



MEEKER AND WRIGHT SPECIAL EDUCATION COOPERATIVE
Board Meeting - Joint Powers Board #0938
Tuesday, March 25, 2025 - 5:00 pm
Meeting Minutes - *Unofficial*

Present: Sarah Baker, Gena Jacobson, Jessica Johnson, Cindy Miller, Tim Oster

Absent: Kelsey Puncochar, Jen Rasset

Others Present: Melissa Hanson, Heidi Hennen, Emily Schneider, Jill Sundblad

I. Call to Order

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m.

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 Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. Consent Agenda

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Gena Jacobson. The board unanimously approved the consent agenda which included:

- Minutes of Previous Board Meeting
- Bills for Payment and other financial reports as attached
- Personnel Items
- *Resignation/Retirement of the following staff:*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>
Patty Diers	Special Education Teacher, STEP	June 19, 2025
Ashley Gruber	Special Education Teacher, Eastern Wright	Effective June 6, 2025
Emily Hilbelink	BCBA	Effective June 18, 2025
Sue Miller	Occupational Therapist	Effective June 6, 2025
Savannah Walsh	Special Education Supervisor, Dassel-Cokato	Effective June 30, 2025



- *Employment of the following staff:*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>
Emma Martin	1.0 Temporary Paraprofessional, Trek	March 13, 2025
Rachel Seppala	1.0 FTE Behavior Analyst Intern	April 1, 2025

- *Employment of the following staff:*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>
Cassidy Hollon	Moving from Behavior Analyst Intern to BCBA	March 17, 2025
Mary Krokstrom	Teacher of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Moving from 1.0 FTE to 0.8 FTE	March 1, 2025

V. Reports

Executive Director Report

Federal Special Education News

On March 20th, the White House issued an Executive Order (EO) to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED), which would shift programs like IDEA and student loans to other agencies. IDEA, a federal law ensuring education for children with disabilities, is a key responsibility of the ED. The department ensures these students receive a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and provides support for training, technical assistance, and family services.

While only Congress can officially dismantle the ED or IDEA, the administration can defund and cut staff, effectively shutting it down. Already, nearly 50% of ED employees have been let go, and \$900 million in education research contracts were canceled. In response, 21 states, including Minnesota, have filed lawsuits to block the EO, and legal challenges are expected.

Staffing updates



Teacher of the Deaf Hard of Hearing (TDHH): Due to a decrease in students with DHH needs and a voluntary reduction by one TDHH, a 1.0 FTE position will be reduced to 0.80 FTE, effective March 1, 2025.

Special Education Supervisor: The special education supervisor supporting the Dassel-Cokato (D-C) District has resigned effective June 30, 2025, to move closer to family. The current supervisor supporting the HLWW district, who resides in D-C, has requested to be reassigned to D-C starting FY26, which has been approved by both MAWSECO and D-C leadership. This reassignment leaves the HLWW Supervisor position vacant for FY26. The position has been posted, and interviews are scheduled for mid-April, with optimism for filling the position with a qualified candidate.

MDE Indicator Data Collection

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has started the Indicator Data Collection (IDC) process for 2025. This data collection is part of the state's performance and federal compliance requirements under IDEA. Each district, including those in MAWSECO, has been selected to participate in file reviews and compliance submissions. This process is separate from the MDE Due Process Monitoring and MDE Fiscal Monitoring currently being completed. The Director of Special Education will lead the IDC file reviews for member districts and MAWSECO programs. If non-compliance is found, she will work with supervisors to ensure proper training and corrective actions are taken.

Disproportionality - Year 2 Letter Received in Member District

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) requires states to identify districts with significantly disproportionate rates of special education identification, restrictive placements, and disciplinary actions for students with disabilities. On March 17, a member district was notified that it met the threshold for significant disproportionality in the 2024-25 school year, specifically regarding Speech-Language Impairment in White students. This is a Year 2 Letter. MAWSECO's special education leadership will assess the causes of this disproportionality. If a district meets the threshold for three consecutive years, it will be required to set aside 15% of federal Part B funds for Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS).

MDE Parent Engagement Surveys

Each spring, the MDE Special Education Division asks families of students with IEPs in selected districts to complete a family engagement survey. The survey allows families to provide feedback on their involvement in the IEP process and their level of support from teachers and administrators. The Director of Special Education will collaborate with



special education supervisors to gather the required parent information to fulfill this request.

MDE State Special Education Complaint Data

The FY24 Dispute Resolution Annual Report reveals a record high in state complaints, with 236 complaints compared to 116 in FY20. From July 1, 2023, to August 29, 2024, MDE issued 159 decisions, 103 of which (65%) found noncompliance. As of this fiscal year, MDE has received 175 complaints and is on track to exceed last year's total.

Director of Business Services Report

Delayed Egress Update

The delayed egress project is progressing, with Brothers on-site last week to complete most of the wire pulling in preparation for installation. They plan to be on-site the week of March 24-28 to do the noisier installation work while students and most staff are away. While the project won't be finalized before students return, they aim to have it completed by the following week.

Final Federal Allocations

Final federal allocations were shared with Business Managers last Thursday. Notably, the Fin 420/620 allocation increased from \$150,944.12 to \$166,611.65, reflecting an overall increase of \$15,667.53.

