



## Meeker and Wright Special Education Cooperative

720 9th Ave, Howard Lake, MN 55349

Joint Powers Board Meeting

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 - 5:30 pm

Meeting Minutes - *Unofficial*

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**Present:** Sarah Baker, Alex Carlson, Gena Jacobson, Cindy Miller, Kelsey Puncochar, Jen Rasset, Kevin Sjodin  
**Absent:** None  
**Others Present:** Colleen Carlson, Kim Geurts, Melissa Hanson, Kate Ryan, Jill Sundblad

### I. Call to Order/ Board Roll Call

The Regular meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

A roll call was conducted:

Sarah Baker: Present

Alex Carlson: Present *via Google Meet due to a scheduling conflict*

Gena Jacobson: Present

Cindy Miller: Present

Kelsey Puncochar: Present

Jen Rasset: Absent

Kevin Sjodin: Present

A quorum of six board members was established.

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

Jen Rasset: Present (5:37 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

Cindy Miller - aye

Kelsey Puncochar - aye

Jen Rasset - absent

Kevin Sjodin - aye

Motion carried with six votes in favor.

### IV. Consent Agenda

*Jen Rasset arrived at 5:37 pm.*



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A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Jen Rasset.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye  
Alex Carlson - aye  
Gena Jacobson - aye  
Cindy Miller - aye  
Kelsey Puncochar - aye  
Jen Rasset - aye  
Kevin Sjodin - aye

Motion carried with seven 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: Ethan Schwehr, School Psychologist, Effective June 5, 2026
  - Contract Changes/Approvals/Position Changes
    - Contract Change: Mary Krokstrom, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, moving from 0.80 FTE to 0.75 FTE, Effective August 24, 2026
    - Position Change: Nancy Walter, from 1.0 FTE General/Special Education Teacher, Wings to 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher, STEP, Effective August 24, 2026
  - At-Will Agreements
    - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Colleen Carlson, Director of Educational Programs
    - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Andrea Fladeboe, Director of Special Education
    - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Kim Geurts, Director of Finance
    - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Laura Holmquist, Program Administrator
    - Addendum to At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Chad Johnson, Program Administrator
    - At-Will Agreement: 2026-2028, Elizabeth Sullivan, Director of Human Resources
    - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Jill Sundblad, Program Administrator
    - At-Will Agreement: 2025-2027, Nathan Woodford, Program Administrator
- Contract Items
  - Non-Member Purchased Services Contracts



- RRSEC Audiology Purchased Services Contract
- Other Contracts
  - Red Rover Annual Subscription

## V. Informational Items

### A. Executive Director Report

#### *Federal Appropriations for IDEA*

Last Tuesday, the education spending bill for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 was signed into law, maintaining education funding largely at current levels and securing federal special education funding for the 2026–2027 school year. IDEA Part B State Grants were finalized at \$14.23 billion, representing a \$20 million increase over FY25 levels. The bill and accompanying report also clarify that education funds cannot be transferred outside of the Department of Education, require that staffing levels be sufficient to carry out responsibilities under education laws, and mandate that funds be distributed in a timely manner.

#### *Non-Member Purchased Services Contracts*

To help reduce purchased service expenses for its members, MAWESCO is providing contracted services to non-member districts in several specialized areas. For FY26, contracts include a 0.50 FTE Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing with Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose (December 2025–June 2026), a Special Education Teacher licensed in Physical Health Disabilities for Little Falls Public Schools (November 2025–June 2026), and hourly Audiologist support (up to 0.40 FTE) for Rum River Special Education Cooperative (February 2026–April 2026). Additionally, an FY27 contract is anticipated with Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose for 0.39 FTE (70 days) of Audiology services during the 2026–2027 school year, with expectations of establishing a long-term partnership beyond FY27.

#### *2026 MN Legislative Advocacy*

The 2026 Minnesota Legislative Session began on February 17 and, as a non-budget (policy/bonding) year, will focus primarily on policy initiatives. The Senate holds a one-seat DFL majority, while the House is evenly split at 67–67, operating under a power-sharing agreement with a GOP Speaker and co-chaired committees. The constitutional adjournment deadline is May 18. Melissa will join other directors on February 27 at the Centennial Office Building for “Donut Dialogues,” hosted by Representative Bianca Virnig, to discuss special education with legislators. Additionally, MAWESCO special education administrators plan to attend MASE Day at the Capitol on March 4 to advocate for special education priorities. The 2026 legislative platforms for MASE and MASA are available for reference. All state legislative and constitutional offices will be up for election in November 2026.

#### *Wings Program - Learning Space*

Due to space limitations at Wings Alternative Program, two teachers have been sharing a classroom since last school year. Recently, the Wings Treatment Center co-owner and director made the dining room available as an additional



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classroom space when it is not being used for meals, helping to alleviate the space constraints. Staff recently began utilizing the dining room as an additional educational space and are working through some technology issues and interruptions. We have yet to determine if this will be a viable long-term option.

*Update: Secondary Transition Programming*

MAWSECO is currently collecting final district referrals for the STEP Program for the 2026–2027 school year. A third STEP teaching position has been posted and recently filled which will support program expansion to better meet the needs of referred students. Additionally, special education director, Andrea Fladeboe, has begun a District Secondary Transition Program Evaluation and Gap Analysis to identify needed resources and supports at both the district and MAWSECO levels to ensure comprehensive secondary transition programming for all students. The team will also visit Sherburne-Northern Wright Special Education Cooperative on March 13 to learn more about their secondary transition programming options.

