

**Board of Education
April 21, 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, Ms. Lynne Cowart

MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF: Dr. Dedrick Martin, Ms. Mindy Miller, Mr. Brian Schupbach, Mr. Scott Thomas, Mr. Eric Stewart, Ms. Rachel Roberts, Ms. Sarah Mansberter, Ms. Angela Telger, Ms. Meredith Lewis, Ms. Sandy Barry-Loken, MMs. Jackie Martell

CALL TO ORDER

I. Mr. Knowles called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. Noreen Heikes made comments in regard to fair contract.
- B. Steven Alves made comments in regard to contract.
- C. Sarah Dickman made comments in regard to concerns.
- D. Ben Bierlein made comments in regard to settle first contract.
- E. Tom Greig made comments in regard to union.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2026
- B. Approval of New Hire
- C. Approval of New Position
- D. Approval of Monthly Financial Report
- E. Approval of Head Start Financial Report
- F. Approval of PAC March Meeting Minutes

Ms. Cowart moved; Mr. VanAntwerp 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 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 KRESA Special Education Leadership Team is a team of principals, administrators, and coordinators from these KRESA Programs: Autism Supports and Interventions, Early Intervention Services and Supports, Juvenile Home School, Transition Services, WoodsEdge Learning Center and Valley Center School.

2025-2026 Key Areas of Focus and Accomplishments

Strengthening Collaborative Practices

This year, the leadership team focused on improving how administrators navigate challenging conversations during IEP team meetings. Through shared learning and practice, leaders strengthened their skills in communication and problem-solving to better support students, families, and staff.

Building a Culture of Belonging

The team examined long-standing school traditions and reflected on whether they align with the goal of creating welcoming and inclusive learning environments. Each principal identified a specific action step to better promote belonging within their school community. Leaders also discussed practical strategies to intentionally include substitute teachers and paraprofessionals, recognizing that inclusive cultures benefit both staff and students.

Improving IEP Practices and Compliance

A significant focus this year was streamlining IEP processes to ensure both compliance and quality. The team:

Implemented a district-wide IEP Timeline Flowchart and IEP Review Checklist to support meeting deadlines and creating high-quality IEPs

Coached staff on writing high-quality IEPs

Ensured the consistent practice of providing families with draft IEPs at least one week prior to meetings to promote meaningful family participation.

These efforts support stronger partnerships with families and improve overall IEP effectiveness.

Paraprofessional Pathway Reflection

Leaders reflected on the first year of implementing the Paraprofessional Pathway. The team discussed successes, challenges, and considerations for the coming year as this model continues to support skill development and career advancement for paraprofessionals.

Student Discipline and Family Communication

Family-friendly suspension letter examples were shared to help ensure communication with families is clear, respectful, and supportive. This work aligns with the team's broader commitment to transparency and relationship-building with families.

Ongoing Learning and Legal Guidance

The team continued learning about Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education requirements and interpretations of special education law. This ongoing professional learning ensures leaders remain informed and responsive to current expectations and compliance obligations.

Staff Attendance and Leadership Strategies

The leadership team discussed staff attendance trends, sharing strategies leaders are using to motivate and support improved attendance, as well as approaches to address challenges when improvement does not occur.

Overall Impact

The Special Education Leadership Team continues to demonstrate strong collaboration and shared responsibility for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The collective focus on compliance, inclusive practices, staff development, and family engagement strengthens KRESA's

special education programs and supports high-quality service delivery across the region.

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

Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates (JMG) – Program Highlights

As the youth services provider for Michigan Works! Southwest, KRESA operates the Jobs for Michigan’s Graduates (JMG) program, an affiliate of Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG). During the past year, JMG achieved exceptional results, earning multiple national recognitions for program quality, staff excellence, and positive youth outcomes.

National Awards & Recognition

- **JAG National 6-of-6 Award (Affiliate Level):**

Earned JAG’s highest distinction for meeting or exceeding all six national performance benchmarks related to education and employment outcomes.

- **JAG National 6-of-6 Award (Program Level):**

All five Career Coaches achieved all six performance benchmarks.

- **Rising Star Award:**

One Career Coach was recognized for exceptional initiative and excellence in supporting youth.

- **Living Our Values – Transformational Award:**

Two Career Coaches were honored for creating meaningful, lasting impact with learners.

Legislative Day Engagement

Two JMG participants represented the region at Legislative Day, meeting with Representative Julie Rogers, attending a legislative panel with Representatives Jasper Martus and Parker Fairbairn, meeting with Senator Sean McCann’s staff, and touring the Capitol and legislative chambers.

