



## **Regular Board of Education Meeting**

Educational Service Unit 7, Oak Room

2657 44th Ave

Columbus, NE 68601-8537

Monday, March 16, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Posted Locations:

- Columbus Telegram Newspaper
- Columbus Telegram Website
- ESU 7 North Building Front Door

Posted Date: 03/06/2026

Attendance Taken at 5:27 PM.

Bob Arp: Present

Joyce Baumert: Present

Amy Blaser: Present

Marni Danhauer: Present

April Emeigh: Present

Don Graff: Present

Beth Kabes: Present

Clark Lehr: Present

Dawn Lindsley: Absent

Richard Stephens: Absent

Jack Young: Present

Present: 9, Absent: 2.

Attendance Update Taken at 6:25 PM.

Dawn Lindsley: Present

Present: 10, Absent: 1.

1. Call the Meeting to Order

**LEADERSHIP • SERVICE • SUPPORT**

Notice of this meeting was given in advance according to State Law 84-1411, by giving notice of the meeting to the public on ESU 7 website [www.esu7.org](http://www.esu7.org) and posted at location of meeting. Notice of this meeting was also given in advance to all members of the Board of Education of Educational Service Unit 7. Availability of the agenda and purpose of the hearing was communicated in the advance notice of the meeting and in the notice to the members of this hearing. All proceedings of the Board of Education of Educational Service Unit 7 were taken while the convened hearing was open to the attendance of the public.

Vice President, Beth Kabes called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

1.1. Notification of Open Meetings Law

This meeting has been preceded by reasonable advance notice and is hereby declared to be in open session. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is posted in the meeting room.

1.2. Roll Call

1.3. Absent Board Members

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Board member absences.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Board member absences as presented Passed with a motion by Don Graff and a second by April Emeigh.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent  
Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

Board Members, Richard Stephens will be absent and Dawn Lindsley will be late. They notified prior to the meeting.

1.4. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Agenda

The sequence of agenda topics is subject to change at the discretion of the Board.

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the agenda as presented.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the agenda as presented Passed with a motion by Bob Arp and a second by Clark Lehr.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent

Richard Stephens: Absent

Bob Arp: Yea

Joyce Baumert: Yea

Amy Blaser: Yea

Marni Danhauer: Yea

April Emeigh: Yea

Don Graff: Yea

Beth Kabes: Yea

Clark Lehr: Yea

Jack Young: Yea

Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

3. Virtual Conferencing for December 2025-March 2026

Nebraska Revised Statute § 84-1411 authorizes virtual meetings for educational service units if the requirements of subdivision (2)(b) are met.

The Board voted to have a virtual conferencing option for the following board meetings: December 2025, January 2026, February 2026, and March 2026.

4. Welcome Visitors

5. Public Comment

The Board has the discretion to limit the amount of time set aside for public participation.

Citizens wishing to address the Board on a certain agenda item must complete the Request to be Heard Document prior to the start of the board meeting. Citizens wishing to present petitions to the Board may do so at this time. However, the Board will only receive the petitions and not act upon them or their contents.

6. **Consent Agenda**

Unless removed from the consent agenda, items identified within the consent agenda will be acted on at one time.

If any Board member wishes to discuss an item, it must be removed from the consent agenda at which time the remaining items will be acted upon.

Consent Agenda Includes:

- Minutes from the previous meeting(s)
- Presentation of the bills
- Policy review with no recommended changes
- Other routine agenda items

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the consent agenda as presented  
Passed with a motion by Marni Danhauer and a second by Jack Young.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent  
Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

6.1. Minutes

**This is a consent item.**

6.2. Presentation of Bills #81346 through #81514 totaling \$1,023,844.89

The summary of bills for the current month total: \$1,023,844.89 - Bills #81346 through #81514

