
Career Educational Advisory Council (CEAC)
Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2026

CALL TO ORDER: Committee Chair, Tim Staffen, called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007.

MEMBERS PRESENT

James Berry (SJC ISD/CTE)	Sue Quiter (BACC) ^V	
Cindy Goss (KRESA/CTE)	Dustin Scharer (BACC/CTE) ^V	
Lori Henrickson (MISTEM)	Jim Sertic (PS) ^V	^V Attended virtual
Sarah Mansberger (KRESA) ^V	Tim Staffen (CISD/CTE)	
David Maurer (PS) ^V		

STAFF PRESENT

Debbie Horn (MWSW)
Ashley Iovieno (MWSW)

OTHERS PRESENT

Brandon Fuller (MCDA) ^V	Allecia Lamb-Ridge (MILEO)	David Prellwitz (Labor) ^V
------------------------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------------------

MWSW CEAC MEMBERS ABSENT

Bobby Beauchamp (KCC)	LaToy Green (Parent)	Ken Willcut (Labor-Plumbers & Pipefitters & HVAC Local Union 357)
James Callahan (Labor)	Jerry Johnson (CAL)	
Jonathon Current (Labor)	Rebecca Murphy (BCPS)	
Dr. Mark Dunneback (KVCC)	Windy Rea (Job Corps)	

INTRODUCTIONS

All attendees present in person and online introduced themselves and the agency/company they represent.

MINUTES (*Exhibit A*)

Motion by James Sertic and supported by Dustin Scharer to approve the March 16, 2026, CEAC meeting minutes. Motion carried.

CLNA AND PERKINS UPDATES

Tim Staffen explained the importance of the Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) and that it is required for Perkins funding applications for the development of any new CTE programs. Any new programming must align with the findings and priorities identified in the CLNA.

Mr. Staffen reported that the Michigan CTE 61v Expansion Grant was successfully applied for in Region 21, with the largest award totaling approximately \$1.5-\$3 million. The grants are intended to support the launch of new state-approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

A key highlight of the grant opportunity is the inclusion of middle-school programming. Marshall, Delton

Kellogg, and Pennfield schools plan to build middle school programs that feed into their high school CTE pathways. This addresses the need to begin career exploration earlier than high school.

Additional updates included Vicksburg Schools in Kalamazoo County receiving \$1.6 million to expand both middle and high-school programming in hospitality and engineering.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Dave Maurer reported that his company continues to collaborate closely with CTE to support their hiring efforts, and they remain committed to hiring through CTE programs.

Jim Sertic reported no new updates. He urged the group to continue their efforts to boost enrollment in the CTE programs and to educate both parents and students about the advantages these programs offer for students and their future job prospects, the broader economy, and workforce needs.

Ashley Iovieno reported that the Going PRO Talent Fund Cycle 2 application window recently closed; all planned applications were submitted, though competition is expected to be very strong due to limited statewide funding.

Ms. Iovieno thanked those who attended the Skills in Sync events, including the Kalamazoo roundtable and the employer-focused event in Pottersville. A third educator-focused session was also held in southeast Michigan. The state is compiling feedback from all three events to help develop a future workforce “playbook.” Attendees shared that the sessions were valuable for networking, collaboration, and hearing new ideas from others across the region.

The MiCareerQuest™ event in St. Joseph County was successful, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Ms. Iovieno also reported on the workforce side, where mixed labor market trends continue. While employers are still actively hiring and job fair participation remains strong, layoffs are also continuing in some sectors. A recent closure involving Waco Airport in Battle Creek affected an estimated 50-60 employees, with workers learning of the shutdown after arriving at work. Efforts are ongoing to connect impacted individuals with available support and resources.

Ms. Iovieno advised employers of ongoing issues with Unemployment Insurance systems as the state transitions to updated login and account management platforms. Many employers have reported difficulties accessing accounts due to outdated login information or technical problems. The issue is being addressed statewide; however, employers should continue working with the Office of Ombudsman and take advantage of waived fees and fines if the issues have prevented timely filings.