Career Development Conference (CDC)

Nine youth participants and three staff will attend the statewide Career Development Conference at Saginaw Valley State University (April 29-30). Youth will compete in three events – Product Design, Communicate 2 Create, and Prep to Impress – with three participants nominated for Youth Honors Awards recognizing leadership and achievement.

Career Connect Superstar

Each month, Career Connect leadership recognizes a Career Connect Superstar – a team member who embodies our mission of providing learners with transformative experiences, skills, relationships, and resources that support lifelong career development.

In March, we recognized Rehabilitation Therapy Technical Assistant Lori Lee. As the Career Connect Campus Interim Principal Mark Palmer noted in his nomination of Lori:

As the interim instructor of the for Rehab Therapy, Lori has learned and delivered engaging curriculum for her students. More importantly, she has embraced the CCC mission of developing skills in her students that are lifelong employability skills - working with students to be collaborative, responsible, accountable, and dependable. She helps her students develop skills that will make them successful in any career or life path that they choose!

In April, we are recognizing Career Development Consultant Lorri Batsie. Administrator of Career Development Jeni Opel nominated Lorri, stating:

Lorri's work directly advances Career Connect's mission by creating meaningful, transformative experiences for students as they explore and define their career paths. She works closely with learners, bringing patience, intentional listening, and a genuine passion for guiding thoughtful conversations that help young people better understand themselves and their future possibilities.

D. Educator Supports Update –Stephanie Brown

The Behavior Specialist team was able to broaden and strengthen behavior support services, increase professional development, launch co-teaching coaching, and increase building-level system work across the county as their team returned to four personnel.

Behavior Specialists provide consultation and coaching to building teams to address behavior concerns for individual students, both with and without IEPs. They conduct behavioral observations to better understand student needs and environmental influences, develop data collection systems, and analyze behavioral data to inform decision-making. The team also assists in the development and implementation of Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs), models evidence-based intervention strategies, collaborates with teams on action planning, and conducts fidelity checks to ensure interventions are implemented consistently and effectively.

Here's a structured list of the supports Behavior Support Specialists provide: (not comprehensive)

- **Consultation & Coaching:** Work with building teams to address behavior concerns for individual students, with and without IEPs.
- **Behavioral Observations:** Conduct observations to assess student behavior and environmental factors.
- **Data Collection & Analysis:** Develop tracking systems, analyze behavioral data, and adjust interventions accordingly.

- **Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) & Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs):** Train staff and assist in developing and implementing these plans.
- **Behavior Intervention Strategies:** Implement and model evidence-based behavior strategies to promote positive student outcomes.
- **Action Planning:** Collaborate with local teams to develop and execute behavior support plans.
- **Fidelity Checks:** Monitor the consistency and effectiveness of behavior intervention plans.
- **Professional Development:** Behavior Specialists provide professional learning opportunities designed to strengthen staff understanding of behavior and effective intervention practices. Training topics include the Basics of Behavior, Fundamentals of Behavior, Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs), and Positive Behavior Support Plans (PBSPs). In addition, customized training sessions are available to address the unique needs of individual districts. Through ongoing collaboration with educators, administrators, and support staff, the team supports the development of structured, supportive learning environments that promote positive student outcomes. During this school year, the team significantly expanded its professional development efforts, increasing offerings to fourteen sessions.
 - **Collaboration & Support:** Work with educators, administrators, and support staff to create a structured and supportive learning environment.
 - **Co-teaching Coaching:** Work with special education teachers to increase understanding of the co-teaching models to maximize student engagement and teacher impact.
 - **Building-level System Work:** Work with building administrators to develop systems and processes that streamline communication, clarify roles and responsibilities, and create consistent structures for delivering student supports across the building.

Student Data (as of March 2026) for the 2025-2026 school year:

Number of referrals received for students with IEP's: 35

Number of referrals received for students without IEP's: 6

Total number of individual student cases (students with IEP's and without IEP's): 41

Total number of classrooms supported: 13

E. Operational Supports Update

1. Human Resources Update – Meredith Lewis

Employee Contract Renewal Process

The HR Department is currently preparing for the Employee Contract Renewal Process for non-bargaining employees. This includes updating the 2026-27 work calendars and pay schedules in the PowerSchool system to ensure accurate contract details. HR also collaborates with Administrators to gather employee performance data and any exceptions that may impact contract decisions. The department will be ready to distribute new contracts on Friday, May 29.

27I Employee Compensation

Our recommendation for disbursement of State School Aid Act Section 27I funds is attached for board approval. Approval of this item will allow KRESA to proceed with processing a one-time gross payment of \$100 to each eligible KRESA employee, excluding administrators, on the April 25, 2026 payroll, with KRESA covering all associated employer payroll taxes and MPSERS costs. This action ensures timely and equitable distribution of the state-allocated funds in accordance with statutory requirements.

