



SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE BACKGROUND

November 3, 2026 Election

Note: This information will be released to media personnel, district website, and general public.

First & Last Name: Patrick Baker	
Phone Number: 507-381-4790	Email Address: patrickjamesbaker@gmail.com
Employment: Cengage, Senior Director of Government Affairs	
Children in the School District: Two elementary-aged daughters in MAPS, Wife teacher at West High	
Background: SEE ATTACHED	
1. Explain why you would like to serve on the Mankato Area School Board. SEE ATTACHED	
2. How can you contribute to a successful school board? SEE ATTACHED	
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Signature: <i>Patrick Baker</i>	Date: 7/20/2026

Patrick Baker

Mankato Area Public Schools Board Candidate Background

BACKGROUND

I was born and raised in Mankato and am a proud product of the Mankato Area Public Schools (MAPS) and graduate of Mankato East High School. Today, my connection to the district is even more personal: my wife is a teacher at Mankato West High School, and our two elementary-aged daughters attend our schools.

I am completing my first term on the School Board and currently serve as board treasurer. My professional career has centered on education and workforce policy and community leadership for nearly 20 years. I began with the National Governors Association in Washington, D.C., representing governors on federal education and workforce issues. I later returned home to serve as Vice President of Greater Mankato Growth, directing public-policy work and advancing regional priorities with business, government, education, and nonprofit partners. I subsequently led government relations and policy for Western Governors University - the nation's largest nonprofit university in the country.

I now serve as Senior Director of Government Affairs for Cengage, where I lead government affairs and public policy for an education company providing learning materials and digital resources to nearly 16 million students and adult learners around the world. I earned a bachelor's degree from Concordia College, Moorhead and a graduate certificate in public management from George Mason University.

These experiences—as a former student, current parent, teacher's spouse, education-policy professional, community leader, taxpayer, and school board member—reinforce my belief that great schools make great communities.

You can learn more about my School Board service and campaign at my website (patrickjbaker.com) and Facebook page (facebook.com/BAKER77). You can also always reach out to me on school district issues via email (pbaker1@isd77.org)



1. Explain why you would like to serve on the Mankato Area School Board

I am seeking a second term because I believe deeply in education's power to transform lives, strengthen communities, and create opportunity. Serving on the School Board is one of the most meaningful ways I can give back to the schools and community that have given so much to me and my family.

When I first ran, I said that great schools make great communities. Four years of service have strengthened that conviction. Strong schools prepare students for successful lives, help employers build a skilled workforce, attract families and businesses, and contribute to the long-term vitality of our region.

I am proud of the progress our district has made during my first term including:

- Invested in the safety and quality of our schools through a successful \$105 million facilities bond referendum that I was proud to champion. Those investments are improving safety, expanding access to early learning, and modernizing educational and wellness spaces.
- Undertook an extensive strategic-planning process involving students, staff, families, and community members. That work refocused the district around a clear mission: "Excellence, Equity, and Empowerment: Every Student, Every Day."
- Expanded educational choice for families by creating three elementary focus schools centered on STEAM education, outdoor and nature-based learning, and global studies, expanding the high-quality choices available to families.
- Confronted a significant budget shortfall. We made difficult decisions to place the district on more stable financial footing while working to protect core student services.

These are collective accomplishments reflecting the work of students, educators, staff, administrators, families, community partners, voters, and board members. My role has been to listen, ask hard questions, focus on evidence, establish priorities, make difficult decisions, and remain accountable to the public.

Important work remains. Should I be re-elected, I intend to focus my next term on:

- Redesigning the middle and high school experience so students have more opportunities for hands-on learning, career exploration, internships, mentorships, college credit, and industry-recognized credentials. Every student should graduate with a meaningful next step and the skills and confidence to pursue it.
- Adopting a thoughtful and responsible approach to technology and artificial intelligence. Technology can expand access, support educators, and prepare students for a changing world, but it can also distract from learning or compromise privacy. Technology should serve learning—not drive it. Our decisions should be age-appropriate, evidence-based, protective of student information, and grounded in clear instructional goals.
- Strengthening the future of teaching. High-quality teachers are critical to student success, yet teaching has become more demanding and complex. To recruit and retain

excellent educators, we must listen to teachers, reduce unnecessary burdens, provide effective support, and create working conditions in which talented people can build sustainable careers.

