

**Board of Education  
March 18, 2025 – 5:30 PM  
Conference Room A/B/C  
1819 East Milham Avenue  
Portage, Michigan 49002  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

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**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, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, Ms. Laura Draper, Ms. Anne Lape, Ms. Jen Sova, 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 – February 18, 2025
- B. Approval of New Hire
- C. Approval of Monthly Financial Report
- D. Approval of Head Start Financial Report

Mr. VanAntwerp moved; Ms. Cowart supported approving the consent agenda.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**IV. PRESENTATIONS**

- A. Juvenile Home Continuous Improvement Update – Laura Draper & Anne Lape

The continuous improvement update for the Juvenile Home was presented.

B. Early Intervention and Special Services Continuous Improvement Update – Jen Sova, Kara Mounce & Jocelyn Bailey

The continuous improvement update for the Early Intervention and Special Services program was presented.

**V. CENTER OF EXCELLENCE UPDATE**

A. Early Childhood Update – Mindy Miller & 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 – Mindy Miller & Angela Telfer

KRESA Special Education Leadership Team

Overview: Throughout the school year, the KRESA Special Education Leadership Team, comprising principals, administrators, and coordinators, holds monthly meetings to stay informed on the latest developments in special education law and our requirements, problem-solve collaboratively, and foster a culture of continuous learning and teamwork.

Key Activities and Topics Addressed This Year:

1. Book Study:
  - This year, the team engaged in a book study of *"It's Your Turn: Teachers as Facilitators"* by Robert Garmston and Carolyn McKanders.
  - The book introduces five mindsets to enhance group facilitation:
    - See groups as they could be.
    - Groups grant consent.
    - Prepare...don't attach.
    - Diversity enriches.
    - Never let a conflict go to waste.
  - Participants practiced tools from the book in meetings and workgroups, sharing their experiences and outcomes each month.
2. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):
  - Discussions focused on a custom-developed tool for supporting center-based and local leaders in making informed IEP decisions to meet students' needs effectively.

3. Transition Planning:
  - Regular updates were shared on transition processes to ensure smooth student progress across educational milestones.
4. IEP Meeting Practices:
  - Reviewed expectations for conducting IEP meetings and explored strategies to enhance communication during challenging discussions.
  - Emphasized the importance of thoughtful language and identifying barriers faced by local districts, offering support where needed.
5. Paraprofessional Competencies:
  - Collaborated to develop paraprofessional competencies aimed at equipping paraprofessionals with the skills necessary to excel in their roles.
6. Policy and Legal Knowledge:
  - Engaged in activities to locate and interpret information from the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education and the ISD Plan.
  - Shared legal updates presented by attorneys at the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) conference, fostering discussions on improving district and program practices.
7. Equity Awareness:
  - Practiced identifying ableism in print and media to promote inclusivity and equity.

The KRESA Special Education Leadership Team remains a highly effective and dedicated group, consistently demonstrating commitment to professional growth, collaboration, and supporting each other in this important work. Their efforts have strengthened compliance with special education laws, enhanced the quality of IEP processes, and fostered a more inclusive educational environment for all students.

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

- CTE Student Recruitment: Career Connect partnered with the Kalamazoo Promise to host a well-attended recruitment event for KPS students for all secondary programs, work-based learning, and career coaching. More than 100 families attended, and many students completed applications onsite.
- Career Connect Campus Hiring Update: The CTE team is focused on filling the remaining two TA positions to complete the instructional team for the Career Connect Campus.
- Career Connect Campus Equipment: The memo was attached had the details equipment recommended for purchase for Health and Veterinary Sciences.

- Workforce Development Board Procurement and Property Management Policy: The Workforce Development Board has approved an updated Procurement and Property Management Policy. This policy is applicable to our Michigan Works! Southwest programs and services (e.g. WIOA Youth Services, Young Professionals, Jobs for Michigan's Graduates). The policy was attached to the agenda for approval.

