



Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative

720 9th Ave, Howard Lake, MN 55349

Joint Powers Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 - 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - *Official*

Present: Sarah Baker, Gena Jacobson, Jessica Johnson, Cindy Miller, Tim Oster, Kelsey Puncochar
Absent: Jen Rasset
Others Present: Colleen Carlson, Kim Geurts, Melissa Hanson, Kate Ryan, Cheryl Ulik

I. Call to Order/ Board Roll Call

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:36 pm

A roll call was conducted:

Sarah Baker: Present

Gena Jacobson: Present

Jessica Johnson: Present

Cindy Miller: Present

Tim Oster: Present *via Google Meet due to scheduling conflict*

Kelsey Puncochar: Present

Jen Rasset: Absent

A quorum of six board members was established.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Approval of Meeting Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Kelsey Puncochar.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye

Jessica Johnson - aye

Cindy Miller - aye

Tim Oster - aye

Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

IV. Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye



Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor of approving the consent agenda which included:

- Minutes of Previous Board Meeting
- Bills for payment and other financial reports as attached
- Personnel Items
 - Retirements/Resignations/Terminations
 - Retirement: Lucille Ekholm, Floating Special Education Teacher, Effective June 5, 2026
 - Recommendations for Employment
 - Employment: Jennifer Casey, Behavior Analyst, Effective April 6, 2026
 - Employment: Charlotte Johnson, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, Cornerstones/Eastern Wright, Effective April 13, 2026
 - Employment: Rebecca Kittok, On Call Substitute Paraprofessional, Effective March 16, 2026
 - Employment: Ernesto Moor, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, Cornerstones, Effective March 2, 2026
 - Employment: Larry Sothan, Building and Grounds Technician, Effective April 20, 2026
 - Contract Changes/Approvals/Position Changes
 - Contract Change: Brenda Brandvold, Paraprofessional, Village Ranch, from 0.8 FTE to 1.0 FTE, Effective August 24, 2026
 - Position Change: Meggann Carlson, from On Call Speech-Language Pathologist to 1.0 FTE Speech-Language Pathologist, Effective July 1, 2026
 - Position Change: Kathryn Sisson, from .61 FTE Floating Teacher to 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher, Village Ranch, Effective August 13, 2026
 - Position Change: Amy Stienessen, from Classroom Systems Consultant/Due Process Specialist to Due Process Specialist, Effective August 24, 2026
 - Position Change: Shari Zeidler, from 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional to 1.0 FTE General Education Teacher, Village Ranch, Effective August 24, 2026
- Contract Items
 - Non-Member Purchased Services Contracts
 - Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Audiologist Purchased Services Contract
 - Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Purchased Services Contract

V. Informational Items



A. Executive Director Report

Special Education Child Count Across MAWSECO Districts

Minnesota's annual child count reports provide a snapshot of children and youth (birth through age 22) who are eligible for and receiving special education services, using data collected through the MARSS system and reported to the U.S. Department of Education. To be included, a student must have a current IEP (less than one year old as of December 1), a recent evaluation (within three years), and be actively receiving services on that date. Statewide, 18.71% of students receive special education services, while MAWSECO districts average slightly lower at 18.28%, with individual district rates ranging from 15.10% to 23.89%.

New Federal Requirement for School-Based Medicaid Providers

A new federal requirement mandates that individual school-based providers obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI) for districts to bill Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) for IEP-related health services. The NPI is a 10-digit identifier required under HIPAA that identifies the licensed professional delivering Medicaid-billable services. Providers such as audiologists, mental health professionals, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists must complete a two-step process to obtain a Type 1 NPI by September 1, 2026. Guidance is still pending on whether school nurses and psychologists are included. Additional details will be shared by the Minnesota Departments of Education and Human Services at the Medicaid in Education Spring Forum on April 28, 2026, with MAWSECO leadership expected to provide further updates and support afterward.

Staffing Updates

MAWSECO is entering the 2026–2027 school year with several positive staffing updates, including being fully staffed with Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) for the first time in years and a fully staffed Birth–2 team, bolstered by a speech-language pathologist transitioning to a full-time role. The Village Ranch Alternative Program has filled two teaching positions internally, while efforts continue to fill resulting vacancies. The Cooperative is also transitioning from contracted custodial services to an in-house model with a new Buildings and Grounds Technician role. Additionally, HLWW will partner with MAWSECO for a part-time Due Process Specialist, restructuring an existing role, and Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Public Schools will share Audiologist and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teacher positions to maintain service continuity. Remaining certified staff vacancies include positions for a School Psychologist in Delano, a General/Special Education Teacher for Wings, and a Floating Special Education Teacher.

Disproportionality Status Update

Under IDEA regulations, states must identify districts with significant disproportionality in special education identification, placement, or discipline, and districts that meet thresholds for three consecutive years must reserve 15% of



federal funds for early intervening services. Last year, Maple Lake District was identified for a second consecutive year due to disproportionate identification of White students with Speech-Language Impairments. Over the past two years, MAWSECO leadership and district speech therapists worked to address the underlying issues, and as a result, the district no longer meets criteria for significant disproportionality and did not receive a notice this year.