**B. Director of Finance Report**

FY27 budget meetings are scheduled through mid-March. MAWSECO has been notified by the Minnesota Department of Education that it met Special Education Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements for FY25, meaning it did not reduce expenditures for students with disabilities from required funding sources, including local funds alone or in combination with state funds, either in total or on a per capita basis. The first FY26 MEGS request for Federal Funds 419, totaling \$1,006,603.69, was submitted on February 13, 2026. A revised FY26 budget draft was presented to Superintendents and Business Managers on February 17, 2026.

**C. Journeys, STEP, and Trek Program Administrator Report & Tours of Programs**

*Journeys*

The Journeys program has benefited from this year’s schedule, which has helped establish consistent routines while providing students with opportunities to work in both small and large groups throughout the day. This structure allows students to practice and apply their skills across a variety of settings. Recently, one student successfully transitioned back to Delano. The program has also experienced some changes, with one student unexpectedly leaving and two new students joining—one last week and another this week. Students will begin MCA testing at the start of March. Flexible seating has been a valuable addition, helping students learn to navigate different expectations and advocate for their needs. Additionally, the regulation room established last year continues to support students in developing and strengthening their self-regulation skills.

*STEP*

The STEP program will have one student from the Litchfield district graduating this school year. Because of the student’s birthday, their last day will be the day before spring break, and they have chosen to celebrate with a small gathering on



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their final day rather than participate in the larger graduation ceremony at the end of the year. Looking ahead, the program will be adding a teaching position next year due to a significant increase in referrals from member districts. With 17 students currently enrolled and the potential for approximately 35 students next year, the team is working to determine adjustments needed to maintain high-quality programming. Additionally, the coffee shop remains a success, with students continuing to expand the menu by preparing new options.

#### *Trek*

The Trek program has maintained consistent staffing and student enrollment throughout the entire school year, providing stability for learning and growth. There has been an increased focus on creating more group opportunities to help students broaden their experiences and practice their skills in collaborative settings. Students have also been participating in group lunchtime, with supportive visuals in place to help them order food more independently. Additionally, students will begin their Alternate MCA testing in March.

#### **D. Policy Review [First Reading]**

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

1. Policy 403 - Discipline, Suspension and Dismissal of School District Employees
2. Policy 408 - Subpoena of a School District Employee
3. Policy 413 - Harassment and Violence
4. Policy 414 - Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse
5. Policy 417 - Chemical Use/Abuse
6. Policy 418 - Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free School
7. Policy 419 - Tobacco-Free Environment; Possession and Use of Tobacco, Tobacco-Related Devices, and Electronic Delivery Devices; Vaping Awareness and Prevention Instruction
8. Policy 420 - Students and Employees with HIV/AIDS and Certain Other Communicable Diseases and Infectious Conditions
9. Policy 421 - Gifts to Employees
10. Policy 422 - Policies Incorporated by Reference
11. Policy 424 - License Status

#### **E. FY26 Revised Budget [First Reading]**

Director of Finance, Kim Geurts, presented the revised FY26 Budget for a first reading. No action was taken.

### **VI. Action Items**

#### **A. Old Business**

##### **1. Policy Review [2nd Reading]**



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A motion to approve the listed policies changes was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Kevin Sjodin.

Policy 401 - Equal Employment Opportunity  
Policy 402 - Disability Nondiscrimination Policy  
Policy 410 - Family and Medical Leave Policy  
Policy 416 - Drug, Alcohol, and Cannabis Testing

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

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

## **2. Policy Rescission [2nd Reading]**

A motion to rescind the listed policies was made by Cindy Miller and seconded by Gena Jacobson.

Policy 431 - Direct Deposit  
Policy 451 - Teacher Probation and Evaluation

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

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

## **B. New Business**

### **1. Resolution Reducing and Discontinuing Educational Programs and Positions**

A motion to approve the Resolution Reducing and Discontinuing Education Programs and Positions was made by Kevin Sjodin and seconded by Sarah Baker.

Roll Call Vote:  
Sarah Baker - aye



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Alex Carlson - aye  
Gena Jacobson - aye  
Cindy Miller - aye  
Kelsey Puncochar - aye  
Jen Rasset - aye  
Kevin Sjodin - aye

Motion carried with seven votes in favor.

**VII. Future Board Meetings**

- A. March 31, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, MAWSECO Ed Center, Howard Lake
- B. April 28, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, Sholund School for Girls, Annandale
- C. May 26, 2026, 5:30 pm, Regular Board Meeting, Wings Alternative Program, Litchfield

**VIII. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kelsey Puncochar and seconded by Cindy Miller.

Roll Call Vote:

Sarah Baker - aye  
Alex Carlson - aye  
Gena Jacobson - aye  
Cindy Miller - aye  
Kelsey Puncochar - aye  
Jen Rasset - aye  
Kevin Sjodin - aye

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 pm.

*\*A tour of the Journeys, STEP, and Trek programs by Jill Sundblad was taken after the meeting adjourned.*

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