EDUCATION UPDATES

- *St. Joseph County* – James Berry reported that he has accepted the superintendent’s role for the St. Joseph County Intermediate School District beginning next school year. He mentioned that Lucas Schrauben was hired to fill his role. Lucas brings extensive experience in CTE, with strong knowledge of Early Middle College (EMC) programming. He was also recognized as the Michigan Department of Education’s 2024 CTE Administrator of the Year.

Mr. Berry reported that the MiCareerQuest™ event in St. Joseph County was held the first week of May and thanked Michigan Works! Southwest for the funding to host the event. Approximately 55 employers participated, providing students with valuable career exploration opportunities.

Many students have attended competitions, including DECA, HOSA, and MITES. Students are also preparing to attend national competitions. A major highlight was the Sturgis machine tool manufacturing program, earning the MITES Grand Champion Award across all categories. Staffing updates included plans to post two teaching positions for the next school year, including construction trades and health science.

The National Technical Honor Society Awards Night was held, where one student earned a \$1,000 national scholarship through the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS).

- *Battle Creek Public Schools (BCPS)* – Tim Staffen reported on behalf of Rebecca Murphy, who was unable to attend, that BCPS received a \$200,000 Section 61vb expansion grant, which will support the creation of new state-approved CTE programs in business and education. In addition, preparation continues for the opening of the Ford Future Builders Lab this fall. They are developing essential skill standards aligned to the “Portrait of a Graduate” technical skill standards, and unit progressions for the new engineering and skilled trades pathway curriculum.

An annual job fair took place with participation from 60 industry partners. Feedback from employers was overwhelmingly positive, particularly regarding the professionalism and preparedness of senior students. Many students received job offers as a result of the event.

Twelve seniors were placed into official internship roles as part of a pilot internship framework. The experience has helped staff identify opportunities for improvement while also supporting students in developing professional confidence and workplace readiness. Moving forward, the goal is to provide internship opportunities for every interested senior next school year. Additionally, ninth and tenth-grade students participated in mock interviews, where community partners noted significant improvement in student preparedness compared to previous years.

- *Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA)* – Cindy Goss reported that Kalamazoo County students have been attending competitions and career-focused events. Both Portage Central (122 students) and Kalamazoo Central (50 students) had strong participation in DECA this year. Portage Central had 27 students who advanced to the state competition in Detroit, and 13 students qualified for the international competition in Atlanta. Kalamazoo Central also had three students qualify at the state level. Four design students displayed their work at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts high school area show from mid-April through the first week of May. Outstanding Achievement Awards recognized more than 93 students involved in CTE and other career-focused programs. During the event, students received a combined total of \$26,000 in scholarships, thanks to the continued generosity and support from community donors.

Students have participated in a variety of mock interviews and job fairs during April and May. Different career pathways were focused on weekly, with local employers reviewing resumes, conducting practice interviews, and in many cases offering students real interview experience and employment opportunities. Ms. Goss also reported that preparation has begun for career exploration camps for incoming 7th and 8th grade students. Interest has been very strong, with the culinary, design, and mechatronics camps already full.

Lastly, the automotive program recently completed and renewed its Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) accreditation, successfully finalizing the process during the first week of May.

- *Branch Area Career Center (BACC)* – Dustin Scharer reported that BACC had students participate in several state and national competitions, including the SkillsUSA state competition in Grand Rapids. Students also competed in the Michigan Industrial Technology Education Society (MITES) competition, where construction trades students built a small shed structure on site, while CAD-CAM engineering students submitted projects.

The Business Professionals of America (BPA) students attended the national competition in Nashville, with five students representing the district. During the event, two students achieved multiple professional credentials; one student obtained seven and another secured three. Additionally, the Career Center hosted its Job Readiness Fair on April 21. The event provided students with hands-on experience in the employment process, including completing job applications, learning interview and workplace skills, and understanding the steps involved in securing employment. Senior Recognition was held on May 8, celebrating approximately 230 students who completed their programs and are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education.