General Activity Fund total: \$15.00

	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Description</b>
81352	\$20,099.20	Amergis Healthcare Staffing	Bridges contracte
81373	\$12,966.44	Eakes Office Solutions	Office remodel/co
81377	\$12,800.00	EMS Linq	Accounting softwa
81399	\$15,000.00	Guardian Spray Foam	Learning Academ
81406	\$6,500.00	Humanex Ventures	PD Leadership tra
81430	\$14,364.68	Madden Therapy LLC	Special Education
81442	\$8,500.00	Roman, Wiemer & Associates	2024-25 Audit
81448	\$6,357.40	State of NE DAS State Accounting	Network Service (

6.3. Reading of Article I, Section 2, A Board's Name and Role

**This is a consent item.**

6.4. Reading of Article I, Section 3, A Election Districts

**This is a consent item.**

6.5. Reading of Article I, Section 7, A Consultants

**This is a consent item.**

6.6. Reading of Article I, Section 7, B Legal Counsel

**This is a consent item.**

6.7. Reading of Article I, Section 8, A Membership in Association

**This is a consent item.**

6.8. Reading of Article II, Section 1, A Location of Meetings

**This is a consent item.**

6.9. Reading of Article II, Section 2, A Regular Meetings

**This is a consent item.**

6.1 Resignations

0. Olivia Bell - Speech Language Pathologist. Last day will be May 20, 2026.

**This is a consent item.**

7. Board Spotlight - Learning Academy (LA)  
Level III Programs Principal, Cara Neesen, will present the Learning Academy Spotlight. Cara Neesen gave a presentation on the Learning Academy. She noted that we do get visitors from other agencies to come and observe what we do. Districts get live data on the students' progress. Twelve students over a seven-year period have graduated from their program and transitioned back to their districts. Nine students obtained their high school diploma. The playground is very much loved by all students. The partnership with Central Community College to obtain Paraprofessionals has been a success.

What is the average length of a student in the Learning Academy? Varies depending on the student.

How do you help the student transition back to their home district? We invite the home district to the Learning Academy to learn about their schedule and the ways we help the students.

What is the capacity of students? Each classroom stays at a certain rubric percentage. Facility capacity is 40 students.

8. Treasurer's Report  
Review the breakdown of the Treasurer's Report.

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented  
Passed with a motion by Bob Arp and a second by Joyce Baumert.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent

Richard Stephens: Absent

Bob Arp: Yea

Joyce Baumert: Yea

Amy Blaser: Yea

Marni Danhauer: Yea

April Emeigh: Yea

Don Graff: Yea

Beth Kabes: Yea

Clark Lehr: Yea

Jack Young: Yea

Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

9. Facilities Update  
The Administrator will provide a facilities update during this item  
Administrator Ostmeyer gave a report on the facilities. Learning Academy installed some insulation in February. Three possible solutions to the Learning Academy high humidity issues were presented. Director Ellsworth talked through the differences of each proposal. A recommendation from our ALICAP insurance adjuster was discussed.

1 HVAC Learning Academy

0. After a review from an independent engineer (Engineered Technologies), 2 proposals have

been received from Tim Warren and Engineered Controls. This is in addition to an earlier proposal from Rutt's, which was based on their engineer's (Strategic Design) assessment. Discuss, consider, and take all action necessary to approve the proposal from Beringer Heating & Air in the amount of \$138,970. Passed with a motion by Clark Lehr and a second by Don Graff.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent  
Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

1 New Hire: Tracie Chochon, School Psychologist for 2026-2027 school year

1.

Tracie Chochon, School Psychologist for 2026-2027 school year.

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider, and take any necessary action to approve the contract for Tracie Chochon, School Psychologist for 2026-2027 school year as presented.

Discuss, consider, and take any necessary action to approve the contract for Tracie Chochon, School Psychologist for 2026-2027 school year as presented Passed with a motion by Marni Danhauer and a second by Joyce Baumert.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent  
Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

Board member asked where she is currently working. She is currently at Norfolk Public Schools.

