



Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative

720 9th Ave, Howard Lake, MN 55349

Joint Powers Board Meeting

Tuesday, August 25, 2026 - 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - *Official*

Present: Sarah Baker, Alex Carlson, Gena Jacobson, Jessica Johnson, Cindy Miller, Kelsey Puncochar, Jen Rasset
Absent: None
Others Present: Colleen Carlson, Kim Geurts, Melissa Hanson, Kate Ryan

I. Call to Order/ Board Roll Call

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm.

A roll call was conducted:

Sarah Baker: Present

Alex Carlson: Present

Gena Jacobson: Present *via Google Meet due to scheduling conflict*

Jessica Johnson: Absent

Cindy Miller: Present

Kelsey Puncochar: Present

Jen Rasset: Present

A quorum of six board members was established.

The following board member arrived after the meeting was called to order:

Jessica Johnson: Present (5:52 pm)

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 Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye

Alex Carlson - aye

Gena Jacobson - aye

Jessica Johnson - absent

Cindy Miller - aye

Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Jen Rasset - 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 Cindy Miller.



Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - absent
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - abstained

Motion carried with five 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
 - Resignation: Raja Ellman, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, STEP, Effective August 19, 2026
 - Resignation: Kayla Jansen, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, Journeys, Effective August 19, 2026
 - Resignation: Amber Polzin, 1.0 FTE Paraprofessional, Eastern Wright, Effective August 18, 2026
 - Recommendations for Employment
 - Linda Hamm, Per Diem Physical Therapist, Effective July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027
 - Contract Changes/Approvals/Position Changes
 - Reinstatement: Lea Dobbs, 0.6 FTE ECSE Teacher, Effective July 1, 2026
 - Reinstatement: Kristina Yaedke, 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher, Journeys, Effective August 24, 2026
 - At-Will Agreement
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2027, Allison Johnson, Language Facilitator
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Karey Lambert, Administrative Assistant
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, JoLee Marquette, Brailist
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Michelle Montgomery, AP/AR & MARSS Coordinator
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Lisa Perovich, Administrative Assistant
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Kate Ryan, Executive Assistant
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Sara Schwehr, Administrative Assistant
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2027, Rachel Seppala, Behavior Analyst Intern
 - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Nicole Sigler, Administrative Assistant



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- At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Elizabeth Thompson, Third Party Billing Coordinator
 - Substitutes
 - Substitute Teacher: 2026-2027, Britta Barth
 - Substitute Paraprofessional: 2026-2027, Layle Dawa
 - Substitute Teacher: 2026-2027, Lisa Elfmann
 - Substitute Paraprofessional: 2026-2027, Kayla Ertl
 - Substitute Paraprofessional: 2026-2027, Rebecca Kittok
 - Substitute Administrative Assistant: 2026-2027, Cindy Lower
 - Substitute Teacher: 2026-2027, Bruce Ruhe
 - Substitute Paraprofessional: 2026-2027, Anne Uecker
 - Contract Items
 - Other Contracts
 - Sandy Hook Promise MOU

Jessica Johnson arrived at 5:52 pm.

V. Informational Items

A. Executive Director Report

New MAWSECO Staff Guidelines for Use of AI

MAWSECO is adding AI Usage Guidelines to its 2026–2027 Employee Manual to prioritize data protection, ethical transparency, and human judgment in decision-making. Following a request from superintendents at the August Executive Advisory Committee meeting, the cooperative is also developing specialized AI guidelines for special education staff to share across all member districts.

Navigating Special Education for School Leaders

Based on administrator feedback, MAWSECO created *Navigating Special Education: Practical Strategies for Today's School Leaders*, an eight-session monthly professional learning series for school and cooperative leaders. The program provides principals, assistant principals, and special education supervisors with practical strategies, real-world case studies, and immediate tools to address key special education leadership challenges.

Changes to Third Party Billing Requirements in MN

The federal MHCP enrollment deadline for school-based providers obtaining a 10-digit NPI for IEP Medicaid billing has been delayed from September 1, 2026, to September 1, 2027, following spring administrative delays at DHS. Additionally, new DHS guidance issued in August expands billing requirements to Personal Care Assistants (PCAs), requiring them to obtain a Unique Minnesota Provider Identifier (UMPI). MAWSECO will continue guiding all affected providers, including therapists, mental health professionals, and PCAs, through these multi-step enrollment processes ahead of the 2027 deadline.



Special Education Funding in MN

Established during the 2025 legislative session, on August 6 the Blue Ribbon Commission on Special Education finalized their draft recommendations including four key funding adjustments to meet a mandatory \$250 million reduction target. These reductions include formula changes, (FIN 728 -homeless/504/care and treatment) transportation restructuring, ADSIS shifts, and charter school tuition aid removals. Beyond cost-saving measures, the commission recommended systemic improvements across workforce recruitment, administrative efficiency, and student support systems. Citing potential harm to marginalized students, the commission unanimously urged the legislature to repeal the reduction mandate, and it will formally submit its final report to the governor and state legislature by October 1, 2026.

MN Kids Rise

Minnesota Kids Rise is a statewide initiative dedicated to building trust, pride, and shared understanding in public education across Minnesota. By highlighting authentic local stories, clear information, and community examples, the effort demonstrates how public schools support every child and strengthen local communities.

B. Director of Finance Report

Kim and Melissa met with Paul Ferrin again on August 11th to review data and identify measures that can be done to improve the cooperative's cashflow. Positive Pay was implemented on the checking account for a \$20 monthly fee. The FY27 SEDRA was updated. Final Purchase Service invoices are scheduled for release to Member Districts this week.

