



**EAST CENTRAL CENTER FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**

**October 15, 2024**

**The board meeting of East Central Center for Exceptional Children was held on 10.15.24.**

**Members Present:** Board President, Jenna Helseth-Carrington, Janelle Helm- Carrington, Natalie Becker- New Rockford-Sheyenne, Matt Lokemoen-Kensal, Stacy Benz- Fessenden, Laura Hager- New Rockford-Sheyenne

**Zoom:** Amber Krapp- Pingree-Buchanan.

**Absent:** Jordon Brown-Oberon

**Others Present:** Ashly Wolsky- East Central Director, Melanie Quinton- East Central Business Manager, Teacher representative Mariah Weber (Zoom).

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am by Board President Mrs. Helseth, and a quorum was established.

Additions/ amendments:

A motion was made by Janelle Helm and seconded by Laura Hager to approve the September 18th, 2024, board minutes. Laura Hager asked about applied topics on the previous minutes. Director Wolsky explained she is involved with the process. She continued to discuss the goal is to use applied topics to prevent dropout and to help students graduate. With no further discussion, the motion carried.

A motion was made by Natalie Becker and seconded by Janelle Helm to approve the October 2024 Financial Report as presented. With no further discussion, the motion carried.

A motion was made by Stacy Benz and seconded by Laura Hager to approve the October 2024 bills payable. Laura Hager asked about mileage. A discussion was held regarding how mileage works with staff and their home schools. Matt Lokemon asked about the cost of Ann Carlson and how many students are currently living there and several students and locations of residential facilities were discussed, Director Wolsky noted that we are still financially responsible until age 21 no matter which school a student attends.

Natalie asked about one of the GL lines which was referring to the out of district high-cost student line. Discussion was held on the GL line "Services purchased LEA in state." With no further discussion, the motion carried.

Director Wolsky explained the 1<sup>st</sup> year teachers mentoring program and how it requires observing in the classroom. We have 2 staff who have been utilizing this program under our mentor, Megan Thompson. The program is going very well. This also means the mentor needs to take time to go to the 1<sup>st</sup> year teacher's classroom which could be during early outs or taking professional leave during regular classroom time, this would require a substitute for the mentor's classroom.

Director Wolsky attended the Directors Study Council meeting on September 18 and listened to Laura Booth give a 504 presentation. Directly Wolsky stated the Study Council meetings have transitioned to monthly. Director Wolsky submitted a question on suspension and the grey area around it. The next meeting Director Wolsky is attending in Grafton the topic of discussion will be AI. Director Wolsky will bring back the information to the next board meeting. The upcoming Regional Directors meetings are as follows: November in Mayville, December FPS, January SEEC/Fargo, February Jamestown/EC co-host, March host Statewide director's meeting in Carrington, April in Wahpeton.

Director Wolsky applied for the NDAD: Gibbens Memorial Grant for \$5,000 to offset equipment costs, and unfortunately, East Central was not granted this award this year. Director Wolsky stated that any new equipment that is needed for students who outgrow their current equipment is responsible at the district level. Director Wolsky spoke about the possibility of SEEC hosting a rental-type system for this equipment. Board President Helseth spoke on how parents sometimes qualify for updated equipment through health insurance or Medicaid. Director Wolsky stated that some students do not qualify for Medicaid and then it is up to East Central to find equipment to help these students. Director Wolsky stated that she would prefer to be able to rent equipment versus purchasing high-cost items. Laura Hager asked about the costs of these items, Director Wolsky stated the district is financially responsible. Director Wolsky will come back with more information after the next Directors' Meeting.

Director Wolsky explained about high-cost students and their length of education in a separate school was discussed. Direct Wolsky will update more information when she has it. There is a newly enrolled student that could potentially be placed in a high-cost facility. Laura Hager asked about billing, which is daily for high-cost facilities Director Wolsky explained.

