



SOUTHWEST CENTER

SWC MISSION

Your center, here for you.
Education matters!

SWC VISION

Positively impact education through collaboration, training and innovative resources; advocating for education excellence and student success.

SWC VALUES

- RELATIONSHIPS
- COLLABORATION
- LEADERSHIP
- INNOVATION
- EXCELLENCE

2025 – 2026 Annual Report



The Southwest Center: A Legacy of Collaboration and Innovation in Education

In 1996, fifteen forward-thinking school districts in Southwest Missouri came together with a shared vision: to improve education for all students by working collaboratively rather than in isolation. These charter districts—Avilla, Carl Junction, Carthage, College Heights, Diamond, East Newton, Golden City, Jasper, Lamar, Liberal, McDonald County, Neosho, Seneca, Webb City, and Westview—laid the foundation for what would become the **Southwest Center for Educational Excellence (SWC)**.

The concept was both simple and powerful: network, share strategies for improving education, and eliminate unnecessary duplication of services. By pooling resources and expertise, these districts aimed to provide richer opportunities for students and more support for educators than any one district could accomplish alone.

Over the years, that vision has grown into a thriving regional consortium that now includes 46 K–12 districts and two higher education institutions. The SWC has become a trusted hub for professional development, curriculum innovation, educational reform, and collaborative problem-solving.

Through its workshops, training sessions, and network of expert consultants, the SWC continues to empower teachers, administrators, and support staff to reach their highest potential—ultimately ensuring that students across the region benefit from high-quality educational experiences.

2025 – 2026 SWC Executive Board of Directors

Dr. Chris Kell, *President*
Greenfield

Dr. Eric Findley, *Vice President*
McDonald County

Dr. Brenten Bryd, *Treasurer*
Webb City

Dr. Kerry Sachetta, *past President*
Joplin

Dr. Dustin Storm
Miller

Dr. Tyson Beshore
Nevada

Dr. Tosha Tilford
Southwest

Phil Lewis
Sarcoxie

Chris Paullis
Wheaton

Dr. Luke Boyer
Carthage

SWC Team

Dr. Melissa Massey
Executive Director

Dr. Eileen Ford
Director of Professional Learning

Donna Byford
Executive Assistant

Educational Consultants

Chris Bozarth
Charlene Casady
Becky Crowe
Bill Kirby
Sarah Lee

Christa Rossetti
Dr. Jan VanGilder
Dr. Trish Wilson

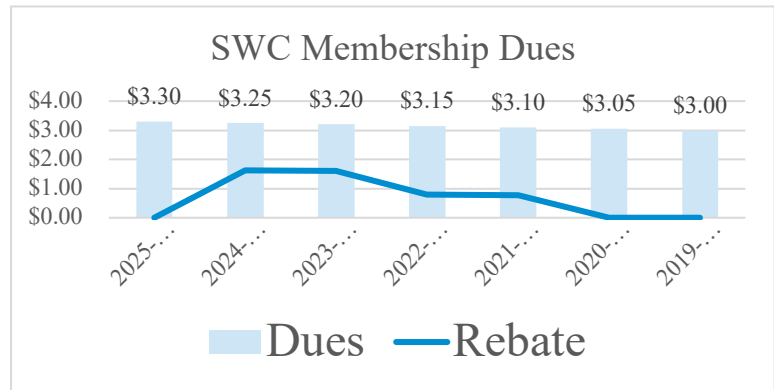
Educational Advocate

Dr. Tony Rossetti

Southwest Center
528 S. Ellis
Webb City, MO 64870

417-673-7078

www.southwestcenter.org



A History of SWC Membership Dues

When the Southwest Center for Educational Excellence (SWC) was founded in 1996–1997, one of the first decisions made by the charter districts was how to structure membership dues. At that time, dues were set at **\$3.00 per pupil**, reflecting the shared commitment of member districts to invest in regional collaboration and educational improvement.

For the first two years, dues remained at that original rate. Then in 1999, the Board of Directors voted to lower dues to \$2.50 per pupil. This reduced rate remained in effect for two years.