C. Director of Educational Programs Report

Program and Protocol Development

Cooperative leadership collaborated with Dassel-Cokato personnel to establish a transition protocol from the Village Ranch Alternative Program (VRAP) to Dassel-Cokato High School (DCHS). Additionally, in coordination with the Special Education Director and the BCBA team, a Setting IV Placement Priority Rubric was created for some of the Setting IV programs, with rubric development also underway for the Trek program.

Systems and Operations

Support for Infinite Campus continues as students actively monitor their grades and academic growth. Additionally, staff are collaborating with the Administrative Assistant team to launch an online enrollment process using fillable PDFs within the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, targeting full implementation later this fall.

Curriculum and Instruction

Colleen is collaborating with MAWSECO's Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Specialist and Program Administrators to select appropriate



curricula for new state teaching requirements, which cover Mental Health Education as well as Cannabis and Fentanyl instruction.

Important Updates

Following August 2026 regulatory updates regarding secure detention facilities, Village Ranch is preparing to accept residents aged 10–12, with staff currently making necessary schedule adjustments. Simultaneously, work continues toward a November rollout of the Sandy Hook Promise Anonymous Reporting System across Cornerstones, Eastern Wright, Sholund, Village Ranch, and Wings. Meanwhile, cross-functional literacy teams are refining intervention strategies and data frameworks to enhance student growth.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Implementation

Five of eight programs have begun a two-year PBIS training and planning commitment focused on evaluating daily practices to ensure they are safe, consistent, and beneficial for students and staff. Following the first two training sessions, staff feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants describing it as the best professional development they have ever attended.

D. Policy Review [First Reading]

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

1. Policy 423 - Employee-Student Relationships
2. Policy 504 - Student Dress and Appearance
3. Policy 507.5 - School Resource Officers
4. Policy 520 - Student Surveys
5. Policy 524 - Internet Acceptable Use Policy
6. Policy 526 - Hazing Prohibition
7. Policy 530 - Immunization Requirements
8. Policy 623 - Mandatory Summer School Instruction
9. Policy 701 - Establishment and Adoption of School District Budget
10. Policy 702 - Accounting
11. Policy 703 - Annual Audit
12. Policy 704 - Development and Maintenance of an Inventory of Fixed Assets and Fixed Asset Accounting System
13. Policy 705 - Investments
14. Policy 712 - Video Surveillance Other Than on Buses
15. Policy 713 - Student Activity Accounting
16. Policy 714 - Fund Balances Policy
17. Policy 721 - Uniform Grant Guidance Policy Regarding Federal Revenue Sources
18. Policy 722 - Public Data and Data Subject Requests

VI. Action Items

A. Old Business



1. Policy Review [2nd Reading]

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

Policy 101.1 - Name of the School District
Policy 201 - Legal Status of the School Board
Policy 203 - Operation of the School Board - Governing Rules
Policy 203.1 - School Board Procedures; Rules of Order
Policy 203.2 - Order of the Regular School Board Meeting
Policy 203.6 - Consent Agenda
Policy 209 - Code of Ethics
Policy 211 - Criminal or Civil Action Against School Districts, School Board Member, Employee, or Student
Policy 212 - School Board Member Development
Policy 213 - School Board Committees
Policy 404 - Employee Background Checks
Policy 404.1 - Authorized Drivers
Policy 405 - Veteran's Preference
Policy 406 - Public and Private Personal Data
Policy 427 - Workload Limits for Certain Special Education Teachers
Policy 502 - Search of Student Lockers, Desks, and Personal Possessions & Student's Person
Policy 503 - Student Attendance
Policy 505 - Distribution of Nonschool-Sponsored Materials on School Premises by Students and Employees
Policy 506 - Student Discipline
Policy 515 - Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records
Policy 516.5 - Overdose Medication
Policy 602 - Organization of School Calendar and School Day
Policy 608 - Instructional Services- Special Education
Policy 609 - Religion and Religious and Cultural Observances
Policy 615 - Testing Accommodations, Modifications and Exemptions for IEPs, Section 504 Plans, and LEP Students

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

2. Policy Rescission [Second Reading]



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A motion to rescind the listed policies was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Jessica Johnson.

Policy 533 - Wellness
Policy 534 - Unpaid Meal Charges

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

B. New Business

1. Cardiac Emergency Response Plan

A motion to approve the Cardiac Emergency Response Plan was made by Jessica Johnson and seconded by Jen Rasset.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

2. 2026-2027 MAWSECO Programs Student Handbook

A motion to approve the 2026-2027 MAWSECO Programs Student Handbook was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Jen Rasset.

Roll Call Vote:
Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye



Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

3. 2026-2027 Substitute Rates of Pay

A motion to approve the 2026-2027 Substitute Rates of Pay was made by Jessica Johnson and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - abstained

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

4. 2026-2027 Executive Director Professional Goals

A motion to approve the 2026-2027 Executive Director Professional Goals was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Cindy Miller.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

5. Resolution Accepting Donation

A motion to approve the Resolution accepting the donation from DonorsChoose was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Jen Rasset.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.



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6. Resolution Accepting Donation

A motion to approve the Resolution accepting the donation from Kids in Need Foundation was made by Jessica Johnson and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

VII. Future Board Meetings

- A. September 22, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
- B. October 20, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
- C. November 24, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Jen Rasset and seconded by Kelsey Puncochar.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye
Alex Carlson - aye
Gena Jacobson - aye
Jessica Johnson - aye
Cindy Miller - aye
Kelsey Puncochar - aye
Jen Rasset - aye

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

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