- Fostering recreation and social connections through activities such as bowling, rock climbing, and learning to enjoy games with peers.

#### Collaborative Approach

The success of this program reflects the collective effort of:

- Teachers, behavior support specialist, social worker, speech-language pathologist, paraprofessionals, and administrators.
- Group home staff who partnered seamlessly with KTS educators.
- Parents who served as strong advocates and active partners in planning.

This team-based approach ensured that the student's voice remained central, honoring their right to a self-directed, fulfilling life beyond school services.

#### Impact and Outcomes

Over the past year, the student has demonstrated remarkable growth:

- Increased participation in community-based activities.
- Improved ability to identify emotions and use coping strategies (from 45% of the time to 74% of the time).
- Greater confidence in trying new experiences.

With six months remaining in the program, the student is on track to transition successfully into adulthood with meaningful work, recreation, and supportive living arrangements. Progress graphs below illustrate the trajectory of achievement, underscoring the effectiveness of individualized, inclusive programming.

#### Key Takeaways

- Innovation and flexibility are essential to dismantling barriers and creating equitable opportunities.
- Collaboration and advocacy amplify student success.
- Student-centered planning ensures dignity, autonomy, and meaningful outcomes.

KTS remains committed to advancing practices that empower every student to thrive in their chosen community settings.

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

Reality Fairs: Reality Fair events are hands-on simulations giving participants a taste of real-world financial realities. Year to date, our team has met with 8 schools and 415 students

#### Student Quotes

"It showed me how to budget and be smart with my money." "It was entertaining, hands on, and felt like real life."

Video: Experience a Reality Fair in Action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICSbaikqBvY>

**Career Connect Campus Principal Hiring:** The principal position at the Career Connect Campus was posted in mid-December through January 18. We look forward to interviews in late January and early February for this hiring process.

**New "Never Go Dark" Partnership:** In partnership with the George Washington Carver Food Research Institute and Kalsec, Career Connect will be offering a two-week Explore Ag STEAM Academy from June 15-26. This two-week camp for 10th-12th graders will focus on food systems design and food equity. Career Connect will announce other new partnerships for "Never Go Dark" at the campus soon.

**ACEC Award:** The Career Connect Campus has been notified that it has won an award from the American Council of Engineering Companies. Career Connect staff will join the project architects and engineering firm at a gala in March to be recognized.

#### D. Educator Supports Update –Stephanie Brown

Our Culture & Climate Specialists help foster positive school climates and improved student outcomes. Through coaching, consulting, and collaborative initiatives, we have made significant strides in areas such as classroom management, social-emotional learning, mental health, and restorative practices.

#### Key Accomplishments:

- **Coaching and Consulting:** Provided targeted support to 5 of 9 local districts, as well as charter and out-of-county districts.
- **Professional Development:** This fall provided seven professional development cohorts across the county and additional learning in Bangor School District. Professional development included topics such as restorative practices, trauma informed practices, and classroom management.
- **Mental Health Supports:** Engaging continuous improvement in Mental Health Systems within our districts and supporting clinicians who merge their mental health expertise with growing awareness and understanding of working within the educational setting.
- **School-Level Impact:** Supported schools in adopting comprehensive SEL curricula.

#### Cultivating Positive Learning Environments:

##### KRESA and Comstock Partnership Highlights

A Glance at Educator Supports Culture and Climate in Our Locals... The partnership between Comstock Public School District and KRESA's Cultural Climate Specialists showcases a multileveled approach to supporting educators and students.

Comstock Public Schools is committed to deeply embedding strong culture and climate supports district wide to foster positive and engaging learning environments. At Comstock Elementary School, culture climate work focuses on enhancing classroom management through direct coaching with eight teachers, emphasizing the setting of clear expectations and providing consistent, positive student feedback. Simultaneously, at the STEM Academy, culture climate specialists will deliver a professional development session titled "Mindful Management," equipping staff with tools to increase self-awareness and self-regulation when facing classroom challenges. This collaborative approach addresses immediate classroom needs while building long-term staff capacity.