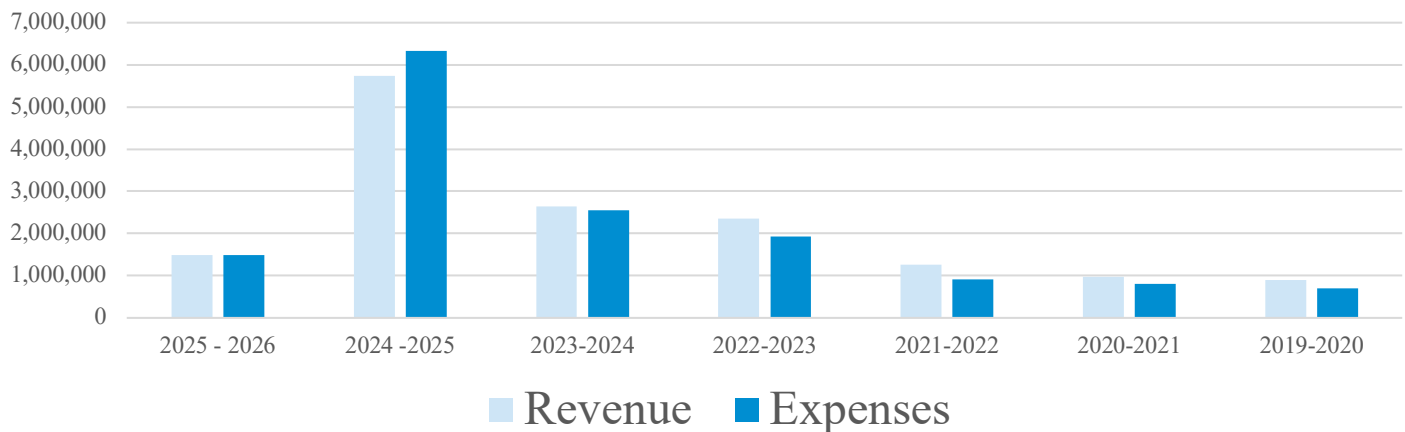
In 2000–2001, dues were again lowered—this time to \$2.25 per pupil. Remarkably, this rate remained unchanged for the next 19 years, giving districts nearly two decades of consistent and predictable membership costs while still benefiting from professional learning, networking, and shared services through the SWC.

As the organization expanded its programming and faced new operational demands, the Executive Board of Directors recognized the need to gradually adjust dues to ensure sustainability. In 2019–2020, the Board voted to return membership dues to \$3.00 per pupil and approved a policy that dues would increase automatically by five cents per pupil each year moving forward.

In 2021–2022, thanks to strong financial stewardship, the SWC was able to provide a membership rebate back to districts. Over the following years, that rebate ranged between 25% and 50%, returning significant savings to member schools while still maintaining the Center’s stability. However, with the funding cuts projected for the 2025–2026 school year, the SWC cannot offer a rebate.

This history reflects the Center’s careful balance between affordability and sustainability. Membership dues have provided a steady and reliable foundation, while rebates have demonstrated SWC’s commitment to reinvesting in districts whenever possible. Today, dues remain not only a financial contribution but also a symbol of the shared investment among districts that first came together in 1996—and that continue to work collectively to improve education across the region.

SWC Revenue v/s. Expenses



Southwest Center: Revenue and Expenses

As the graph illustrates, the SWC has operated with a balanced budget over the last five years. This record demonstrates the Center's continued commitment to fiscal responsibility and the careful stewardship of funds entrusted to us by member districts, state partners, and federal agencies.

2024-2025

The 2024-2025 budget initially showed deficit spending of \$537,213 due to the cancelled TQP grant. After going through the appeals and justification process, SWC was awarded its appeal and will receive \$548,497 as the final payment from the cancelled grant. This funding shifts the 2024-2025 budget from a deficit to a surplus.

2025-2026 Outlook

The 2025-2026 budget is also projected to be balanced, even with the recent loss of federal grant funding. While one of the cancelled grants will carry through December 2025, leadership has adjusted revenue and expenditures to ensure that operations remain stable and services continue without interruption.

