

Board of Directors Board Meeting Minutes



March 10, 2026

BOARD MEETING

Ms. Liz Brennan, board president, called the Heartland AEA Board of Directors meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

Board Members Present: Ms. Liz Brennan, Mr. Shawn Holloway, Mr. Kasey Huebner, Mr. Mark Lane, Ms. Tiara Mays-Sims, Ms. Mary Poulter, Ms. Heather Sievers and Ms. Margie Schwenk.

Heartland AEA Administrative Staff Present: Mr. Kevin Fangman, Chief Human Resources Officer; Ms. Valerie Hubert, Executive Assistant; Dr. Susie Meade, Chief Academic Officer; Ms. Jenny Ugolini, Executive Assistant/Board Secretary; Dr. Kristi Upah, Chief Student Services Officer; Dr. Cindy Yelick, Chief Administrator; and Mr. Brian Whalen, Director of Business Services.

Approval of Agenda

A MOTION was made by Mr. Huebner and seconded by Ms. Sievers to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from Feb. 10 and 26, 2026

A MOTION was made by Ms. Poulter and seconded by Mr. Lane to approve the minutes from Feb. 10 and 26, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Forum & Correspondence

No one from the public was present to address the Board.

Discussion Items

Iowa Dept. of Education AEA Desk Audit

Dr. Yelick shared that Heartland AEA was fully accredited in 2024 for five years. She discussed the Iowa Department of Education's desk audit, which occurs annually as a follow-up to the full accreditation. She discussed the process, including the areas of review and artifact submission. A summary report will be sent by the DE later this month, with a presentation to the State Board of Education on April 16.

Legislative Update

Dr. Yelick provided a brief update on the current legislative session.

- School Supplemental Aid was passed at 2% and signed by the Governor. This includes language stating that school districts will receive their state aid payments quarterly rather than over 10 months. The Agency will monitor how this will impact its future billing cycle.
- Senate Bill 2402, related to the creation of two pilot behavior centers, was amended. Language that said the centers would be funded with AEA special education dollars was removed.

Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding Contract

Dr. Yelick shared that language was added to the Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding contract. It includes specific language that the district would flow its special education funds to Heartland AEA, which creates a safety net for the Agency. The Spirit Lake CSD school board approved the contract on March 9.

Heartland AEA Tentative Agreement with the Heartland Education Association for 2026-27

Mr. Fangman and Mr. Whalen shared that the HEA Tentative Agreement was voted on by the association yesterday. The total package increase is 3.16% (base salary at 3%) at a cost of approximately \$1.6 million. Following board approval, the Agency will issue contracts to Certified staff next week.

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Action Items

Heartland AEA Tentative Agreement with the Heartland Education Association for 2026-27

A MOTION was made by Mr. Holloway and seconded by Ms. Sievers to approve the Heartland AEA Tentative Agreement with the Heartland Education Association for 2026-27. The motion passed unanimously.

Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding Contract

A MOTION was made by Mr. Huebner and seconded by Mr. Lane to approve the Spirit Lake CSD and Heartland AEA Transfer of State Funding Contract. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda

Dr. Yelick noted that, as a practice, board members can recuse themselves from voting on contracts that present a conflict of interest. The Norwalk CSD Master Service Agreement (cybersecurity) was pulled from the consent agenda and was voted on as a separate action item.

Mr. Whalen shared the financial report, noting the balances of the Agency's self-insurance plan. Claims are down and trending better. Prescription refunds will be issued in June, which will improve the balance. A MOTION was made by Ms. Sievers and seconded by Ms. Schwenk to approve the consent agenda, *excluding* the Norwalk CSD Master Service Agreement (Cybersecurity), and including payment of warrant numbers 423519 and 423613 and electronic warrant numbers 56959 through 57312. The motion passed unanimously.

- Personnel Report and Addendum
- Board Financial Reports
- 2025-26 Agreement for Jt. Exercise of Governmental Powers Pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 28E between the Des Moines Independent School District and Heartland AEA (Title I Students in Ellipsis)

A MOTION was made by Mr. Lane and seconded by Mr. Huebner to approve the Norwalk CSD Master Service Agreement (Cybersecurity). Ayes: Brennan, Lane, Huebner, Mays-Sims, Poulter, Schwenk and Sievers. Recused: Holloway. Nays: None. The motion passed.

Chief Administrator Comments

- The Agency has posted two new Service for Fee positions, which is good news. It means districts are purchasing more services.
- Des Moines Public Schools has requested quotes for coaches to provide special education training. The Agency would provide training for staff who are parallel to Heartland AEA special education staff, such as school social workers, school psychologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists. We have the capacity, and it would enhance practice in Des Moines, thereby improving outcomes for kids. A contract may be brought to the April board meeting.
- As a reminder, Dr. Yelick and Mr. Whalen will be attending the State Board of Education meeting on March 13 to review the Agency's FY2027 Budget Report.

Board Comments

- Ms. Brennan is attending the COSSBA national convention this week in Louisville, KY, on behalf of the Iowa Association of School Boards.
- The Agency purchased the Simbli board management software in February. The Board will transition to using the new program at the April board meeting.

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Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Huebner and seconded by Ms. Schwenk to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Reports and documents and the full text of motions, resolutions or policies considered by the Board at this meeting are on file in the Board Secretary's office, (515) 473-6644, Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Brennan".

Ms. Liz Brennan
Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Ugolini".

Ms. Jenny Ugolini
Board Secretary