Mr. Scharer also reported that 6th-grade visits took place on May 12, giving students from across the county an opportunity to tour the campus and gain their first exposure to CTE programs and opportunities.

Staffing updates include four new teachers secured for the next school year, including a new agriculture/FFA advisor, two in health science, and one in auto body. They are finalizing a computer networking teacher, and interviews for a welding instructor will begin soon. They continue to search for a construction trades paraprofessional, a position that has remained vacant since December 2025. Depending on final enrollment numbers, additional paraprofessional positions may also be considered in the coming weeks.

- *Calhoun Intermediate School District (CISD)* – Tim Staffen reported that the Calhoun County Career Center hosted several events focused on encouraging students to explore non-traditional career pathways. In partnership with DENSO, a “Women in Trades” event was held on March 15, where female students had the opportunity to meet women working in a variety of skilled trades and technical careers, tour facilities, and participate in hands-on activities. A second event, “Women in Welding”, was held in March at Landscape Forms and included welding activities, design competitions, career panels, and facility tours. These efforts are part of the ongoing response to its CLNA, which identified a need to increase support and opportunities for students entering non-traditional career fields, particularly women in skilled trades.

Staffing updates include a new automotive instructor for next year following the retirement of a longtime teacher. An additional construction paraprofessional will support the growing program. They are also seeking a student services coordinator to support the Early Middle College program, Work-Based Learning, and student development areas, such as attendance, professional behaviors, and workplace readiness skills.

ADULT EDUCATION

- *Calhoun County ISD* – Tim Staffen reported on behalf of Calhoun County ISD, noting no new updates since the last report.

MISTEM

Lori Henrickson reported positive news regarding a recent partnership with KRESA Career Connect Center and its climate change group. On Earth Day, more than 150 students in grades 8-12 attended an event at Western Michigan University, where over 40 professionals from various fields spoke with students about how climate change is affecting their careers. Dr. Asia Doughton from Michigan State University delivered the keynote presentation, highlighting her work and career path in urban forestry.

Ms. Henrickson also provided an update on the state budget, reporting that MISTEM is currently not included in the House budget, though it remains funded in both the Senate and the Governor's proposed budgets. The House budget does include one-time STEM funding for instructional materials; however, long-term support through programs like MISTEM is critical to maintaining and advancing STEM education across Michigan.

Ms. Henrickson also highlighted that Michigan's regional MISTEM model is unique and highly effective, noting that it allows support to be tailored to the specific needs of different regions while still advancing statewide STEM goals. Ms. Henrickson encouraged members to advocate for continued funding and support for the program, including the long-term benefits for students, schools, businesses, and the state as a whole.

OTHER UPDATES

Michigan Center for Data and Analytics (MCDA) – Brandon Fuller shared updates on several recently released and upcoming reports. A 2026 update to the Registered Apprenticeship in Michigan report was released in late April, providing demographic, employment outcome, and wage data for active registered apprentices and program completers across the state. An updated accompanying dashboard is expected to be released soon, and links to the report and dashboard will be shared when available. Additionally, MCDA is finalizing its annual planning information and workforce analysis reports, which are expected to be released soon. These reports include demographic and labor market information for Michigan Works! service areas. Additional updates and links will be shared once the reports are published.

James Berry announced that Tim Staffen was nominated and awarded the Michigan Department of Education's Administrator of the Year for 2026. Tim expressed that he was truly grateful and humbled to receive the award, adding that it meant a great deal to be recognized alongside the talented people he has the privilege of working with.

Cindy Goss announced that she accepted a new position for the next school year with the Gull Lake School District. She will be working with the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), and her last day with KRESA is June 30.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

NEXT MEETING

The next CEAC meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 14, 2026, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Upjohn Institute, 300 S. Westnedge Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Horn, CEAC staff support

Tim Staffen, Chair CEAC