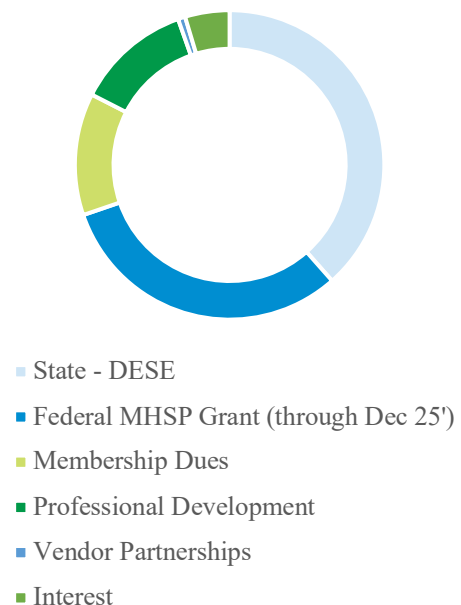
Long-Term Stability

The SWC's ability to maintain a balanced budget—even in years of funding uncertainty—reflects both strategic financial planning and the strong support of our member districts. Careful attention to revenue diversification, paired with prudent expense management, ensures that the organization remains sustainable and capable of serving educators across the region.

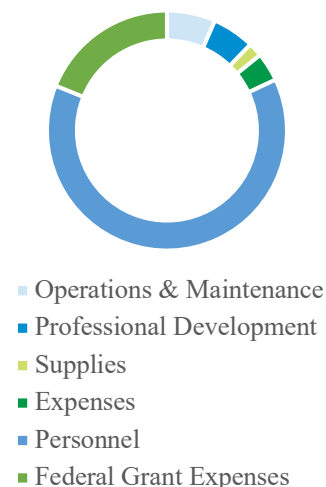
Revenue and Expense Breakdown

Additional charts are provided that reflect 2025-2026 budgeted revenue and expenses, providing a transparent view of how funds are generated and allocated to best support the mission of the SWC.

SWC 2025-2026 Budgeted REVENUE



SWC 2025-2026 Budgeted Expense



SWC GRANT AWARDS HISTORY

Year	Range	Grant Name	Amount
1997	1	Collaborative approach to Curr. Development (State)	\$65,000
1998	1	Technology Training and Technical Support (State)	\$75,000
2002	5	Ozark Rural Systemic Initiative	\$3,634,444
2003	3	Ozarks and the Nation	\$772,053
2004	5	Great American Lives	\$999,998
2005	3	Documenting the Past	\$998,353
2005	3	Echoes of the Past, Prelude to the Future	\$999,698
2008	3	Traveling America's C's Change and Continuity (3 C's)	\$997,747
2008	3	Emergency Preparedness REMS Grant	\$500,000
2009	5	Traveling America's C's (5 C's)	\$1,675,135
2009	3	Preserving America's Midwestern Heritage	\$990,308
2010	3	What is an American?	\$990,164
2013	5	Project LINC - SLP Grant	\$2,274,165
2019	5	MoACT-TQP Grant (Oct 2019 - Sept 2024)	\$3,743,791
2023	5	<i>* MHSP Grant – Mental Health: (April 2023) - \$2,503,284 Grant cancelled after completion of year 3</i>	\$4,213,662
2024	5	<i>* MoACT - TQP Grant (Oct 2024 - Sept 2029) - \$754,000 Grant cancelled February 2025</i>	\$4,237,200
			\$29,173,940

The Southwest Center: Navigating Challenges, Sustaining Impact

Since its founding in 1997, the Southwest Center (SWC) has secured an extraordinary **\$29,973,140 in grant funding**. Over the past 28 years, the organization has successfully managed **two state grants and fourteen federal grants**, ensuring that students, teachers, and schools across southwest Missouri benefit from high-quality professional development and innovative programming.

From the beginning, the SWC's financial stability has been closely tied to grant opportunities. Recognizing the uncertainty that comes with competitive funding, the Center established a **safety net system** to maintain operations in times when new grants are pending. This foresight has allowed the SWC to remain a steady resource for districts, even during periods without active awards.

A Difficult Year

The year 2025 brought unexpected challenges. In **February 2025**, SWC leadership was notified that its most recent grant, a 2024 Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant—a five-year award—was being **cancelled immediately**. One month later, news arrived that the **Mental Health Service Providers (MHSP) grant**—a five-year award—would be terminated at the **end of its third year (December 2025)**.

The TQP grant supported paraprofessionals working to become certified teachers and the MHSP grant supported certified teachers pursuing counseling certification. The grants aimed to shore up the field with additional teachers and counselors at a time when both roles are difficult to fill.