Shared costs versus direct costs were discussed. Direct Wolsky presented a document explaining the differences. There is no policy on this, it is past practice how we have determined shared versus direct. Teachers and speech services are direct costs, in the past SLP's were under the negotiated agreement, but we now have to utilize outside contracted services due to the lack of available SLP's to fulfill the positions. A few years back there was a finance committee that determined this was the most fiscally responsible way to run the finances. Board President Helseth stated she was on the finance committee along with Director Wolsky and a few other board members at the time. They thought there would be changes to how things were run, but after multiple meetings and research the end dollar amount ended

up being a wash and they determined to continue following past practices on how shared and direct costs were billed. Laura Hager asked how long ago the finance committee was, Ashly stated that Nancy Bollingberg and Jill Louters were on it, so roughly 5-6 years ago.

Behavioral health funds for the 2023-24 school year allotted to East Central were around \$11K and spent on training and curriculum. Board President Helseth mentioned Behavioral Health funds and why it goes to the districts and how they are spending the funds. Director Wolsky reminded the board that grants cannot be relied on annually. For the 2024-25 school year no districts have allotted the Behavioral Health funds to EC. EC does have consistent rental income from the preschool, and a discussion was had on having other rentals. Laura Hager asked if EC takes the behavioral health then EC decides how to use it but if the district keeps the funds they decide how to spend the funds. Director Wolsky stated that we currently have a better business model now than when we have had in the past.

Board President Helseth stated dropping the social worker position ended up not being much cost-saving to each district. The transition coordinator position is also a shared cost that we get a grant to cover most of that salary. Board President Helseth talked about how we bill mills and ADM, and it ends up being an insurance policy and fairly charging each district. Director Wolsky spoke on the insurance policy type mentality of high-cost students also. Laura Hager would be interested in seeing shared costs comparable with speech. Stacey Benz asked about paras and why they are shared costs versus direct. Board President Helseth stated that it is standard to follow the high-cost students. Director Wolsky stated that the only way to cut the budget is to cut positions or lower mills. Director Wolsky also mentioned the Voc rehab grant, negotiations coming up this year, and the potential of new high-cost students are variables. Director Wolsky talked about Medicaid money and the providers doing the work of entering and billing for these services and this is where the behavioral health funds come from that go to the districts. We utilize the student contact system that includes out-of-district and high-cost facility students. In the past our Pre-K teacher, if or when additional time was available districts were able to contract services from her which was a direct bill. Our current pre-k teacher only 4 days a week and is a shared cost. The social worker position was eliminated, helping save our fund balance. Director Wolsky has secured \$328,228.62 in additional grant funds thus far as a director.

Director Wolsky discussed implementing a secure entrance and updated technology for the boardroom. Discussion was held on the safety of a secure entrance and the providers and logistics of the office. Laura Hager asked about any other options to secure the building.

Director Wolsky presented an application for a Leadership Award: Outstanding Contribution for Special Ed Administration Award, Director Wolsky stated this is a new award that is being given and board members are encouraged to apply.

Director Wolsky discussed a potential new 'Para project' opportunity for training separate from Master Teacher. If funds are available to train/pay, they will offer it to 150 paras in special education through SEEC. The paras need 20 hours of training annually to maintain this certificate. The 2 required current training for new paras are through Special Education Gurus and include new para and autism training.

Director Wolsky discussed ABLE in School a grant that East Central received in the amount of \$6,500 for the Carrington school. This grant is from Burgum Foundation and covers the costs of the curriculum (3 years), training, and travel to the upcoming ABLE Games in April 2025.

Chronic Absenteeism was discussed by Director Wolsky, case managers are encouraged to call CHINS for a referral, IEP teams should continue to discuss reasons why students are absent and continue to create plans to attempt to get student(s) in the building. Case managers should document all attempts, including parent training, keep filing truancy, send home truancy letters from school, and have access to school counselors for support.

