

Southwest Arkansas Education Cooperative Board's Minutes
October 22, 2025 held at Genoa Central School District Administration Building

Schools Present: Hope, Texarkana, Genoa, Nevada, Spring Hill Proxy-Peter Maggio

Schools Not Present: Blevins, Fouke, Lafayette, Prescott

Co-op Staff Present: Phoebe Bailey, Monica Morris, Gina Perkins, Jenny Smead

Guest Present: Tim Cain-DESE Director of Facilities and Transportation

The meeting was called to order by Jonathan Crossley.

Lloyd Jackson made a motion to approve the minutes from September. Peter Maggio seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Peter Maggio made a motion to approve the financial and expenditure reports from September. The motion was seconded by Lloyd Jackson. The motion was approved.

Genoa School District Presentation- Bradley Wright invited a student from each grade level, second through twelfth, to briefly share what it means to them to be a Genoa Dragon. Each student offered a unique perspective, reflecting their individual experiences and strong sense of community.

DESE- Tim Cain, who oversees facility and transportation programs for Arkansas public schools, emphasized the importance of providing proof when requesting replacements or improvements. He noted that having clear documentation strengthens the case for facility or transportation upgrades. Additionally, submitting project applications early is beneficial because it allows the Division to review the request and provide feedback. This early feedback gives schools time to correct or improve any criteria that may not initially meet the requirements.

Personnel- Ms. Bailey asked that we accept the resignation of Rashawnda Young as ECH Teacher. A motion to accept the resignation was made by Peter Maggio and seconded by Roy McCoy. The motion was approved.

AEPA- The Natural State Purchasing Cooperative (NSPC) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for floor covering, related supplies, and services. Notice of the RFP was shared via social media, the SWAEC website, the NSPC website, and advertised twice in both the Texarkana Gazette and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. The deadline for submissions was October 20 at 1:00 p.m. All proposals were evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the RFP and provided by the vendors. At this time, NSPC recommends awarding contracts to Floors and More, Inc. and Williams Commercial Painting & Performance Floor Covering. Lloyd Jackson made a motion to approve the two recommended vendors. The motion was seconded by Bradley Wright and approved by the board.

ArPEP Data Session- Ms. Morris presented a data breakdown related to the ArPEP program, which included the number of participants from each district and the subject areas in which they are currently licensed. She also provided a brief overview of two recent state reviews—one focusing on the Science of Reading and the other on the ArPEP program itself. Ms. Morris discussed areas identified for improvement moving forward.

Teacher Center Updates- Monica Morris

Third Grade Promotion- Ms. Morris linked a promotion timeline calendar in her notes. She also linked a slide show that includes information such as Identifying at-risk students before third grade, good cause exemption, and services for students not meeting the third grade reading standard.

Assessment- There will be two sessions held at SWAEC on November 18th focused on understanding the calculation of school letter grades and exploring strategies for improvement moving forward.

Educator Effectiveness and Licensure- The Science of Reading will be available on the EES Dashboard soon. Superintendents will receive an email once the upload is complete along with a quick presentation explaining the dashboard.

Master/Lead Educator- Lead Cohort 1 started on October 14. Master Cohort 1 will start in December. Ms. Morris has sent information out to the principals. There are 12 spots available.

Beginning Principal Mentoring- Ms. Morris linked upcoming workshops for this in her notes. She said you do not have to be a new principal to attend these.

Ms. Morris also listed several upcoming professional development opportunities coming up. You can always see an updated list on the SWAEC website.

Director Updates- Phoebe Bailey

According to an article in Education Week there is push back on the \$100,000 fee for H1B visas for overseas teachers. Education organizations and lawmakers from both major parties have raised concerns about how the new fee will affect teacher staffing.

Ms. Bailey stated the co-op directors met last week and were able to hear Secretary Olivia discuss the Federal government shutdown and the impact on education. They do not anticipate laws going away such as IDEA or ESSA. ArAPP will be a central part of any waiver request the state submits to show how we have a centralized process. The Special Education office may be moving to another department and out of DoE.

The more significant financial change involves an update to the daily reimbursement rates for providers serving children in the program. Currently, rates vary based on both the child's age and the quality rating of the provider. However, beginning November 1, reimbursement rates will still differ for infants, toddlers, pre-K, and school-aged children, but each age group's rate will be flat—no longer adjusted based on provider quality ratings. The Department of Education provides additional information on its website regarding the income-based sliding scale, along with a copay calculator for parents to estimate their costs.

SWAEC is currently preparing a submission for a four-year SBMH grant. If awarded, the grant would allow us to rehire our seven specialists and add one additional staff member. It would continue to support teletherapy services for staff and parents, as well as the mental health video series we currently offer. In addition, we have partnered with STOPit to ensure the HELPme app remains available through the end of the 2025–26 school year, regardless of whether the grant is funded. Ms. Bailey plans to submit the application on Friday, October 24. If you have not yet submitted your letter of support, please do so as soon as possible.

Ms. Bailey also highlighted two of our AEPA vendors. Lakeshore currently has two approved contracts- one for furniture and one for supplies. The other is Tremco Roofing & Building Maintenance.

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