Resilience and Commitment

Although these setbacks are difficult, the SWC remains steadfast in its mission. The organization's history demonstrates both resilience and innovation in the face of funding shifts. By maintaining strong partnerships with member districts and exploring new grant opportunities, the Southwest Center continues to ensure that educators and students in southwest Missouri have access to the support they need.

2025-2026 SWC Member Districts

Aurora	Dr. Ben Yocom	Lockwood	Clay Lasater
Avilla	Russ Cruzan	Marionville	Shane Moseman
Bronaugh	Beth Sandness	McDonald County	Dr. Eric Findley
Carl Junction	Dr. David Pyle	Miller	Dr. Dustin Storm
Carthage	Dr. Luke Boyer	Monett	Dr. Mark Drake
Cassville	Dr. Merlyn Johnson	Mt. Vernon	Christina West
New Christian	Dr. Dan Decker	NE Vernon County	Christina Jones
Crane	Dr. Kelli Rogers	Neosho	Jim Davis
Diamond	Dr. Bill Redinger	Nevada	Dr. Tyson Beshore
East Newton	Scott Charlton	Pierce City	Matthew Street
ElDorado Springs	Brad Steward	Purdy	Dr. Travis Graham
Everton	Dr. Will Darter	Sarcoxie	Phil Lewis
Exeter	Tim Jordan	Seneca	Dr. Brandon Eggleston
Galena	Dr. Danny Humble	Sheldon	Jason Irwin
Golden City	Dennis Kimzey	Southwest	Dr. Tosha Tilford
Greenfield	Dr. Chris Kell	Verona	Melody Whitehead
Hume	Scott Morrison	Walnut Grove	Rory Henry
Hurley	Matt Summers	Webb City	Dr. Brenten Bryd
Humansville	Dr. Tammy Erwin	Westview	Dr. Nathan Manley
Jasper	Dr. Cindy Hansen	Wheaton	Chris Paullis
Joplin Catholic	Jess Sickman	<i>Miami, OK</i>	Jill Douthit
Joplin	Dr. Kerry Sachetta	<i>Missouri School for the Severely Disabled</i>	
Lamar	Brian Gillis	<i>Missouri Southern State University</i>	
Liberal	Barry Yokom	<i>Crowder College</i>	

SWC Legislative Advocacy: Strengthening the Voice of Education

The SWC is now in its second year of employing a Legislative Advocate, Dr. Tony Rossetti. This important role was created to ensure the voices of our schools, teachers, and students are heard at the state level, and to help our member districts stay informed about the policies shaping public education in Missouri.

Collaboration with an Advisory Team

Dr. Rossetti works closely with a dedicated advisory team made up of superintendents from across our region: **Luke Boyer**, Carthage; **Kerry Sachetta**, Joplin; **Cindy Hansen**, Jasper; **Travis Graham**, Purdy; **Scott Morrison**, Hume; **Chris Paullis**, Wheaton; and **Brenten Bryd**, Webb City. Together, they provide insight and direction to ensure legislative advocacy aligns with the real needs of our schools.

Building Awareness in Schools

One of Dr. Rossetti's key efforts has been working with new teachers during SWC's training programs. He emphasizes the importance of understanding how legislative decisions impact their classrooms and why it is vital to share their stories with elected officials.

Presence at the Capitol

Dr. Rossetti spends considerable time at the Capitol, meeting with legislators and building relationships on behalf of the Southwest Center's member districts. His advocacy ensures our concerns and successes are part of the conversations that drive education policy.

Connecting Legislators to Districts

In addition to traveling to Jefferson City, Dr. Rossetti arranges for legislative representatives to visit SWC and take part in monthly Superintendent Forums. These visits foster stronger communication between lawmakers and local educational leaders, ensuring legislators see firsthand the challenges and innovations happening in our schools.

Special Legislative Events at SWC

A highlight of the advocacy work has been the special legislative events hosted at SWC. These gatherings bring legislators together with superintendents, board members, teachers, and students for open conversations about education. The events provide a platform to showcase success stories from local districts, discuss pressing issues, and highlight how state policy directly impacts rural schools. They have become a cornerstone of SWC's efforts to bridge the gap between policymakers and the classrooms they serve.

Staying Informed and Connected

Dr. Rossetti provides regular updates on legislation that could affect our schools and works closely with other legislative advocates across Missouri. This network strengthens the collective voice of education and ensures that rural and regional concerns are not overlooked.