1 Article I, Section 3, C Role of Individual Board Members

2.

Based on discussion during the February board meeting, and following consultation with ESU 7 Board Attorney, Justin Knight, the following sentence from this policy is being moved to Article I, Section 2, B Duties and Function of the Board

**The Board of ESU 7 functions only when it takes official action at a duly called meeting of the Board.**

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Article I, Section 3, C Role of Individual Board Members as presented. Passed with a motion by April Emeigh and a second by Clark Lehr.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent

Richard Stephens: Absent

Bob Arp: Yea

Joyce Baumert: Yea

Amy Blaser: Yea

Marni Danhauer: Yea

April Emeigh: Yea

Don Graff: Yea

Beth Kabes: Yea

Clark Lehr: Yea

Jack Young: Yea

Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

1 Article I, Section 2, B Duties and Function of the Board

3.

Based on discussion during the February board meeting, and following consultation with ESU 7 Board Attorney, Justin Knight, the following sentence from this policy is being moved from this policy to [Article I, Section 3, C Role of Individual Board Members](#)

**The Board of ESU 7 functions only when it takes official action at a duly called meeting of the Board.**

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Article I, Section 2, B Duties and Function of the Board as presented. Passed with a motion by Clark Lehr and a second by Bob Arp.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent

Richard Stephens: Absent

Bob Arp: Yea

Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

1 Reading of Article I, Section 6, D Line of Responsibility  
4.

On Matters Involving Special Education (non-~~Cen7ter~~/~~Learning Academy Level III Programs~~):

1. Special Education Coordinator
2. Special Education Director
3. Administrator
4. Board of Education

On Matters Involving ~~Cen7ter~~ Level III Programs:

1. Teacher
2. Student Services Principal
3. Special Education Director
4. Administrator
5. Board of Education

~~On Matters Involving Learning Academy:~~

- ~~1. Teacher~~
- ~~2. Student Services Principal~~
- ~~3. Special Education Director~~
- ~~4. Administrator~~
- ~~5. Board of Education~~

On Matters Involving ~~Production~~ Print Shop:

1. Professional Development Director
2. Administrator
3. Board of Education

**Administrator Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Article 1, Section 6, D as presented.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve Article 1, Section 6, D as presented Passed with a motion by Joyce Baumert and a second by Marni Danhauer.

Dawn Lindsley: Absent  
Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 9, Nay: 0, Absent: 2

1 ESU 7 Administrator Contract Amendment  
5.

The Board Negotiations Committee has proposed the salary amount for the ESU 7 Administrator for the 2026-2028 term as detailed in the attached contract.

The Negotiations Committee Recommends a 4.9% total package increase.

**Committee Recommendation:** Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the amended ESU 7 Administrator Contract as presented.

Discuss, consider and take all necessary action to approve the amended ESU 7 Administrator Contract as presented Passed with a motion by April Emeigh and a second by Jack Young.

Richard Stephens: Absent  
Bob Arp: Yea  
Joyce Baumert: Yea  
Amy Blaser: Yea  
Marni Danhauer: Yea  
April Emeigh: Yea  
Don Graff: Yea  
Beth Kabes: Yea  
Clark Lehr: Yea  
Dawn Lindsley: Yea  
Jack Young: Yea  
Yea: 10, Nay: 0, Absent: 1

Negotiations Chair, Don Graff shared the process.

- 1 Board Vacancy - District 8
6. Applications have not been received for the board vacancy in District 8. NEB. REV. STAT. § Section 32-574 states, "Unless otherwise provided by law, all vacancies shall be filled within forty-five days after the vacancy occurs unless good cause is shown that the requirement imposes an undue burden."

District 8 includes the following school districts, Clarkson, Columbus, David City, Lakeview, Schuyler. The term will expire December 31, 2028.

Administrator Ostmeyer shared what she has done thus far in trying to find a person to fill this vacancy.