D. Educator Supports Update – Mindy Miller & Stephanie Brown

The Engagement Specialist team continues to expand its coaching, consulting, and professional learning to support inclusive practices and least restrictive settings for students with disabilities. This work spans KRESA specialized programs and local school districts, emphasizing student strengths, fostering independence, and promoting equitable educational environments.

Through coaching and consulting, the team guides general and special education providers in implementing specialized instruction and proactive, evidence-based strategies. These efforts enhance collaboration, strengthen educational systems, and create more inclusive learning environments that empower students and improve achievement.

In professional learning, the team has launched a cohort centered on evidence-based strategies, with TEACCH Methodologies as its foundation, to improve student accessibility and engagement. Structured TEACCHing provides strategies and tools for teachers to use in the classroom. These help students with autism to achieve educational and therapeutic goals (TEACCH, 2025). Overall provided professional learning opportunities this school year has included approximately 825 educational stakeholders, which encompasses administrators, educators, and paraprofessionals. Feedback has been positive, with 95.1% finding the learning valuable and 93.8% reporting significant gains in instructional knowledge.

To extend this impact across greater Kalamazoo County, the team has welcomed an additional Engagement Specialist, expanding capacity to support districts with the latest resources and best practices. Additionally, ongoing collaboration at the state level and cross-county partnerships ensure continued alignment with current research and innovative approaches.

#### E. Operational Supports Update

##### 1. Business Services Update – Scott Thomas

The Business Office continuous improvement plan includes the following activity as part of KRESA's System Impact Focus Area Goal 4b: Utilize an effective budget process for all funds to provide resources for KRESA priorities while maintaining reserves for sustainability.

To achieve this goal, we have rolled out our updated budget process to all funds and are having several budget meetings to prepare the 2025-26 preliminary budget.

We are also requesting to establish a Career Connect Campus capital projects fund per the memo included as part of the action item.

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

###### Technology

We are pleased to announce that we will be adding Allegan Public Schools to our SW MiTech consortium following a unanimous decision by the APS Board on April 10.

Purchasing of technology items approved for the Career Connect Campus is about 70% complete. We expect to have temporary occupancy by April 1 and will begin to install larger equipment at that time. Smaller items will be installed at full occupancy in early May.

###### Facilities

Earlier this month, we held our final facilities master planning meeting with Eckert-Wordell. Later this fiscal year, we look forward to the results of this work to support our vision of KRESA Centers of Excellence.

Installation and programming for the HVAC controls project with Miller-Davis and the vendor ICS is 90% complete and is on schedule.

##### 3. Deputy Superintendent Update – Tom Zahrt, Sandy Barry-Loken & Meredith Lewis Human Resources

Wage Recommendations for 2025-26 School Year: Recommendations for non-bargaining group wages for the 2025-26 school year are outlined in the attached memo and presented for the board's approval. The recommendations include a newly designed wellness incentive program that provides employees with three opportunities for incentive payments tied to activities related to Whole Person Health, Consistent Attendance, and Fostering Community. The program nicely

aligns with Continuous Improvement Focus Area #1 and KRESA's Culture and Belonging Roadmap and provides a holistic approach to recognizing and supporting employee wellness.

**Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA):** Sick time policies and our time and attendance system were updated and rolled out agency-wide to comply with the new State requirements, regardless of last-minute changes by the Michigan legislature.

**Red Rover Hiring:** The HR team successfully implemented Red Rover Hiring to replace our current vendor for Applicant Tracking. The new system is highly recommended by surrounding districts and provides a more intuitive interface for applicants and hiring managers, offers better visibility to track candidates across multiple jobs and programs, includes a simplified and mobile-friendly application process for applicants, and allows hiring managers to manage applicants on a single dashboard.

**Culture & Belonging Strategic Plan –** The Executive Directors of Human Resources and Communications and Community Engagement along with the Director of Culture and Belonging are facilitating a 30-minute staff meeting session at 12 KRESA sites to engage all KRESA staff in learning about the KRESA brand refresh and the Culture and Belonging Roadmap. All sessions will be completed by March 27, 2025. This process is part of our strategy to communicate transparently agencywide.

