

**STATE BOARD OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**February 26, 2024**

State Board of Public School Education members met in the CTE 15<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at the State Capitol and via Teams on Monday, February 26, 2024. The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Sonia Meehl at 1:00 pm.

**State Board Members in Attendance:**

Chair Sonia Meehl  
Vice Chairman Mike McHugh  
Board Member Josh Johnson  
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom  
Board Member Eric Nelson  
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler

**State Board Member Present Virtually:**

Board Member Burdell Johnson

**Others in Attendance:** Allyson Hicks (Asst. States Atty), Shauna Marchus (NDDPI), Brandt Dick (Burleigh County Supt.), Luke Schaefer (CREA), Four guests were present for the Bakker Dissolution.

**Others Present Virtually:** Donna Fishbeck (NDDPI), Adam Tescher (NDDPI), Marlys Ohlhauser, Melissa Hamilton

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 22, 2024**

Mike McHugh moved to approve the minutes from the January 22, 2024 - regular meeting. Lyndsi Engstrom seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

**2. Review the record, discuss, and take action on the proposed dissolution of the Bakker Public School District #10 to Strasburg Public School District #15 in Emmons County.**

Chair Meehl read the Findings of Fact submitted by the Emmons County Reorganization Board for the Bakker Dissolution.

Allyson Hicks read the per-student valuation, section N. She noted there are no current calculations for the Bakker School district because it was nonoperating for the school year. She explained that the packet stated the number of children from the dissolving school district to be enrolled in the other school district (preschool - birth to age 3) listed three children, but based on the students that are listed in I-1, she tabulated 4. She stated that the number of school-aged students listed in the packet is 2, so that is a total of six instead of five students. She added that the adjusted per-student valuation if approved, will be \$113,623. Allyson Hicks noted a change in section P also due to the additional child, so the adjusted taxable valuation following enrolled students would be \$687,185.00 per student.

Chair Meehl noted that minutes from the county meeting that occurred on January 31, 2024, recorded that there was a motion to approve the dissolution, and it passed unanimously with a vote of 5-0.

Chair Meehl asked how long a school district can remain in nonoperating status. Allyson Hicks answered that a nonoperating school district has one year to reorganize or dissolve, per N.D.C.C. 15.1-12-24

The board members added the following relevant factors:

- 1) There was no opposition at the county hearing.
- 2) Bakker School District is in nonoperating status.
- 3) The per-student taxable valuation following the children to Strasburg is reasonable.
- 4) The Bakker district is landlocked by the South Dakota border and Missouri River, and it is fully surrounded by Strasburg on the other sides, so a dissolution or reorganization was their only option.

Mike McHugh moved to approve the dissolution of the Bakker School District based on the factors:

- 1) There was no opposition at the county hearing.
- 2) Bakker School District is in nonoperating status for one year.
- 3) The per-student taxable valuation following the children to Strasburg is reasonable.

Eric Nelson seconded the motion. No discussion.

Chair Meehl called for a vote on the motion to approve the Bakker Dissolution:

NAME	VOTE (Yes/ No)
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom	Yes
Board Member Josh Johnson	Yes
Vice Chair Mike McHugh	Yes
Board Member Eric Nelson	Yes
Board Member Burdell Johnson	Yes
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Yes
Chair Sonia Meehl	Yes

Chair Meehl noted that the motion to approve the dissolution plan passed 7-0.

- 3. Final approval of the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order for:**
  - a. Annexation of property from the Apple Creek Public School District No. 39 of Burleigh County in North Dakota to Bismarck Public School District No. 1 of Burleigh County in North Dakota. (Jacobson Appeal)**

Lyndsi Engstrom moved to approve the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order for the annexation of property from Apple Creek to Bismarck Public Schools known as the Jacobson petition. Josh Johnson seconded the motion. No discussion.

Chair Meehl called for a vote on the motion

NAME	VOTE (Yes/ No)
Vice Chair Mike McHugh	Yes
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Yes
Board Member Burdell Johnson	Yes
Board Member Josh Johnson	Yes
Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom	Yes
Board Member Eric Nelson	Yes
Chair Sonia Meehl	Yes

Chair Meehl noted that the motion to approve the Jacobson annexation appeal passed 7-0.

