

COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY #4

The Board of Control met on Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at CESA 4, 923 East Garland Street, West Salem. Chair Catherine Griffin called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members Present: Jim Bagniewski, Kevin Bauman, Sara Cook, Larry Cyrus, Cindy George, Catherine Griffin, Julie Meyers, Lindsay O'Hair, and Gerald Roethel

Excused: Ryan Stubrud

Absent: Micaela Conlon-Bue

Also present: Paul Fischer, Wayde Pollock and Michelle Kotek

PUBLIC INPUT

None

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Cindy George moved to approve the agenda as distributed. Jim Bagniewski seconded the motion. Motion carried.

READING AND APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 10, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

Jim Bagniewski moved to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2025 meeting. Kevin Bauman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR DECEMBER

Julie Meyers moved to approve the vouchers and financial statement for December. Larry Cyrus seconded the motion. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

BOARD DISCUSSION/INPUT ON WASB CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS FOR CESA 4 DELEGATE

The Board reviewed each of the resolutions and discussed any questions and gave their feedback to Jim Bagniewski. Based on the feedback given on each of the resolutions, the group gave Jim the discretion to vote accordingly.

APPROVAL OF RETIREMENT AND RESIGNATION

Sara Cook moved to approve the resignation of Steph Seidel effective January 19, 2026 with a penalty clause of \$1,500 for breaking personnel contract. Also the retirement request of Diane Eickmeier effective the end of her 2025-26 contract. Lindsay O'Hair seconded the motion. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL CONTRACT

Cindy George moved to approve the personnel contract for Riley Peterson, Itinerant Teacher of the Visually Impaired for the 2026-27 school year. Jim Bagniewski seconded the motion. Motion carried.

AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD – PAUL FISCHER

CESA 4 Activities and Regional News

1. I am excited to have been invited to be a part of a forum that will focus on school finance. This forum will take place in Westby on Tuesday, January 27th at 6:30 p.m. at the Performing Arts Center. This will be a public meeting that will include local district administrators and community members. The purpose of the forum is to provide non-partisan, educational information with the hope of making connections between school policy and school funding. The event is being hosted by Kickapoo Connections, which is a group of residents in Vernon and Monroe counties who get together across sectors, perspectives, and communities to address root-cause, common-ground issues that are rooted in community, not politics. It is hopeful that these type of forums and conversations will be helpful for community members to gain a better understanding around the complexity of school finance.
2. The 501(c)(3) is now in place thanks to the assistance of attorney Jessica Kirchner from the Moen, Sheehan, and Meyer Law firm in La Crosse, WI. The official title of the non-profit is the "LIFTtoFFS Learning Collaborative." The new steps that have been identified in terms of moving this work forward is to establish a board, which will consist of myself, superintendent's, and local business leaders in our region. With the status now in place, we also have begun applying for grants that can continue to support the work of our LIFTtoFFS program.
3. With the State Education convention coming up in less than two weeks, the Agency Administrators from all 12 CESA's will once again be meeting on Monday and Tuesday at the CESA 1 office in Pewaukee. We will again be joined by Dr. Underlie and her admin team from the Department of Public Instruction. There are several items on our agenda to discuss with them, but the re-organization of the Department continues to be on the forefront of our discussions. A great deal of discussion is expected to take place in regards to contracts that we as CESA's receive from the Department. They continue to not be timely in nature and at times negatively impact the operations of the CESA offices. In regards to the State Conference itself, just a reminder for those that have signed up, that we will be having the Board of Control appreciation breakfast on Wednesday, January 21st, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at the Hilton Hotel.

4. After continued evaluation of our ALPSS (alternative licensing) program, the decision has been made to set a deadline of July 1st to have a minimum of 8 candidates signed up from the licensing program for the 2026-2027 school year. If that number is not met, and down payments have not been received, we will be discontinuing the licensure program. There has been a great deal of time and effort put into the creation of the program, but we have operated in a deficit for the past 4 years. Typically, new programs at CESA 4 are given a 3-5 year window to establish a profitable program, and being that we are at the end of that window, it is time for a decision to be made in terms of the future of ALPSS. I will continue to keep you updated in terms of enrollment numbers through the spring and early summer, and then ultimately make you aware of the decision made after July 1, 2026.

State News

1. As of this writing there are 9 total candidates for the Governor's race in Wisconsin. Of those, 7 are Democrats and 2 are Republicans. A primary will be taking place this August to narrow the field down to one candidate for each party. Governor Evers will be stepping down after 12 years, making this a highly sought-after position on both sides of the aisle. As of now, Tom Tiffany appears to be the clear front runner on the Republican side, but the field is wide open on the Democratic side. There is no clear front runner on the Democratic side, but we have had some local campaigning that has taken place in our area, with Francesca Hong recently campaigning in La Crosse. Several candidates have indicated that they have goals of reaching \$40-\$50 million in funds for their campaign. There is an estimate of \$100-\$200 million expected to be spent on this year's campaign.

Cindy George approved the Administrator's Report as presented. Kevin Bauman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

ADJOURN INTO CLOSED SESSION UNDER WI STATUTE 19.85 1 [c] TO CONSIDER AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION

Julie Meyers moved to go into closed session. Jim Bagniewski seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Jim Bagniewski - aye; Kevin Bauman - aye; Micaela Conlon-Bue - absent; Sara Cook -aye; Larry Cyrus - aye; Cindy George – aye; Catherine Griffin - aye; Julie Meyers - aye; Lindsay O'Hair - aye; Gerald Roethel - aye; Ryan Stubrud - excused. Adjourned into closed session at 7:40 p.m.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION

Kevin Bauman moved to return to open session. Larry Cyrus seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Jim Bagniewski - aye; Kevin Bauman - aye; Micaela Conlon-Bue - absent; Sara Cook - aye; Larry Cyrus - aye; Cindy George – aye; Catherine Griffin - aye; Julie Meyers - aye; Lindsay O’Hair - aye; Gerald Roethel - aye; Ryan Stubrud - excused. Returned to open session at 9:25 p.m.

CRACKER BARREL

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Closed Session

Recap of WASB Convention – delegate summary

ADJOURNMENT

Julie Meyers moved the meeting adjourn. Cindy George seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at CESA 4 in West Salem.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Kotek