Wellness Program Update

For the upcoming school year, KRESA's wellness program will focus on staff mental health through Building Resilience, a framework inspired by *Onward* by Elena Aguilar. This work includes eight facilitated book study sessions and a custom journaling experience designed to engage staff in reflection and activities that support mental health in the context of educational work. Participation in Building Resilience will be incorporated into the Fostering Community component of our Wellness Incentive Program to encourage participation. In addition, we are pleased to continue our partnership with KVCC, offering three new courses that deepen staff learning around the relationship between mental health, nutrition, and movement.

Culture & Belonging

- The Culture & Belonging Team created a [video](#) to show at new hire orientation to communicate about C&B work at the agency and welcome new staff.
- The Fostering Community component of the Wellness Incentive was implemented for the first time during the 2025-26 school year through February 2026. 179 staff members participated in the following ways:
 - o 647 LinkedIn Learning modules successfully completed
 - o 104 community events attended
 - o 21 workshops attended
 - o \$43,700 in total incentives paid out to staff

Union Negotiations

During a March 11, 2026 bargaining session, the KCTEA provided KRESA with a proposal for consideration. The parties met again on April 15, 2026, during which KRESA presented its counterproposal and engaged in a positive and productive discussion with the union. Bargaining remains ongoing, with the next scheduled session set for April 28, 2026.

2. Technology & Operations Update – Brian Schupbach

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 all sites except WoodsEdge Learning Center. We expect to have WoodsEdge Learning Center Completed before the end of April.

Miller-Davis's facility assessment identified three needed roofing projects: a full replacement for the Service Center roof, and repairs or partial replacements at WoodsEdge Learning Center and West Campus. Upon completion of our RFP and architect and construction manager interviews, we have selected Tower Pinkster as our architectural firm and Triangle Associates as our construction management company for the project. Tower Pinkster will begin work shortly to finalize the design. Construction work is expected to begin either this Fall or early Spring 2027, depending on contractor availability.

VI. Superintendent Report – Dr. Dedrick Martin

Springing into Action:

Now that we are past spring break, activity has certainly increased as we enter the home stretch and prepare for the upcoming May 5th Special Education Millage election. Over the past week, I had the honor of serving as the keynote speaker at the Excellence in Education dinner, presenting at the Portage Rotary meeting, and joining the team to host and present at CCC for the Bronson Senior Leadership Team and attend the Southwest Michigan First Breakfast Event on Data Centers. These opportunities were not only valuable to attend but also

provided meaningful ways to promote the great work happening at KRESA and to reinforce the importance of the May 5th election through presentations and casual conversations.

Closed Session:

Just a reminder that we will conduct a closed session this week to hear from our new lead attorney from Thrun, Katherine “Katy” Broaddus, who recently conducted her second negotiations meeting with our team. I am pleased to report that the team has already shared positive feedback on how Katy has stepped into a difficult negotiation, shifted targets from the CTE bargaining team, and pushed back on inappropriate tactics by the bargaining leader. This included a letter to the head of the MEA addressing conflicting communications and standards from the leader.

Commons Purchase:

The KRESA administration is requesting Board approval of a resolution authorizing the Superintendent to execute the final purchase contract for the Commons facility, which currently houses Head Start programming and Transition Services classes. Approval of this resolution will allow the District to move forward in a timely manner once final contractual terms are completed, ensuring continuity of services and minimizing disruption to students and families who rely on these programs.

The acquisition of the Commons facility aligns with the District’s long-term strategic and operational needs by securing a permanent location for critical instructional and support services. Granting authorization for the Superintendent to sign the final contract provides the necessary flexibility to finalize the transaction efficiently while maintaining Board oversight through the approved resolution and established purchasing parameters.

VI. Thrun Law Notes

A. Correspondence/Informational

VII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR ACTION

Approval of Disbursement of Section 271 Funds as presented.

Mr. Webster moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval of disbursement of Section 271 Funds as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Approval to purchase video surveillance cameras for Special Education buildings in the amount of \$46,000.

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Ms. Cowart supported the approval to purchase video surveillance cameras for Special Education buildings in the amount of \$46,000.

Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Resolution for Property Purchase as presented.

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. VanAntwerp supported the approval of the Resolution for Property Purchase as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the renovation of the audio-visual equipment in the Wile Auditorium

Ms. Cowart moved, Mr. Devers supported the approval of the renovation of the audio-visual equipment in the Wile Auditorium.

Motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. VanAntwerp moved, Ms. Cowart supported the adjourning into closed session to review and discuss contract negotiations and attorney/client privileged information at 5:53 pm.

Motion carried unanimously.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Cowart
Board Secretary

Jackie Martell
Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved on