

**REGION III SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE
EXECUTIVE MEETING
February 18, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Rob Miller, Chairperson, at 10:08 am. Roll Call was as follows:

Present: Dr. Jill Griffin, Mrs. Nancy Werden, Mr. Rob Miller, Dr. Todd Dugan, Dr. Kevin Bowman, Dr. Patrick Anderson

Not in attendance:

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Special Olympics

Mrs. Lenger informed the Board that Region III is planning a Special Olympics event to be held on May 2, 2026, at East Alton Wood River High School. She mentioned there has been significant interest and positive discussion surrounding this initiative. We are modeling our efforts after the successful event hosted by the Bethalto School District and are working to expand this opportunity to our other districts.

An additional planning session is scheduled for this Friday during the scheduled half-day. Following that meeting, we will be able to share more detailed information and next steps.

IAASE Winter Conference

Mrs. Lenger reminded the Board that the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education (IAASE) conference will take place next Thursday and Friday in Champaign, Illinois. She informed them that their coordinators will be attending and will be out of the district during that time.

Extended School Year

Mrs. Lenger informed the board that Extended School Year (ESY) services have been scheduled. She stated the elementary students (K-8) will attend at Bethalto East Primary School from June 3 through July 1, and the high school students will attend at East Alton-Wood River High School from June 1 through July 2.

Mrs. Lenger reported to the board that at this time, 21 students from our programs have been identified as eligible for ESY services. She informed the board that she has not yet received final eligibility lists from the districts; however, she anticipates additional students from Wood River-Hartford School District #15 and potentially from East Alton as well. She stated that additional updates will be provided as that information becomes available.

Mrs. Lenger shared with the board that ESY staff positions have been posted.

Region Recognition

Mrs. Lenger shared with the board that Region Recognition for last month was awarded to Isabel Montano, a paraprofessional currently housed at East Alton Middle School. She mentioned that she earned her short-term substitute license this year and has substituted several days in Mrs. Meyer's classroom. Mrs. Lenger stated she received feedback from staff that indicated the classroom ran seamlessly under her leadership, and she did an outstanding job stepping into the role. Mrs. Lenger reported that a conversation was held with Isabel regarding pursuing a teaching certificate; while Isabel is not interested at this time, Mrs. Lenger will continue to encourage her professional growth.

Mrs. Lenger also recognized Kaylee Nicosia, Speech-Language Pathologist, who is shared between Bethalto Community Unit School District 8 and East Alton School District #13. Mrs. Lenger stated she has been a valuable

addition to the team, demonstrating flexibility while working across two districts with differing procedures. She approaches her responsibilities with professionalism and works diligently to support students in both settings.

Mrs. Lenger additionally recognized Andy Allen, permanent substitute teacher, for his exceptional work with students. Mrs. Lenger mentioned that he regularly incorporates STEAM lessons into his assignments, including projects that involve motors, electricity, and woodworking. She informed the board that he is currently attending a 3D printer training through the Regional Office of Education to expand his knowledge and enhance learning opportunities for students through additional hands-on projects.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Financial

Mrs. Lenger provided a budget update, reporting the percentage of funds expended in each area of the budget through February. She stated that both the CLIP and Journeys programs have exceeded 80% of their allocated supply budgets, and the administration is closely monitoring expenditures and working to gain better control of supply costs moving forward.

Mrs. Lenger mentioned that a significant portion of supply spending appears to be related to reinforcers and student store items. She informed the board that a discussion had taken place regarding the importance of aligning reinforcers with the function of student behavior. Given that many students demonstrate attention-seeking behaviors, the team is reviewing the appropriateness of certain tangible rewards and considering more function-based reinforcement strategies. She also stated that additional staff training is being planned, in collaboration with Kim Hood, to strengthen understanding of matching reinforcers to behavioral function and to improve budgeting practices for the upcoming year.