**4. REA Presentation: Central Regional Education Association (CREA): Luke Schaefer**

Lyndsi Engstrom declared a conflict of interest, and she was recused from voting on approving this presentation.

Luke Schaefer provided a comprehensive update on the Central Regional Education Association (CREA), highlighting its growth since its establishment in 2019, particularly in terms of their capacity. He explained that their focus is serving learners, educators, and schools. He reviewed their 57 school district members, partnerships, and collaborating members, noting the Central Regional Career and Tech Center which CREA operates. He discussed collaborating work among all seven REAs, which allows them to accomplish more. He touched on their governance structure, their organizational chart, and then emphasized their focus on professional learning, integrated student support services, and school support services. He broke down the work they do into three main service categories of strategic themes, century code requirements, and ND long-term outcomes and then he described various programs. He also reviewed CREA’s financials, including a significant grant received in 2023, which impacted revenue, but he explained that the breakdown of funding sources remained consistent with grants comprising 70% of the total budget. He addressed findings from an audit report, successes such as collaboration with the NRA were noted, as well as challenges like balancing school needs and wants. He also discussed that they are onboarding 21 new staff for a new early childhood program. He concluded with CREA's vision, which is to be the premier organization that provides leadership and is adaptable to the needs of schools and the students they educate.

Chair Meehl asked about the collaboration with other REAs and how they avoid duplication or ensure that duplication that may exist is necessary duplication. Luke Schaefer emphasized

the importance of adaptation and learning from each other in providing professional learning opportunities. He highlighted that while necessary duplication may occur, it often leads to refining approaches to better suit the needs of individual schools across the state.

Superintendent Baesler expressed gratitude for CREA’s alignment with the PK-12 Strategic Vision Framework. She commended CREA’s role in supporting school districts to understand and align with the six long-term aspirational goals.

Josh Johnson stated that of all the REA presentations, this one stood out noting its clarity in illustrating CREA’s purpose, accomplishments, and future plans. He praised the CREA’s leadership among all REAs in meeting the needs of all types of schools and commended their adaptability and foresight in anticipating the evolving needs of schools and students now and into the future.

Superintendent Baesler commented about CREA’s support to a number of TSI/CSI schools and their ability to provide effective support to these schools with long-lasting impacts affecting the school’s success. She asked if CREA is the only REA that provides a liaison for TSI/CSI schools. Luke Schaefer stated that all REAs have a liaison, but the capacity to serve schools varies.

Mike McHugh asked what the number one impact CREA has on students. Luke Schaefer answered that CREA creates opportunities anytime there is a barrier.

Chair Meehl asked if all twenty-one new staff he mentioned are for the early childhood program and how the additional staff will affect CREA’s budget. Luke Schaefer stated that all the new staff would focus on early childhood education and would address critical needs such as social work and speech pathology, which would give them the opportunity to provide services that schools are missing, which would then have the potential to generate revenue. He estimated a 12-month timeframe to reach a balanced budget. Superintendent Baesler mentioned that the US Department of Education just released expanded guidance on the ability for REAs and schools to use Title One Part A for early childhood.

Mike McHugh moved to accept the REA presentation of CREA. Eric Nelson seconded. No discussion.

Chair Meehl called for a vote on the motion.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>VOTE (Yes/ No)</b>
Superintendent Kirsten Baesler	Yes
Vice Chair Mike McHugh	Yes
Board Member Burdell Johnson	Yes
Board Member Josh Johnson	Yes
Board Member Eric Nelson	Yes

Board Member Lyndsi Engstrom	Not voting
Chair Sonia Meehl	Yes

Chair Meehl noted that the motion passed 6-0.

Chair Meehl mentioned that the handbook, which will include guidance on annexations and dissolutions, had been drafted by Allyson Hicks' office and is with Chair Meehl now for review. She added that the plan is for the counties to have training in July 2024.

Chair Meehl asked if there was anything else the board members felt they could use more training on. Eric Nelson mentioned the need for more training on the board's statutory duties regarding the REAs.

There being no other business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

Minutes taken and prepared by Shauna Marchus

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:

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Sonia Meehl  
Chairwoman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kirsten Baesler  
Executive Director & Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date