REGION III SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE
EXECUTIVE MEETING
August 26, 2026

CALL TO ORDER
The meeting was called to order by Mr. Rob Miller at 5:09 pm. Roll Call was as follows:

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

Not in attendance:

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS: Mrs. Donna Loy, Southwestern School Board Member

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS
Training 26-27 School Year
Mrs. Lenger reported on the professional development activities held during the week prior to the start of school. She stated she was pleased with the large number of staff members who attended the various training sessions offered this year.

She stated the paraprofessional training had approximately 24 paraprofessionals in attendance, including participants from the district as well. The training was conducted by Kim Hood and provided an overview of essential topics for paraprofessionals working in the classroom. Topics included establishing clear classroom expectations, understanding the functions of behavior and appropriate responses to student behaviors, and gaining an understanding of the disabilities most commonly encountered in the classroom and what those disabilities may mean for classroom practices. Mrs. Lenger described the training as a comprehensive and valuable overview designed to help paraprofessionals effectively support students and teachers.

A teacher training was also held for all teachers. The training covered IEP information and other topics relevant to supporting students and meeting instructional needs. Additional training was provided regarding the Unique Learning System curriculum for teachers who will be utilizing the program.

Mrs. Lenger also reported that the PEAK training was very well attended, noting that the Wood River Hartford boardroom was packed. She mentioned she was very pleased with the overall training opportunities provided to staff prior to the start of the school year.

Beginning of the Year Meeting
Mrs. Lenger reported that the beginning-of-the-year meeting was held at Riverbend Family Ministries on the 11th. She stated that the meeting went very well and was a successful start to the new school year.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT
Financial
Mrs. Lenger reported that the financials will be updated at next month's board meeting to reflect expenditures incurred to date.

Personnel

Mrs. Lenger reported that all positions have been filled for the current school year with the exception of the social worker position. She stated that she will be requesting board approval of a contract with Amergis, a contract staffing agency, which has identified an in-person social worker to provide services to the district three days per week.

Mrs. Lenger explained that, while the contracted services are costly, having an in-person social worker three days per week will provide coverage for students with IEPs as well as additional time to address other student needs.

She noted that she had worked with several contract agencies in an effort to find an in-person social worker, but Amergis was the only agency able to identify a candidate.

Mrs. Lenger also reported that she had been in communication with an individual from Bunker Hill who is currently working as a counselor while pursuing a degree in school psychology. The district explored the possibility of employing her; however, the significant reduction in compensation compared to her current position with Centerstone made the transition unfeasible.

Mrs. Lenger stated she will continue her efforts to recruit and hire a full-time social worker for the following school year. The contracted social worker services will be provided at a rate of $90.00 per hour.

Current Programs

Mrs. Lenger reported that she was able to address classroom enrollment needs by restructuring several classrooms for the current school year. The co-taught classroom from the previous year, staffed by Nicky Clowers and Melissa Seldon, was divided into two classrooms. Both classrooms are housed at Lewis and Clark. The middle school classroom at East Alton was also divided into two classrooms with two teachers, which helped address student numbers.

Mrs. Lenger noted that the districts have experienced a significant number of move-ins since the beginning of the school year and have been placing new students in classrooms as they enroll. She stated the cooperative ended the previous school year with 55 students. After accounting for three students who left the program, the district began the current school year with 52 returning students and is now serving 61 students. Mrs. Lenger stated that the first eight days of school were particularly busy due to the number of new student enrollments and expressed hope that the rate of move-ins would slow.

Mrs. Lenger provided an update on enrollment in the Journeys programs. Kim Hood currently has six students, Mary Beth Paul has five students, and Val Sprague has six students. She noted that the classrooms are beginning the year at or near capacity.

Dr. Griffin asked about the number of aides assigned to the Journeys classrooms. Mrs. Lenger reported that each classroom currently has one aide and stated that staffing levels have been manageable. She noted, however, that the coordinators have expressed concern about the classroom numbers so early in the school year, particularly because several of the additional students were recent move-ins rather than students already enrolled in the district.

Mr. Miller asked whether there were currently any openings in the classrooms. Mrs. Lenger indicated that there is currently one definite opening. She explained that, depending on a student's individual needs and the district's ability to appropriately support the student, she has previously placed a seventh student in a classroom when necessary.

Mrs. Lenger also reported that she will check with the church regarding the availability of additional space, including a library area that had previously been identified as a potential overflow space. The space had experienced leaks the previous year and therefore had not been utilized. She will determine whether another suitable space is available should additional students require placement.

Regarding staffing options, Mrs. Lenger noted that Andy Allen serves as the cooperative's permanent substitute and is familiar with the program, having previously worked in the program as a paraprofessional. He currently assists in the program on Tuesdays and Fridays and also provides coverage for Kim Hood when she is out of her classroom. Mrs. Lenger stated that this may provide an additional staffing option if classroom enrollment continues to increase.

FOR DISCUSSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Resignations

Mrs. Lenger reported that she received two staff resignations shortly before the start of the school year. Brittany Rabe, who was serving as a long-term substitute at Lewis and Clark Junior High, and Laura Kimbro, a paraprofessional. Mrs. Lenger stated that both positions have since been filled.

RTO Training Requirements

Mrs. Lenger reminded the Board of the training and documentation requirements related to restraint and timeout procedures. She explained that staff members who are CPI certified, or who may utilize CPI procedures, are required to complete and document eight hours of training.

Mrs. Lenger noted that a documentation form outlining the eight-hour training requirement was shared with the coordinators. She recommended that staff complete the form to ensure the required training hours are properly documented and readily available if needed. She emphasized that this documentation is particularly important in the event of a state complaint, as the state may request verification of staff training records.

