

Southwest Arkansas Education Cooperative Board's Minutes

March 19, 2026

Schools Present: Prescott, Lafayette, Nevada, Texarkana Proxy - Demarcus Green, Genoa Proxy - Brock Dickinson, Spring Hill Proxy - Peter Maggio, Hope Proxy - Jocelyn Wiley

Schools Not Present: Fouke, Blevins

Co-op Staff Present: Phoebe Bailey, Gina Perkins, David Hampton

Guests Present: John Ashworth, Virtual AR

The meeting was called to order by Phoebe Bailey.

Jon Estes made a motion to approve the minutes from February. Larry Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Jon Estes made a motion to approve the financial and expenditure reports from February. The motion was seconded by Peter Maggio. The motion was approved.

Virtual Arkansas - John Ashworth spoke about the Virtual Arkansas annual report that was shared across the state. The annual report includes each cooperative area and their enrollment numbers. He emphasized the importance of the program being embedded into each co-op and the cost saving benefits. He shared the website link and where to find the most needed information, including the course catalog.

Data Report - Ms. Bailey presented ATLAS Interim data from fall to winter for each district. Superintendents then participated in a review activity, analyzing performance by level and grade, including areas of growth and decline, to better understand district progress and support preparation for the upcoming assessment.

Teacher Center Updates - Monica Morris

There is a zoom over Accelerated Learning today at 1:00. Everyone is encouraged to join.

International Exchange Students can be exempt from state accountability. Districts must fill out the google form by March 31 to claim the exemption. The form link has been shared with all superintendents.

Tess Credential Training will be required by the 2027-28 school year. The co-op is hosting this training July 21-23. Registration will be through NIET.

LEADS credential training will also be required for superintendents.

Mrs. Morris reminded everyone that the Nimble job board is available to assist in hiring teachers.

The summer workshop spreadsheet is available to see all workshops during the summer. It changes daily and workshops are still being added. This summer will be a little different, as the co-op is doing more on-site training for each school district.

Teen Suicide Awareness and Prevention is the required course for this year. There is a course on AR IDEAS and a workshop will also be held at the co-op as well on July 21st.

Tier 1 will be held at the co-op this summer, the tentative date is June 10th.

HQIM Coaching training will be held at the co-op on June 16th for new building principals. Great Minds Coaching will provide this training. Superintendents are invited to attend as well.

SLOP training for EL teachers will be held June 16-18. The focus will be K-2 Vocabulary.

An ARAPP work session will be March 31st. There will be a short presentation over the next module and then the work session with each team in the new portal.

Director Updates - Phoebe Bailey

Paper Bid - The co-op will begin the annual copy paper bid. Ms. Bailey shared an order sheet along with each district's previous years order amounts. The order forms should be turned in by April 16th.

SWAEC Calendar Approval - Ms. Bailey shared the proposed SWAEC Calendar for the 2026/27 school year. Peter Maggio made a motion to amend the calendar to add two paid holidays to coincide with Thanksgiving break – The Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Larry Smith seconded the motion. The motion to approve the calendar was unanimously approved as amended.

Program MOUs for 2026/27 School Year - Ms. Bailey shared a form showing a list of the consortium agreements that the Co-op has to offer. The superintendents were asked to pick the services they need for the upcoming year. The form needs to be returned to Ms. Bailey.

Federal/State Updates

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit lifted a preliminary injunction on a Louisiana law requiring the display of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms, allowing implementation to move forward while legal challenges may continue. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education issued new guidance encouraging the use of Title II-A funds to support “strategic staffing” models, including team-based teaching approaches, professional development for school leaders, differential pay for educators in specialized roles, and efforts to strengthen teacher pipelines.

Student achievement recovery remains uneven following the pandemic. A recent NWEA report indicates that approximately one-third of schools have recovered in either math or reading, but significantly fewer have made gains in both areas, underscoring the need for continued targeted support and planning at the local level.

Finally, districts are reminded of upcoming federal compliance requirements related to equitable services for private school students and educators. Under ESSA and IDEA, districts must submit the required Affirmation of Consultation documentation to the AR App Platform by June 30, 2026.

Personnel - Ms. Bailey recommends hiring Mavis Patillo as ESVI Specialist for SWAEC starting July 1. Peter Maggio made a motion to approve the change in position for Melanie Birthright to ESVI Director and to hire Mavis Patillo. Larry Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The next meeting will be April 16th at Southwest Co-op.

With no further business, a motion was made by Jon Estes to adjourn. Peter Maggio seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.