FY24 We met Maintenance of Effort

As a Special Education Cooperative, MAWSECO meets the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirement collectively, meaning that MOE is assessed for the entire cooperative and its seven member districts, not individually. Although MAWSECO did not maintain MOE last year due to additional funding sources outside of special education, the cooperative remains in compliance because MOE is a group effort.

MOE refers to the requirement for federally funded programs, like IDEA Part B, to maintain a consistent level of local funding for the education of children with disabilities from year to year. LEAs receiving IDEA funds must budget and spend at least the same amount of local or state and local funds for this purpose. The MOE levels for budgeting and spending are called the "eligibility standard" and the "compliant standard."

Year Over Year MAWSECO Service Bills by District

At the Executive Advisory Committee meeting, a request was made to compile district-level data showing each district's purchase service and MDE Tuition 1 bills from



MAWSECO over the past four years, along with related student data for context. The District Business Managers were consulted to determine the most useful student information to include. The consensus was to add student count data to the purchase service information and include student data for the SEDRA tuition billing to provide more context. Although student-level data has not yet been added, work is ongoing, and it is expected to be completed by the end of March.

Program Administrator Report

Journeys

This year has been successful in blending new and veteran staff, who have effectively combined established practices with new ideas. The new schedule has introduced valuable routines, providing students with opportunities to work in both small and large groups, helping them practice skills in various settings.

One student has fully transitioned back to Annandale, another is beginning their transition to Litchfield, and a third will soon start transitioning back to Rockford. Additionally, a student has recently joined the program from Dassel-Cokato. The students have also completed their MCA tests for the year.

STEP

STEP Graduation will be held on May 23rd at 10:00, with 13 graduates from the districts of Annandale, Dassel-Cokato, Delano, HLWW, Maple Lake, and Rockford. Of the graduates, only 4 will continue in the program next year, but 15 new students are expected to join, bringing significant changes and new opportunities for the program.

The coffee shop has been successful this year, with students adding new options. The introduction of a 'credit card' payment option has provided students with an opportunity to enhance their cashiering skills.

Trek

Exciting news: One student from the program has successfully transitioned back to HLWW this school year! Trek is nearly fully staffed and is looking forward to welcoming another student toward the end of the school year. Students and staff are preparing for the last 26 days of school, with a theme for each letter of the alphabet. They are open to any fun ideas for learning or activities, and encourage suggestions.

VI. Action Items

A. Old Business



1. Policy Review: [Second Reading]

A motion to approve the listed policies with changes as recommended was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Jessica Johnson. Motion carried unanimously.

Policies with approved changes include:

Policy 101 - Legal Status of the School District

Policy 102 - Equal Educational Opportunity

Policy 207 - Public Hearings

Policy 211 - Criminal or Civil Action Against School District, School Board Member, Employee, or Student

Policy 412 - Expense Reimbursement

Policy 455 - Tax Sheltered Annuities

Policy 456 - Post Retirement Health Care Savings Plan

Policy 519 - Interviews of Students by Outside Agencies

Policy 521 - Student Disability Nondiscrimination

Policy 713 - Use of Credit Cards

Policy 713 - Student Activity Accounting (New)

B. New Business

1. Program Calendars

A motion to approve the 2025-2026 MAWSECO Program Calendars was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Sarah Baker. The board unanimously approved the 2025-2026 MAWSECO Program Calendars as presented.

2. Resolutions for Non-Renewal of Staff with Tier 1 and Out of Field Permissions that expire at the end of 2024-2025 school year

Cindy Miller introduced the resolutions for the non-renewal of staff with Tier 1 and out of field permissions including Martin Aberle, Gregory Amundson, Cassandra Drusch, Olivia Engel, Tehya Lehmann, and Kristina Yaedke. Gena Jacobson seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Gena Jacobson: Aye; Cindy Miller, Aye; Sarah Baker, Aye; Kelsey Puncochar, Absent; Jessica Johnson, Aye. Tim Oster: Aye, Jen Rasset: Absent. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Resolution for Proposing Placement of Tenured Teacher on Unrequested Leave of Absence



Motion for the adoption of the forgoing resolution proposing placement of tenured teacher, Carrie Schoon, on unrequested leave of absence due to licensure was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote: Gena Jacobson: Aye; Cindy Miller, Aye; Sarah Baker, Aye; Kelsey Puncochar, Absent; Jessica Johnson, Aye. Tim Oster: Aye, Jen Rasset: Absent. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Proposed MAWSECO Program Administration Restructuring and Succession Plan

A motion was made by Jessica Johnson to approve the restructuring proposal as outlined with the exception of the addition of the proposed Director of Educational Programs role so that board members may further review the proposed position. The motion was seconded by Gena Jacobson. The motion passed by a vote of 4 to 1.

Voting yes: Gena Jacobson, Sarah Baker, Tim Oster, Jessica Johnson

Voting no: Cindy Miller

VII. Future Board Meetings

- A. April 22, 2025, 5:00 p.m., MAWSECO Education Center, Howard Lake
- B. May 27, 2025, 5:00 p.m., Wings Alternative Program, Litchfield
- C. June 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m., MAWSECO Education Center, Howard Lake

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 p.m. was made by Gena Jacobson and seconded by Sarah Baker. Motion carried unanimously.

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