Mrs. Lenger reported that professional development expenditures were also discussed. She stated that there have been numerous requests for training opportunities this year. Mrs. Lenger mentioned that while Dr. Kara Williams, Occupational Therapist, has shown strong initiative in pursuing professional growth and sharing knowledge with staff, conversations have occurred regarding the overall cost of professional development and the need for a more structured, long-term plan. Mrs. Lenger also mentioned that adjustments were made to some professional development activities this year to remain within budget parameters.

Personnel

Mrs. Lenger informed the Board that at this time, nearly all positions for the upcoming school year have been filled. One teaching position remains open, along with a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant (COTA) position that will be vacant due to retirement. The COTA position has been posted, and applications have been received; however, no applications have been submitted for the open teaching position.

Discussion followed regarding current hiring trends in special education. Dr. Griffin reported that while applicants have been received within her district, they are primarily internal candidates—individuals who have participated in accelerated programs, completed student teaching placements, or previously served as paraprofessionals within the district. Recruitment efforts have included outreach to Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, which has yielded one external candidate, while the remaining applicants have been internally developed.

Current Programs

Mrs. Lenger reported that there are currently 55 students enrolled across all programs. Mrs. Lenger stated a new student from East Alton School District #13 began services today. In addition, a placement meeting is scheduled for tomorrow with Wood River-Hartford School District #15 to discuss a potential new student placement. Mrs. Lenger mentioned that there are currently seven students in Brittany Raby's classroom. This classroom is a behavior-focused program modeled after the Journeys program and is housed at the junior high level.

Mrs. Lenger and the Board discussed enrollment trends. Enrollment was 54 students in September. Although five students exited at semester due to moves, graduation, or placement changes, subsequent referrals and new placements have maintained relatively stable overall enrollment numbers.

FOR DISCUSSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

RBT Training Program

Mrs. Lenger provided an update on the Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) training program. She stated that the program continues to move forward, and Genevieve is scheduled to meet this Friday with trainees who are currently preparing for their certification exam.

Mrs. Lenger and Dr. Griffin discussed the possibility of limiting the number of staff participating in the RBT training program at one time to ensure adequate supervision capacity. The initial cohort included six trainees; three completed the certification process relatively quickly, while three have progressed more slowly due to the rigor and time commitment required. Based on these experiences, consideration is being given to limiting future cohorts to ensure Genevieve can effectively meet supervision requirements.

Mrs. Lenger reported that Genevieve was initially capped at supervising 20 RBTs. She is currently supervising six certified RBTs and has approximately five additional individuals in various stages of training (two from Dr. Griffin's district and three from Region III, though one candidate has since withdrawn). She stated that ongoing monitoring of supervision capacity will continue as more staff complete certification to ensure appropriate oversight and scheduling.

Mrs. Lenger also noted that the next step will involve incorporating RBT services into eligible students' IEPs when appropriate. Mrs. Lenger stated she has been having conversations with the coordinators to begin this process. For students who require RBT-level support, this service may be included in the IEP and is eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.

Cyclical Monitoring Preparation

Mrs. Lenger informed the Board that the cyclical monitoring process is focusing on the district's completion of its Behavior Intervention Policy and Procedures. Mrs. Lenger stated that Suzanne, coordinator from Bunker Hill, has submitted their district's intervention plan and procedures, which had previously been approved by the Board, while Jen, coordinator from Bethalto, is finalizing the plan by incorporating academic information. Dr. Griffin noted that approval of their district's Behavior Intervention Policy and Procedures is scheduled for the February 26th board meeting.

Mrs. Lenger emphasized that this work is part of the district's preparations for the upcoming school year.

Journeys School Building Update

Mrs. Lenger reported that a new roof has been installed over Journey School. The work was completed over a single weekend, and the roofing company did an excellent job. During the recent heavy rain, no leaks were reported in the school. Some additional roofing work remains on the church side of the building.

Mrs. Lenger stated that interior repairs, including ceilings and walls affected by prior water damage, will be completed by a separate contractor. She mentioned that communication from the contractors has been positive, and they are working to minimize disruption to the school day. Mrs. Lenger noted that staff, including Kim Hood, are relieved that temporary measures, such as placing buckets for leaks, are no longer necessary.