Further expanding this partnership, our team is also partnering around system-wide improvements at Comstock Middle School, where we are coaching on student engagement and positive behavior supports. This includes ongoing support for the implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) through schoolwide learning, dedicated data collection and feedback mechanisms, and

monthly collaboration with the PBIS leadership team. Their work extends to Compass Alternative High School, providing observation and data support to educators to refine engagement strategies in support of building wide goals to promote student growth and increased graduation rates. Finally, they are engaging with district leadership to implement and refine mental health system supports, including facilitating a monthly cohort for interested therapists to foster peer-to-peer learning and collaborative engagement across the district.

While our Culture Climate Specialists are partnered in several additional (in and out of county) districts, Comstock has integrated this work in such a way that it showcases the depth and breadth of work that such partnership can support.

#### E. Operational Supports Update

##### 1. Human Resources Update – Meredith Lewis

###### **Union Negotiations**

KRESA presented its final proposal to the union on October 27, which was later amended on December 19 to remove the ratification bonus in response to union concerns. At a subsequent bargaining session, both parties acknowledged that negotiations have reached an impasse. The union is not contesting this determination. As a result, KRESA is implementing its final proposal to the full extent allowed by law, including moving all bargaining unit members to the current 2025-26 pay schedule and providing full retroactive pay, which will be included in the January 30 payroll.

###### **Culture & Belonging**

The Director of Culture and Belonging facilitated a 90-minute professional learning for 65+ staff within Technology, Facilities, and Transportation. This session was the third of five sessions focused on supporting high-quality customer service. The Culture and Belonging Team continues to collaborate with the Human Resources Department on several projects including creating an introductory C&B video for all new employees to view during orientation, creating a C&B Team charter to communicate how the team functions, and creating high-quality and consistent recruitment and hiring resources.

##### 2. Technology & Operations Update – Brian Schupbach

To enhance emergency management within our facilities, we are implementing a new system called Informacast. This platform enables staff to promptly alert all occupants of a building during an incident, using an application accessible on mobile phones or laptops. In addition to notifications sent to personal devices, the system will also trigger both visual and audible alerts through our paging infrastructure. Informacast is currently

operational at the CCC and will be deployed at Valley Center and Juvenile Home School later this month.

**V. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin**  
**State Superintendent Conference in Kalamazoo:**

Michigan Education Guarantee:

The Michigan Launch organization is diligently working on a legislative proposal known as the Michigan Guarantee. They aim to have this legislation proposed in the coming weeks voted into law as soon as possible. The primary objectives of this legislative effort are to redefine high school graduation standards with a promise of adequate and equitable funding and to reshape "reciprocal" accountability standards and measurements. Although the Launch group has attempted similar initiatives in the past with limited success, they are making another concerted effort. This time, they are extending their outreach beyond private industry to seek acceptance from various groups within the education community. I have been invited to join an ISD/RESA advisory group to swiftly review and provide feedback on this proposal. In general, many aspects of this initiative sound promising on paper, although it lacks specificity. Key points from my perspective include a push towards a standards-based education model with a focus on "demonstration of mastery" and career-focused education (CTE). Additionally, the proposal includes the establishment of a Graduation Standards Oversight Committee, which appears to be more than just an advisory body to the Michigan Department of Education.

MASA Conference:

A quick reminder that I will be attending the MASA conference this week, and we are fortunate to have the event here in Kalamazoo.

**VI. Thrun Law Notes**

A. Correspondence/Informational

**VII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION**

- A. Approve the attached stormwater resolution.

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of the attached stormwater resolution.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Resolution for Special Education Millage (ROLL CALL VOTE)

Mr. Webster moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval Resolution for the Special Education Millage

VanAntwerp – yes, Devers – Yes, Webster – Yes, Knowles – Yes

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a. Randy Borden made comments in regard to contract bargaining.
- b. Ben Bierlein made comments in regard to union.
- c. Sarah Dickman made comments in regard to bargaining.
- d. Noreen Heikes made comments in regard to the teacher conditions.
- e. Crystal Van Pelt made comments in regard to the contract.
- f. Liz Ratashak made comments in regard to settling the contract.
- g. Brian Brusah made comments in regard to the contract.
- h. Tom Greig made comments in regard to the union.

**VIII. Superintendent requests that the Board of Education adjourn into closed session to review and discuss contract negotiations and attorney/client privileged information.**

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Webster supported adjourning to closed session at 6:10pm.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Lynne Cowart  
Board Secretary

---

Jackie Martell  
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on