

**West Plains R-VII Board Meeting
February 17, 2026**

Opening Items - 5:00 PM

- Call to Order by President Cindy Tyree
- Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum by President Cindy Tyree
- Approval of Agenda - Approved 7-0
- Motion to enter into Closed Session - Approved 7-0

Closed Executive Session - 5:00 PM

- Adjournment to Closed Executive Session
 - Pursuant to Section 610.021.1 Legal MattersPursuant to Section 610.021.2 Leasing, purchase, or sale of real estate
 - Pursuant to Section 610.021.3 Personnel Matters
 - The following administrators were approved for the 2026-2027 school year - Approved 7-0
 - Josh Cotter - SMTI Director
 - Michael Davis - ZPA Director
 - Colton Hensley - WPHS AP
 - Seth Huddleston - SFES - Principal
 - Katie Jones - WPES AP
 - Sarah Land - WPES Principal
 - Lynn Maguffee - Director of Literacy
 - Amy Marshall - WPMS Principal
 - Donnie Miller - Director of Transportation/A+
 - Matthew Orchard - Deputy Superintendent
 - Amy Ross - Assistant Superintendent
 - Melissa Rutledge - WPES AP
 - Ryan Smith - WPHS Principal
 - Brandon Somoza - WPHS AP
 - Virginia Uphaus - Director of Operations
 - Erica Walker - WPMS AP
 - Tiffany Young - Director of Teaching and Learning
 - Ashley Cooley was approved for the 2026-2027 school year as the Activities Director - Approved 6-0-1 (CT abstained)
 - Pursuant to Section 610.021.6 Student Matters
 - Pursuant to Section 610.021.17 Security Operations
 - Motion to return to Open Session - Approved 7-0

Open Session - 5:30 PM

- Call to Order by President Cindy Tyree
- Pledge of Allegiance led by President Cindy Tyree

Student/Staff Spotlight

- Zizzer Pride Academy - Michael Davis
 - Mr. Michael Davis highlighted his staff, expressing appreciation for their dedication and hard work. He shared a video celebrating December graduates and how each student gets to put their hand print on the wall when they graduate. Brooklynn Houston was the guest speaker for ZPA, who completed the Missouri Options Program. Brooklyn read her final essay for the program, describing how ZPA positively impacted her life.



Consent Agenda - Approved 7-0

- Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting(s)
- Approval of Monthly Finance Reports
- Approval Request for employments, resignations, retirements, terminations, transfers, and volunteers of individuals as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools
 - **New Hires – Board Action Required**
 - Certified Positions
 - None at this time
 - Non-Certified Positions
 - None at this time

- **Transfers – Board Action Required**
 - Amy Marshall - WPES Asst. Principal to WPMS Principal
 - Melissa Rutledge - Secondary Instructional Coach to WPES Asst. Principal
 - Katie Jones - WPES 3rd Grade Teacher to WPES Asst. Principal
- **Volunteers - Board Action Required**
 - None at this time
- **Resignations – Board Action Required**
 - Amy Marshall - WPHS Head Girls Softball Coach
 - Steven Crask - WPMS Assistant Principal
 - Hannah Collins - WPHS/WPMS English Teacher
- **Retirements - Board Action Required**
 - None at this time
- **Terminations - Board Action Required**
 - None at this time
- Approval of Program Evaluation(s)
- Approval of CSIP Update(s)

Previous Business

- None at this time

Regular Agenda

- Payment of Bills - Approved 7-0

New Business

- Approve MSBA 25E Board Policy Update - Approved 7-0

Updates & Reports to the Board

- Student School Board Member Report - McKrae Brewer
 - McKrae reported strong student engagement during Midwinter festivities, noting an increase of approximately 70 students attending the Midwinter Dance compared to last year. She also highlighted the school's first-ever Midwinter Assembly, which was entirely student-led. The assembly recognized winter sports teams, court members, and featured a Special Olympics game. The event was very well received, with positive feedback and enthusiasm from the student body.
- Administrative Reports
 - Amy Ross - Special Ed/Federal Programs
 - Dr. Amy Ross shared updates related to Special Olympics programming. A Unified Sports Intrasquad Scrimmage is scheduled for February 24 during the home boys basketball game. The district has also been awarded the Show Me Excellence Banner for its Special Olympics efforts, which will be formally presented at the February 24 game. Additionally, the district has received an invitation to participate in an upcoming Special Olympics game hosted by Mountain Grove.

