

Executive Board

President

Dale McDaniel, CRESD 113

President Elect

June Sine NEWESD 101

Members

June Sine NEWESD 101

James Sebree ESD 105

Darlene Stickel ESD 112

Dale McDaniel CRESD 113

Ann Byrnes OESD 114

Mehret

Tekle-Awarun PSESD 121

Terry Brandon ESD 123

Marcia Henkle NCESD 171

Merle Kirkley NWESD 189

Superintendents

Rob Roettger NEWESD 101

Shane Backlund ESD 105

Tim Merlino ESD 112

Flip Herndon ESD 113

Aaron Leavell OESD 114

Gustavo Balderas PSESD 121

Steve McCullough ESD 123

Michelle Price NCESD 171

Ismael "Ish"

Vivanco NWESD 189

AESD Staff

Jessica Vavrus, Exec. Director

Melissa Gombosky, Legislative

Liaison

Shayna Burmeister, Assistant

9:30am

Welcome

Lead: President, Dale McDaniel

Welcome, Introductions, [Pledge of Allegiance](#), Review of agenda

I. Consent Agenda

Lead: Dale McDaniel

For Reference: [3/10/26 meeting minutes \(draft\)](#) | [Today's Meeting Materials](#)

President McDaniel welcomed the group and invited introductions around the table. President McDaniel then led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and reviewed the agenda.

President McDaniel invited review and comment on the March 10, 2026 meeting minutes and the June 9, 2026 Consent Agenda and called for a motion to approve. Marcia Henkle moved to approve the meeting minutes and Consent Agenda. James Sebree seconded the motion. The March 10, 2026 meeting minutes and the June 9, 2026 Consent Agenda were adopted.

II. AESD Annual Conference Reflections & Forward Planning

a. 2026 Conference Debrief & Final Actions

Lead: Aaron Leavell, Ann Byrnes, Jessica Vavrus

Review & Discussion: [conference reflections](#) | [final budget/registration snapshot](#)

Action: review/adoption of [Draft 2026 Business Meeting Minutes](#)

AESD Executive Director Jessica Vavrus reviewed the 2026 Annual Conference Reflections, noting that the intent of the feedback summary is to communicate: we heard you, these are the themes we heard, and this is what will guide us moving forward.

The Executive Board reviewed feedback from the 2026 AESD Annual Conference, which included 83 responses. Discussion focused on opportunities to strengthen future conferences, including later morning start times, increased board-to-board networking, content specifically relevant to ESD boards, greater transparency and understanding of AESD's role and network value, and more streamlined and interactive breakout sessions. Additional considerations included continuing to incorporate student voice and host-region learning opportunities, creating greater cohesion around the conference theme and practical takeaways, and maintaining a high-quality venue experience while improving communication and logistics related to travel, parking, AV, and lodging proximity. The feedback will help inform planning and priorities for future AESD Annual Conferences.

Dale McDaniel led a discussion regarding Annual Conference location, attendance, and participants leaving prior to the conclusion of the conference. Because the conference location rotates based on the host ESD, travel distance and logistics can vary significantly from year to year.

The 2026 location presented additional challenges for some attendees due to travel distance, flight schedules, and driving time.

It was noted that the 2027 Annual Conference will be held in one of the more centrally located areas within the rotation. Discussion emphasized, however, that location alone does not address the broader concern regarding the level of importance and commitment placed on the Annual Conference.

The Executive Board reaffirmed its commitment to holding the AESD Annual Conference annually, with the primary purpose of providing board member education, opportunities for networking across ESDs, and a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences among regions. The Board also discussed the importance of consistent participation and engagement throughout the full conference.

b. 2027 Conference Update, Input, & Actions`

Lead: Shane Backlund

For reference: [Dates & promo video](#) | [proposed conference theme and logo](#)

Superintendent Shane Backlund shared initial ideas for the 2027 Annual Conference theme, logo, and tagline. He explained that the concepts reflect the ESD 105 Board's perspective on the region, including the local landscape and imagery, and are intended to connect closely with the character of the host region and the conference venue.

The Executive Board discussed the proposed direction and provided input to help guide continued development of the 2027 conference theme and branding.

Jessica Vavrus shared the conference design and planning team will include two to three representatives from the host ESD 105, one representative from the 2028 host ESD 189, AESD President Dale McDaniel, and one representative from an additional ESD.

c. AESD Membership Survey & Input: Conference Feedback & Considerations

Lead: Dale McDaniel, Jessica Vavrus

Overview of feedback received to set the stage for a future-planning discussion at the September meeting.