Spring All-Staff Inservice

MAWSECO's end-of-year all-staff inservice will be held on Friday, June 5. The keynote session, "Managing Stress Naturally in Trauma-Exposed Work: Protecting Those Who Protect Others," will focus on how ongoing exposure to stress and trauma affects staff and will offer practical strategies to support stress regulation, resilience, and sustained effectiveness in demanding roles.

B. Director of Finance Report

Accounts Payable items were higher than usual this month due to the FY26 SRO payment to Wright County for \$60,840, the remaining 75% payment for the FY26 Technology Director to HLWW for \$60,000, and the second FY26 lease payment to HLWW for \$121,790.20. The FY27 Preliminary Budget is in process. The finance department is exploring ways to streamline and improve Purchase Service billing processes. PFM notified the department on February 19, 2026 that the P-Card program will transition from BMO to US Bank.

C. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Specialist Report

Cheryl Ulik, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Specialist provided highlights on the 2025–2026 school year so far. Paraprofessionals participated in Structured Literacy Training, with the first session held virtually on January 23, 2026, covering theoretical frameworks and phonemic awareness. A second session is being planned to address phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. A new assessment requirement mandates that students in grade four and above who are not reading at grade level be screened for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, using an MDE-approved tool- Capti ReadBasix. Capti ReadBasix evaluates multiple literacy skills including Word Recognition and Decoding, Vocabulary, Morphology, Sentence Processing, Reading Efficiency, and Reading Comprehension. Cheryl has trained staff on its implementation and supported programs during its administration. A Data Informs Instruction professional development session is scheduled for April 7. Additional efforts include exploring curriculum updates to meet new state requirements in areas such as mental health, cannabis and other substance use education, physics/chemistry, and personal finance. Cheryl also continues to support staff in using online curriculum platforms and administering both district and state assessments.

D. Policy Review [First Reading]

The following policies were brought to the board for a first reading. No action was taken.



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1. Policy 501 - School Weapons Policy
 2. Policy 507 - Corporal Punishment and Prone Restraint
 3. Policy 507.5 - School Resource Officers
 4. Policy 508 - Extended School Year for Certain Students with Individualized Education Plans
 5. Policy 514 - Bullying Prohibition Policy
 6. Policy 516 - Student Medication and Telehealth
 7. Policy 519 - Interviews of Students by Outside Agencies
 8. Policy 532 - Use of Peace Officers and Crisis Teams to Remove Students with IEPs from School Grounds
 9. Policy 533 - Wellness
 10. Policy 535 - Service Animals in Schools

E. Policy Rescission [First Reading]

The following policy was brought to the board for a first reading. No action was taken.

1. Policy 555 - Loitering on School Grounds

VI. Action Items

A. Old Business

1. Policy Review [Second Reading]

A motion to approve the listed policy changes was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Policy 403 - Discipline, Suspension and Dismissal of School District Employees

Policy 408 - Subpoena of a School District Employee

Policy 413 - Harassment and Violence

Policy 414 - Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse

Policy 417 - Chemical Use/Abuse

Policy 418 - Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free School

Policy 419 - Tobacco-Free Environment; Possession and Use of Tobacco, Tobacco-Related Devices, and Electronic Delivery Devices; Vaping Awareness and Prevention Instruction

Policy 420 - Students and Employees with HIV/AIDS and Certain Other Communicable Diseases and Infectious Conditions

Policy 421 - Gifts to Employees

Policy 422 - Policies Incorporated by Reference

Policy 424 - License Status

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye

Jessica Johnson - aye



Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

B. New Business

1. 2026-2027 MAWSECO Program Calendars

A motion to approve the 2026-2027 MAWSECO Program Calendars was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Jessica Johnson.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

2. Resolutions for Non-Renewal of Staff with Tier 1 and Out-of-Field Permissions that expire at the end of the 2025-2026 school year

Gena Jacobson introduced the resolutions for the non-renewal of staff with Tier 1 and out-of-field permissions including Gregory Amundson and Annette Hystad. Kelsey Puncochar seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

3. Resolution Proposing Placement of Tenured Teachers on Unrequested Leave of Absence

Motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolutions proposing placement of tenured teachers, Lea Dobbs, Cassandra Drusch, and Kristina Yaedke, on unrequested leave of absence due to licensure was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye



Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

4. FY26 Revised Budget [Second Reading]

A motion to approve the FY26 Revised Budget was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Jessica Johnson.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

5. Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Individual Procurement Cards

A motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Individual Procurement Cards was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

6. Executive Director At-Will Agreement

A motion to approve the FY27-29 Executive Director Agreement was made by Sarah Baker and seconded by Kelsey Puncochar.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Tim Oster - aye



Meeting Date
Tuesday, March 31, 2026

Kelsey Puncochar - aye

VII. Future Board Meetings

- A. April 28, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, Sholund School for Girls, Annandale
- B. May 19, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, Wings Alternative Program, Litchfield
- C. June 23, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye

Jessica Johnson - aye

Cindy Miller - aye

Tim Oster - aye

Kelsey Puncochar - aye

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 pm.

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