Director Wolsky has been collecting data from statewide sources on contracted services to compile. These are the current rates EC is paying:

PT \$65-70 an hour

ACC PT \$141 an hour (used only for students with complex needs)

OT \$62.50 an hour

Speech \$85 an hour

There are a few upcoming trainings that are needed for providers and staff. Tienet training is needed for any contracted service providers, ADOS training is needed for School Psych through SEEC, and Safety Care training for local trainers.

There is a possibility that some equipment could be shared statewide. SEEC is looking into more information on this and what the legal requirements would need to be to ensure FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education).

Director Wolsky stated that MTSS Speech has been cut in a few schools due to the high speech costs. If your district is looking to cut speech costs you could cut MTSS. These students are not on IEP's. Board President Helseth talked about the principal meeting she attends, and the number one discussion was the high-cost students and speech costs. The increase in screen time for younger kids could partially be contributing to this. Also included in the board packet is the letter indicating we passed indicator 13. Director Wolsky stated that without a transition coordinator, we will not comply with indicator 13.

Congrats to our newest board member, Laura Hager and family on the arrival of baby #6: Keaton John, born 9/18 9 lbs. 1oz.

The updated East Central Comprehensive Plan, once all signatures are completed by the board of directors on the MOU (memorandum of understanding), Director Wolsky will submit it to ND DPI.

Widmer Roel Auditors will be on site at East Central October 21<sup>st</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup>. Melanie Quinton has nearly completed uploading all the required documentation.



Director Wolsky spoke on Measure 4 and encouraged everyone to vote:  
<https://www.sos.nd.gov/elections/voter/ballot-measures/measures-ballot>

Communications have been had with NRS Board Members and EC Board President. The reconciliation of direct costs for the end of Fiscal Year 2023-24 has not been received. The payment was due by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Business Manager Melanie Quinton explained that when bills are paid late past the end of the Fiscal Year it causes issues with the audit and accounts receivable. All other accounts receivable were posted in July. Melanie also noted that we have access to money in our fund balance to cover items like this. Natalie Becker stated that the check was approved at the NRS board meeting the night prior and we should receive it soon.

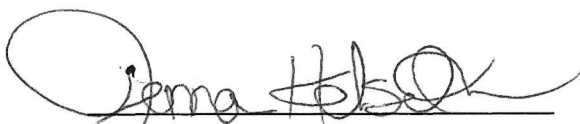
Vickie Becvar, Transition Coordinator submitted her resignation letter with plans to be done the end of the 2024-25 school year, Director Wolsky and Vickie Becvar had discussed part-time training options for her replacement. A discussion was held on the Transition Coordinator job description and wage scale. It is Director Wolsky's recommendation to post the position immediately to fill it for the 2025-26 school year. Director Wolsky discussed the need to come up with a starting wage. Board President Helseth stated she wants to thank Vickie Becvar for her 28 years of service. Director Wolsky discussed the need for a job description and salary. Stacy Benz mentioned that a lot of units go without a transition coordinator and the case managers meet the requirements. Board President Helseth stated she would not like to see the position end. Natalie Becker agrees with Stacey Benz that we do not need a transition coordinator if we do not receive the grant that covers most of the salary.

Transition Coordinator Job description example:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oPMJQ1\\_S5FEfxrqEnApStC4a3nEZRZcO3uwLZDPtO0/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oPMJQ1_S5FEfxrqEnApStC4a3nEZRZcO3uwLZDPtO0/edit?usp=sharing)

The Policy Committee meeting date: November 12, 2024, at 10:00 am.

The Next Board Meeting date: November 20, 2024, 10:00 am.

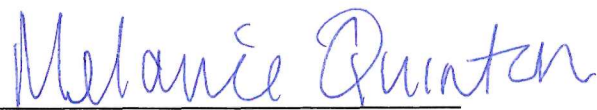
The meeting adjourned at 10:59 am



Mrs. Helseth, Board President

11-27-24

Date Approved



Melanie Quinton, Business Manager