Review for Discussion in September:

[Spring '26 Membership Survey Results Summary](#)

[NEWESD 101 Board Letter](#)

The Executive Board reviewed results of the 2026 AESD Membership Survey, which reflected strong value in board member learning, networking across ESDs, and content related to ESD governance, legislative and policy issues, and the AESD Network.

Board members discussed the importance of maintaining opportunities for new and experienced board members to learn from one another, while also considering concerns related to conference cost, accessibility, and fiscal stewardship. The Executive Board also reviewed input from the NEWESD 101 Board regarding alternative conference structures, and Dale McDaniel expressed appreciation for their willingness to share those concerns.

Following discussion, the Executive Board recommended continuing to adjust the Annual Conference budget annually, as has been done over the past three years, recognizing that location and cost are closely connected. Jessica Vavrus noted that conference venues typically must be contracted 18–24

months in advance to secure appropriate meeting and lodging space. Further discussion will occur at the September Executive Board meeting regarding development of a five-year Annual Conference plan, including projected venue quotes and costs, as well as administrative and staff registration fees.

II. Association Business

a. Proposed 2026/27 Executive Board Meeting Schedule

Lead: Jessica Vavrus

For review & reference: [Proposed 2026/27 AESD Schedule w/ Executive Board meetings.](#)

Jessica Vavrus reviewed the proposed 2026–27 Executive Board meeting schedule, noting that it was developed using the same general structure and coordination with other AESD/WSIPC leadership meetings and key statewide events as in prior years. James Sebree moved to approve the 2026–27 Executive Board meeting schedule. Marcia Henkle seconded the motion. The 2026-27 Executive Board and Leadership Meeting Schedule were approved.

b. AESD Awareness-Building

Lead: Dale McDaniel

The Executive Board discussed *The Bridge*, AESD’s monthly newsletter distributed to ESD board members, superintendents, and executive staff. Dale McDaniel shared that each month a board member from one ESD is highlighted to help members get to know one another beyond their formal roles, including personal interests, hidden talents, career backgrounds, and other points of connection.

The intent is to encourage greater interaction among peers, strengthen relationships across ESDs, and reinforce that individual board members are part of a larger statewide network. The Board also discussed additional ways to increase visibility of AESD work with members, including opportunities to strengthen communication, connection, and Executive Board participation, as well as the potential use of alternates when needed.

III. ESD Hot Topics, Updates, & Top of Mind Discussion

Lead: Dale McDaniel / All

This time is for Executive Board members and ESD superintendents to elevate important topics of interest and relevance for group learning and discussion.

a. Financial Health Updates – ESDs & Districts

The Executive Board discussed the financial health of ESDs and school districts across the state, including updates regarding districts experiencing financial challenges. Members shared regional perspectives and discussed ways ESDs are supporting districts through financial planning, technical assistance, and other regional services.

b. District Updates

The Executive Board shared updates regarding significant district-level matters across the state, including ongoing legal proceedings and leadership transitions. Discussion focused on emerging regional trends and issues that may have broader implications for ESDs and the districts they serve.

IV. State Legislative Updates & AESD Legislative Priorities

Lead: Melissa Gombosky (virtual)

For Reference: [25/27 Final Budget Items – AESD Topics](#) | [SLIDE DECK](#)

Melissa Gombosky provided a legislative update, including an overview of the current political and budget

environment and anticipated issues heading into the 2027 legislative session. She noted continued pressure on the state budget, including direction for agencies to identify potential reductions.

AESD legislative priorities include support for mathematics instruction for students and teachers, protection against reductions to ESD funding, and support for school district concerns related to tort reform and rising insurance costs. Broader K–12 priorities are expected to include MSOC, special education, transportation, substitute costs, LEA restoration, and levy lid increases.

The group also discussed potential issues to monitor, including school consolidation, reductions outside of basic education, and administrative salary caps. AESD superintendents will continue engaging with the Governor’s staff and individual lawmakers during the interim and supporting school districts with their legislative priorities.

V. Good of the Order & Adjourn w/ Boxed Lunches

Lead: Dale McDaniel / All

Dale McDaniel recognized the work of the ESD 113 Communications Team, noting their recent national recognition and receipt of 17 national awards for their communications work.

Upcoming: Dale McDaniel noted that the next Executive Board meeting will be held in September and wished everyone a great summer.

President McDaniel adjourned the meeting at 11:23 am