- Briana Link - Communications
 - Briana Link reported ongoing updates to the district website, including maintenance of the staff directory and an updated alumni page. She also shared that the two-way chat training on the new app has been completed in collaboration with Mr. Hufstedler. The next step will be training one representative from each building on how to use the feature.
- Joby Steele - WPMS
 - Dr. Joby Steele reported that WPMS is now at a 38-day countdown until 8th grade students take the MAP assessment and 42 days countdown for the other grades. He also highlighted recent school celebrations, including the EZPYS Awards, recognizing major student award winners and achievements.
- Josh Cotter - SMTI
 - Dr. Josh Cotter reported that SomoTech recently hosted three tours from sending schools. Students also competed at the SkillsUSA district competitions. Additionally, the culinary program will compete on Friday, marking its first competition appearance in several years; they are hoping for good results.
- Matthew Orchard - Facilities/Human Resources
 - Mr. Matthew Orchard reported that the after-school meal program served 807 meals during the month of January. He also shared that on February 6, the district published an RFQ for employee benefits insurance as part of the review and renewal process.
- Michael Davis - ZPA
 - Mr. Michael Davis reported that three students have completed the Missouri Options Program since the last board meeting. He also shared that Mrs. Dietrich recently took students to the Red Carpet Days at Missouri State University–West Plains, and several students are now considering enrolling there.
- Ryan Smith - WPHS
 - Mr. Ryan Smith reported a strong turnout for the Midwinter Dance, noting that students greatly enjoyed the event. He also shared that Scheduling Night was held last Thursday and was successful in engaging parents in the course selection process. In addition, the counseling office met with students to review scheduling requirements and discuss the courses they need to take for the upcoming school year.
- Virginia Uphaus - WPES
 - Mrs. Virginia Uphaus highlighted that WPES fourth-grade student leaders recently attended the Noon Rotary meeting, where they had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership skills they have learned this year. Following the

meeting, the students enjoyed a celebratory visit to McDonald's. She also welcomed Mrs. Land, who was in attendance with her at the meeting.

- Superintendent's Report

- Legislative Update - Dr. Davis gave a brief overview of some current legislative updates. He highlighted the following topics and he cautioned that many things will change between now and the end of the legislative session in May.

- State and MSHSAA Governing Board - A lot of discussion about a "state governing board" to oversee MSHSAA. This is causing a lot of concern among athletic directors in the state.
- "Grading" districts and schools - This could be a change from the current APR format in which schools and districts could be graded on a letter grade and not on a point system.
- All school elections must be held in November - Much debate is taking place concerning school elections, (both board members and tax initiatives), and could all be moved to the November ballot only.

- Finance Update

- 2025-2026 Budget

- YTD Budget 2.17.26

- Total Revenues - \$23,684,088 - 67.67% of budget
 - Total Expenditures - \$20,385,687 - 58.35% of budget

- 2026-27 Budget Planning - Dr. Davis mentioned that Mr. Orchard had sent out an RFQ to four different health insurance groups looking for future health insurance options. (Please see more info below concerning health insurance).

Dr. Davis reminded the board that over the last three school years, 13 positions across the district had been reduced and/or eliminated. He said that with the upcoming financial issues facing the state; this trend unfortunately needs to continue. He also mentioned that declining enrollment needs to be considered in staffing across the district. He remarked that staffing needs to be based on current enrollment figures and not based on enrollment history as the district moves into a more difficult financial time in the near future. He told the school board that he does not see a need to fill several positions—including teaching, non-certified, administrative, and extra-duty roles—when they become available.

- Health Insurance - The majority of the Superintendent report focused on the district's current employee health insurance provider - MEUHP. The district has utilized this group for many years. Dr. Davis mentioned that the district had a state wide meeting last Thursday with 50+ school districts. It was discussed at the meeting that the MEUHP group is in severe financial distress. In the past,

the MEUHP group has required “assessments” of districts when this has happened. This has ranged from \$188,00 to \$250,000 for West Plains. Over the last few years, the size of the group has dwindled from 110+ school districts to less than half that number. Now the MEUHP group is looking at dissolving completely. The big issue is that a large assessment is being placed on the current districts to pay for claims that will need to be paid after the MEUHP dissolves; Dr. Davis told the school board that this amount is about \$750,000 for our district alone. He also told the board that all current MEUHP districts are required to pay three months of premiums; for West Plains that is roughly \$750,000 and would be due around June 30th. He mentioned that he expects several legal challenges, but that it is actually part of the contract that the districts have signed for years. He told the board that he is thankful that West Plains has adequate reserves, but this is a major hit to the district’s finances and future budgeting. He commented that this is a very large unplanned and unbudgeted expense.

Adjournment

- The board voted to return to Closed Session for personnel reasons Approved 7-0
- The board voted to adjourn at 6:41 pm - Approved 7-0
- Next Meeting - March 10, 2026 - Early because of Spring Break