Journeys School 2026-2027 Calendar

Mrs. Lenger presented the proposed calendar for Journey School for the upcoming school year. The tentative start date for teachers is August 10, with institute days scheduled for August 10 and 11. Students are expected to begin on August 12. Additional institute days are planned for October 9 and January 4. Two school improvement half-days are scheduled for September 25 and April 23, intended for full staff professional development.

Dr. Dugan noted that there is a 95% likelihood that Election Day will be declared a holiday. Mrs. Lenger explained that if this occurs, the schedule would swap with Cashmere Pulaski Day.

Mrs. Lenger also requested a schedule adjustment for one classroom at Bethalto Community Unit School District 8. Currently, April 23 is a half-day for all programs except Bethalto. She proposed allowing the students in that classroom to attend a full day on April 30, when a professional development afternoon is planned, and dismiss early on April 23 instead. Dr. Griffin approved the change. Mrs. Lenger will notify the transportation department, parents, and staff of the adjustment.

Region III Cooperative Seniority List

Mrs. Lenger provided the board with a copy of the cooperative's seniority list.

Alternative Assessment Assurances and Justification, February 13, 2026

Mrs. Lenger reminded the Board that the Alternative Assessment Assurances and Justification is now open. She noted that even if a district does not have any students taking the alternative assessment, the form still must be completed in IWAS this year.

FY 26 Excess Cost Application

Mrs. Lenger informed the board that the FY 26 Excess Cost Application due date was extended to March 16, 2026.

PRESS Policy Update 120, Second Reading

Mrs. Lenger presented the Press Policy 120 update for second reading. She noted that seven policies were excluded from the update because they are not part of the cooperative's policy manual. These exclusions include topics such as graduation requirements, transportation, and student fees, which are specific to the individual districts.

Region III Psychology Position

Mrs. Lenger opened a discussion with the board about the potential creation of a school psychologist position within Region III to better meet district needs. She shared salary information from neighboring districts for comparison. Based on the current salary schedule, and using the same placement level as the speech-language pathologist (Master's degree plus 32 hours due to required coursework), the proposed salary for a school psychologist would be \$63,132. She noted that this amount appears comparable to surrounding districts and may eliminate the need to develop a separate salary schedule.

The board also discussed possible billing structures if the position were shared among districts. Options included charging a daily rate, similar to the current model for shared speech-language services, or an hourly rate to allow for more flexible access. If certain districts committed to set days each week, any remaining availability could be offered to other districts. It was emphasized that the position would need sufficient district participation to remain financially sustainable.

Board members spoke about the continued demand for psychological services and acknowledged that some districts have faced staffing shortages during the year. In those situations, district staff have taken on added responsibilities, including assisting with evaluations and assessments when psychologist coverage was limited.

The conversation also highlighted the broader contributions a school psychologist can make beyond evaluations and testing, such as supporting MTSS efforts, facilitating student groups, and addressing social-emotional and behavioral needs. Board members agreed that if a qualified candidate were identified, a shared arrangement among districts could provide stability and long-term benefit, especially given ongoing staffing challenges.

Director's Evaluation

The board informed Mrs. Lenger that they are tabling her evaluation till the March 25, 2026, board meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA/ACTION ITEMS

Dr. Pat Anderson moved to approve the consent agenda, including the bills, regular board minutes, and closed session minutes. Dr. Todd Dugan seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Jill Griffin moved to approve the 2026-2027 Journeys School Calendar. Dr. Kevin Bowman seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Jill Griffin moved to approve Press Policy Update 120. Dr. Pat Anderson seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Pat Anderson moved to approve the retirement of Laurie Haselhorst, COTA, at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. Dr. Todd Dugan seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Todd Dugan moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:52 am. Dr. Kevin Bowman seconded. Motion carried with Members Voting, Aye-6, Nay-0.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting for the Region III Executive Board will be held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 10:00 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Katie Wieckhorst, Administrative Assistant



Mr. Rob Miller, Chairperson