Medicaid Billing/Service Logs

Mrs. Lenger reminded the board the importance that all related service staff complete service logs in EMBRACE for all students, regardless of their current Medicaid eligibility. She explained that students may become Medicaid eligible during the school year, and maintaining complete service logs allows the district to go back and bill for eligible services provided earlier in the year.

Mrs. Lenger stated that this reminder was also shared with the coordinators to ensure that staff consistently document services for all students.

FY 27 Cyclical Monitoring

Mrs. Lenger reported that the districts are on the schedule for cyclical monitoring and have been participating in the required webinars. The second required webinar is scheduled for September, after which the districts will begin the monitoring process.

Mrs. Lenger stated that she has asked the coordinators to assemble their monitoring teams and submit the names of team members to her by September 1. She explained that the state provides limited specific guidance regarding the size and composition of the teams, but the teams should include a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, and other professionals with knowledge of the IEP process.

Mr. Miller asked about the anticipated timeline for the monitoring process. Mrs. Lenger explained that once the teams are established, they can begin reviewing policies and procedures. She stated that the districts expect to receive a list of the IEPs selected for review toward the end of September, with documentation expected to be submitted sometime in January. Mrs. Lenger indicated that she would obtain the specific dates and share them with the Board.

Mr. Miller asked whether the coordinators were aware of the required timelines. Mrs. Lenger confirmed that they are aware and are participating in the webinars to ensure they understand the process and deadlines.

Dr. Griffin asked how the districts plan to provide staff with sufficient time to complete the required monitoring activities, including whether substitute coverage may be necessary. Mrs. Lenger explained that the process may look different from district to district and that possible options include utilizing PLC days, half days, or securing substitute teachers.

Mrs. Decker reported that she had recently met with Heather Strebel to review the monitoring timeline and requirements for their district. They discussed completing the work in one full day, rather than attempting to spread the activities across multiple PLC or half-day sessions.

Press Policy Update 122, First Reading

Mrs. Lenger presented the first reading of the PRESS Policy 2022 updates. She stated that the revisions were relatively straightforward and that she did not have any questions regarding the proposed changes. The Board reviewed the updates and discussed the recommended change to the public comment time limit.

Dr. Dugan asked whether the Board had considered the recommendation to reduce the public comment period from five minutes to three minutes. Dr. Griffin noted that some larger districts with significant public participation have adopted a three-minute limit, while other districts continue to allow five minutes.

Mrs. Lenger asked whether districts were generally changing the limit to three minutes or retaining the five-minute period. Board members noted that practices vary, with some districts adopting the three-minute limit and others continuing to allow five minutes.

No further questions or concerns regarding the policy updates were raised.

Administrative and Teacher Salary Report

Mrs. Lenger provided the Board with copies of the administrative and teacher salary report for review.

FY 27 Region III Cooperative Budget, Second Reading

Mrs. Lenger presented the FY27 budget, which is divided into three primary areas: tuition, administrative, and in-service.

The tuition budget increased due to the addition of two classrooms and additional paraprofessional support. The district increased from 17 paraprofessionals in the previous school year to 23 paraprofessionals for the current school year. The FY27 tuition budget totals $3,056,029.

The administrative budget totals $371,227, and the in-service budget totals $34,311, bringing the district's total FY27 budget to $3,461,568.

Mrs. Lenger reviewed the tuition budget in greater detail and noted several additional expenses for the current school year. The district added an interpreter to support an East Alton student who came to the program from the Illinois School for the Deaf. The district also added a third speech-language pathologist who will be shared among the programs. Mrs. Lenger noted that the increase in student enrollment has helped offset some of these additional costs.

The Board also reviewed the administrative and in-service budget breakdowns by district.

Mrs. Lenger provided a comparison of the FY27 budget to the previous year's budget. The tuition budget increased by approximately 22%, while the administrative budget decreased by slightly more than 3%, and the in-service budget decreased by just under 1%. Overall, the district's FY27 budget represents an increase of more than 19% compared to the previous year.

CONSENT AGENDA/ACTION ITEMS

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

Dr. Pat Anderson moved to approve the Retirement of Certified staff, Valerie Sprague, Teacher, effective May 31, 2029 . Mrs. Kelli Decker seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Kevin Bowman moved to approve the employment of non-certified staff, Sandra Meyer, paraprofessional, Shannon Goble, paraprofessional, Brooke Barker, paraprofessional, Emmylou Pruitt, paraprofessional, Timpani Treat-Puckett, paraprofessional, Rachael Stidham-Zorger, paraprofessional, and Lauren Summitt, Sign-Language

Interpreter. 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 employment of certified staff, Ty Suhre, Special Education Teacher, Amber Sims, Special Education Teacher, and Daphne Devall, Speech Language Pathologist. Mrs. Kelli Decker seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Mrs. Kelli Decker moved to approve the closed board meeting minutes from January 2026 to June 2026 stay closed. Dr. Jill Griffin seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Todd Dugan moved to approve the Region III FY 27 Budget. Dr. Jill Griffin seconded. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Dr. Pat Anderson moved to approve the Employee Health Insurance Renewal with United Healthcare. Dr. Dugan seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

Mrs. Kelli Decker moved to approve the Contract for Social Work/Counseling Services through Amergis. Dr. Jill Griffin seconded the motion. Roll call was taken with Members Voting, Yes, 6-0. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Pat Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:38 pm. Dr. Todd Dugan 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, September 16, 2026, at 10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

K Wieckhorst

Katie Wieckhorst, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Rob Miller, Chairperson