## **VI. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin**

**KCSOA Reminder:** This week we will have our KCSOA dinner at the Fetzer Center starting at 5:30 with the topic Legislative Updates with Jennifer Smith. Just as an advanced teaser, we have decided to move the May 21st KCSOA dinner to the new Career Connect Center. This will be one day before the opening ceremony on May 22nd and provide an advance sneak peek for KCSOA members only. I will be announcing this at the KCSOA meeting on Wednesday.

**U.S. Department of Education (USDOE):** As you are probably aware of the move last week to reduce the USDOE by nearly 50% (4,133 to 2183). The administration has made statements indicating that they plan to eliminate the USDOE; this cannot be done by executive order under the current law, complete elimination will take congressional approval. Below is a small excerpt from the Michigan Attorney General via a press release regarding this recent move that provides a good summary of the potential impact:

*“As Attorney General Nessel and the coalition assert in the lawsuit, dismantling DOE will have devastating effects for states like Michigan. The administration’s lay-off is so massive that DOE will be incapacitated and unable to perform essential functions. As the lawsuit asserts, the administration’s actions will deprive students with special needs of critical resources and*

*support. They will gut DOE's Office of Civil Rights, which protects students from discrimination and sexual assault.....*

*With this lawsuit, Attorney General Nessel and the coalition are seeking a court order to stop the administration's policies to dismantle DOE by drastically cutting its workforce and programs. Attorney General Nessel and the coalition argue that the administration's actions to dismantle DOE are illegal and unconstitutional. The Department is an executive agency authorized by Congress, with numerous different laws creating its various programs and funding streams. The coalition's lawsuit asserts that the Executive Branch does not have the legal authority to unilaterally incapacitate or dismantle it without an act of Congress."*

Currently, this lawsuit represents Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai'i, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, Wisconsin, Vermont, and the District of Columbia.

Right now, we do not believe this reduction in DOE staffing will have any significant impact on current KRESA operations for the remainder of this school year. According to a statement put out by USDOE, they will continue to deliver on all statutory programs that under their purview such as special education funding, competitive grants, etc. Regardless, we will continue to monitor these federal activities as we are certain that the reduction of staffing and the stated intent to eliminate the department will at the very minimum have an operational impact and probably financial impacts in future budgetary cycles.

**Parent Advisory Committee (PAC):** Last week President Knowles and I were able to speak with our PAC about the process of board elections for KRESA, monitoring and compliance of IEP process and implementations for schools and potential impact of changes with the USDOE. The recent NowKalamazoo news article seemed to create some misunderstanding amongst the group that there is no real process for electing board members. I think President Knowles and I helped to clear up the confusion generated by the article as well as helped to settle some fears about the activities coming out of Washington for now.

## **VII. Thrun Law Notes**

A. Correspondence/Informational

## **VIII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION**

A. Approve to establish the Career Connect Campus Capital Projects Fund as recommended.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the establishment of the Career Connect Campus Capital Projects Fund as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of the purchase of equipment for Career Conntect Campus' Heath Science and Veterinary Science programs, as presented.

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Webster supported the purchase of equipment for Career Conntect Campus' Heath Science and Veterinary Science programs, as presented.  
Motion carried unanimously.

C. Approval of Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board Procurement and Property Management Policy, as presented, to be utilized for WIOA Youth Services, Young Professionals, and Jobs for Michigan's Graduates.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board Procurement and Property Management Policy, as presented, to be utilized for WIOA Youth Services, Young Professionals, and Jobs for Michigan's Graduates.  
Motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Wage Recommendation for the 2025-2026 School Year as presented.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Webster supported the approval of Wage Recommendation for the 2025-2026 School Year as presented.  
Motion carried unanimously.

E. Approval of contracted empolyee per the attached board memo

Mr. VanAnterp moved, Ms.Cowart supported the approval of the contracted employee per the attached board memo.

Motion carried unanimously.

F. FOIA Appeal – Jermaine Robinson

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Mr. Webster supported to deny the FOIA appeal by Jermaine Robinson  
Motion carried unaimously.



**IX.ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lynne Cowart  
Board Secretary

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Jackie Martell  
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on