## 1 Administrator's Report General

7.

- Spotlight Funding Revisit
- ESUCC Update
- Quarterly Report
- Professional Development and Print Shop Report - Director Ericson
- Special Education Report - Director Clay
- Technology Report - Director Ellsworth
- Upcoming Events
  - ESU 7 Board Recognition Dinner
    - **Monday, April 20, 2026 at The Oak Room of Columbus**
      - Board Meeting 4:00-5:00
      - Dinner 5:30-8:30
      - [RSVP](#) by April 6, 2026
  - 2026 Elections
    - Filing Deadlines
      - Incumbents: **July 15, 2026**
      - Non-Incumbents: **August 3, 2026**
    - These are the districts up for election in 2026
      - Richard Stephens - District 1 (Richard has chosen not to run again)
      - Amy Blaser - District 3
      - Jack Young - District 5 (Jack has chosen not to run again)
      - April Emeigh - District 7
      - Joyce Baumert - District 9 (Joyce has chosen not to run again)
      - Don Graff - District 11

Learning Academy is funded by our school districts who participate. There was no ESUCC update. Administrator Ostmeyer continues to work on her goals.

Director Ericson shared that her department has finished up our district's annual consultations. She also shared a Strategic Roadmap generated by AI. This roadmap shows

what our school districts' needs are.

Director Ericson shared that we are getting ready to pilot our new drop-off system process in our Print shop.

Director Clay shared the school's maintenance of effort process. Special Education is continuing to assess IEP's for school districts. We are waiting to hear if our special education grants will be funded for next year.

Director Ellsworth gave a report on server reconstruction. Director Ellsworth developed a server infrastructure plan to offer schools which includes maintenance and updates.

Administrator Ostmeyer reminded the Board about the Board Recognition Dinner after April's board meeting and the change in start time to 4:00 p.m.

#### 17.1. Goal Update

Goals - Attached for your Review

Goal 2: By July 2026, the ESU 7 board will attend at least two professional/personal learning events annually.

- Attached Below

Goal 3: By July 2026, the ESU 7 board will attend the corresponding school district board meetings at least once every two years to report the tailored services provided by ESU 7 and the outcomes measured.

- Completed:
  - Cross County - October 13, 2025
  - Schuyler - October 13, 2025
  - High Plains - November 10, 2025
  - Humphrey - November 10, 2025
  - Lakeview - November 10, 2025
  - Palmer - December 8, 2025
  - David City - January 14, 2026
  - Howells-Dodge - January 14, 2026
  - Shelby-Rising City - January 19, 2026
  - Leigh - February 11, 2026
  - Columbus Public Schools - February 16, 2026
  - Twin River Public Schools - February 16, 2026
  - Central City - February 16, 2026
  - St. Edward - March 9, 2026

#### 17.2. Services Update

- SMART Update

Current Matrix of planned/accessed services attached  
Administrator Ostmeyer gave a SMART Update and explained how to read the graphs.

17.3. Legislative Update

During this item, the Administrator will provide a Legislative Update to members of the Board.

[Link to Legislative Update](#)

Administrator Ostmeyer gave a legislative session update.

Administrator Ostmeyer explained how LB1219 would affect ESU's.

1 Conference Report

8. Conference Attendees will report on their learnings.

Administrator Ostmeyer and Board member, Clark Lehr, shared with the Board what they learned from the NASB's School finance and budget workshop they attended.

Board President, Dawn Lindsley and Administrator Ostmeyer attended the NRCSA Legislative conference. Board President Dawn Lindsley reminded the Board that they can reach out to our area Senators regarding legislative issues anytime.

1 Board Announcements

9.

Board Member, Bob Arp shared his experience with students on his recent trip to Africa. Board President, Dawn Lindsley noted the Board NASB standards are attached.

2 Adjournment

0. Vice President, Beth Kabes adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.