- Protect the district's long-term financial health through disciplined budgeting, clear priorities, transparent communication, and responsible stewardship. Financial sustainability also depends on earning families' confidence so MAPS remains the clear first choice for education in our region.

I am proud of what we have accomplished, realistic about the challenges ahead, and optimistic about what our district and community can achieve together. I will continue approaching every decision with humility, preparation, independence, and one primary question: What is best for all students?

2. How can you contribute to a successful school board?

A successful school board must work as a governing body to establish direction, adopt policy, oversee finances, employ and evaluate the superintendent, monitor results, and maintain the public's trust. Members will not always agree, but they must be able to disagree respectfully, make decisions, and govern responsibly together. I also recognize that decisions involving staffing, facilities, curriculum, student services, legal obligations, and finances are interconnected. This is the perspective I've tried to bring to my board service the past four years.

I also bring a student-centered, evidence-based approach. My primary filter is: What is best for all students? I study the facts, ask questions, review data and research, listen to students, families, educators, and staff, and consider benefits, costs, tradeoffs, and long-term sustainability. Effective governance combines evidence with the lived experiences of the people our schools serve.

As treasurer, I contribute financial and strategic-planning experience. Every district dollar is a public dollar and should advance the needs of our schools. I ask whether spending aligns with the district's mission, whether expected outcomes are clear, whether investments can be sustained, and whether results are being evaluated.

My professional career has been spent working in and leading nonpartisan organizations. I have learned how to bring together people with different perspectives, identify shared objectives, and seek responsible solutions without abandoning principles. I do not approach School Board service through a partisan political lens. I evaluate issues on their merits, exercise independent judgment, explain my reasoning, and remain willing to reconsider a position when better evidence becomes available.

My career also gives me substantial experience in K–12, postsecondary, workforce, teacher-preparation, and technology policy. My years at Greater Mankato Growth created strong

relationships across the regional business, nonprofit, government, and civic communities. Together, those experiences can help the district expand career-connected learning, build community partnerships, understand state and federal policy, and advocate effectively with policymakers across the political spectrum.

Finally, I bring respect for every employee who contributes to student success, along with a commitment to transparency and accessibility. Board members should listen to staff expertise, set clear expectations, communicate honestly, and support the district's ability to recruit and retain excellent people.

As a board member, I commit to prepare carefully, listen respectfully, act independently, explain my reasoning, and keep students at the center of the work.

3. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Public education is entering a period of significant change. Technology is advancing rapidly, employers are seeking new combinations of skills, families have more educational options, student needs are becoming more complex, and school districts face continuing financial pressures. MAPS should not stand still, but neither should we chase every new trend. We should be innovative without being impulsive, fiscally disciplined without losing sight of student needs, and ambitious without pretending every challenge has a simple solution.

We should hold high expectations for every student while recognizing that students may need different forms of instruction, support, challenge, or opportunity. Relationships must remain at the center of education, because no technology, curriculum, facility, or program can replace the relationship between a student and a caring, capable adult.

Students also need multiple rigorous and respected pathways to success, including advanced coursework, the arts, athletics, career and technical education, work-based learning, apprenticeships, college-credit programs, and service. Our responsibility is not to prescribe one definition of success, but to prepare each student to pursue a meaningful future. Families' trust must be earned through excellent teaching, safe and welcoming schools, strong communication, broad opportunities, and honest engagement.

Serving on the Mankato Area Public Schools Board has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I am grateful for the trust the community has placed in me, proud of the progress we have made together, and committed to the work still ahead.

Great schools make great communities.