

Board Retreat Day 1

Thursday, October 22, 2026 8:00 AM

MSAD Wilkins Hall, 615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault, MN 55021

1. 8:00 - 8:10 AM:
 - Welcome New Board Member Autumn Moder
 - Oath of Office
 - Board Introductions
2. 8:10 - 9:15 AM:
 - Open Meeting Law Refresher Training
 - Board Manual Review
3. 9:15 - 10:00 AM:
 - Introductions and Engagement with MSA School Leaders
4. 10:15 - 11:15 AM:
 - Presentation: AI in Special Education, Christina Wernau
5. 12:15 - 1:00 PM (Smith Hall):
MSAD Showcase
6. 1:15 - 2:00 PM:
 - Cognia Accreditation, Justin Cyboron
7. 2:00 - 4:00 PM:
 - Strategic Plan Year 1 Action Steps



Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

OATH OF OFFICE

I, **Autumn Moder**

(Name of Person Elected or Appointed)

do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Minnesota, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of:

Minnesota State Academies Board

(Name of Advisory Council, Board, or Committee)

Minnesota Department of Education Representative

(Position or Seat Name)

To the best of my judgment and ability, so help me God.

I certify that I am authorized to execute this oath, and I further certify that I understand that by signing this oath I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Minnesota Statutes section 609.48 as if I had signed this oath before a notary public.

Signature

Date

Return completed oath electronically to: official.documents@state.mn.us

Or mail completed oath to:

Minnesota Secretary of State, ATTN: Official Documents

Veterans Services Building, 20 W. 12th Street, Suite 201, St. Paul, MN 55155



Artificial Intelligence in Special Education

Companion handout for the Minnesota State Academies (MSA) Board presentation,
October 22, 2026

Presented by Christian Wernau, Regional Low Incidence Facilitator, Region 10 Low
Incidence Projects

What AI is, and what it isn't

Artificial intelligence (AI) finds patterns in huge amounts of data to predict and generate text, images and audio. It doesn't think, understand or use judgment, and it can be confidently wrong. It is a powerful tool, not a replacement for the people who know a student.

AI tools already in our schools

- **General-purpose assistants:** ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Microsoft Copilot and Perplexity. Free education versions, such as ChatGPT for Teachers and Claude for Teachers, add student-privacy protections that personal accounts don't have.
- **Teacher toolkits:** MagicSchool AI and Brisk Teaching.
- **Built for special education:** Goalbook, Lessi, Nookly and SpEd Forms.
- **SpEd Forms, MSA's Individualized Education Program (IEP) system:** now piloting AI to draft goals, objectives and accommodations, with a full accessibility update planned by April 2027.

- **Accessibility and voice:** ElevenLabs, Superwhisper, Microsoft Seeing AI and Be My AI.
- **Creating visual materials:** Gamma and Napkin AI.
- **Not for school use:** Grok, because of documented child-safety failures.

Where AI can help

- Less paperwork, so staff time goes back to students.
- Materials personalized for each learner.
- Stronger access: image descriptions, text-to-speech, braille-ready files and voices for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.
- Support for transition planning.
- Preparing students for a world with AI.

What to watch for

- AI can make up facts and sources. A person must check every output.
- Bias from training data can affect results for students with disabilities.
- Over-reliance can replace the learning a student needs to do.
- Access to devices, internet and training is not equal for all students and families.

“An algorithm can't know a child.” (Council for Exceptional Children, 2026)

Protecting student information

1. **Use an approved tool.** Choose district-approved tools with a signed data agreement, not personal accounts.

2. **Share only what's needed.** Keep names, birthdates, ID numbers and identifying details out unless the district authorizes it.
3. **Combine the data.** Use group or class results instead of one student's scores when you can.
4. **Check the output.** A person reviews it before it goes into an IEP or home to a family.

Minnesota law (Minnesota Statutes, section 13.32, subdivision 13): technology providers can't use student data for commercial purposes, must return or destroy it within 90 days after a contract ends, and schools must notify families about these providers each year.

Two lines AI doesn't cross

- **IEP translation:** AI alone doesn't meet the legal standard for official IEP documents. A qualified human translator must verify.
- **Access for deaf and hard of hearing people:** AI captioning can supplement, but never replace, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) or qualified interpreters.

Questions worth asking

1. Which AI tools are staff and students already using, and who approved them?
2. Do we have an AI policy? Have we reviewed Model Policy 625 from the Minnesota School Boards Association and Minnesota Association of School Administrators?
3. Which tools have a signed data privacy agreement, and who keeps that list?
4. How do we make sure AI tools are accessible to our deaf, hard of hearing, blind and low-vision students, staff and families?

5. How will staff learn to use AI well, including what never goes into a chatbot?
6. How do we keep AI in a supporting role on IEP teams?

Learn more

Companion website: [\[ADD SITE LINK\]](#). It includes everything from today, a glossary and all 13 questions.

- [Minnesota Department of Education: Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Education: Creating AI Guidance](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children: AI Hub](#)
- [TeachAI: AI Guidance for Schools Toolkit](#)
- [Student Data Privacy Consortium](#)
- [Common Sense Privacy Program](#)

Contact

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This handout is available in large print or other accessible formats on request.

Artificial Intelligence in Special Education

What it is, what's already in our schools, and the questions worth asking



Minnesota State Academies Board | October 22, 2026

Christian Wernau, Regional Low Incidence Facilitator, Region 10 Low Incidence Projects

You've already used AI today



Spam filters

Your inbox sorts junk mail by spotting patterns.



Autocorrect

Your phone predicts the next word you'll type.



Recommendations

Streaming services guess what you'll watch next.



Navigation

Maps predict traffic and reroute you.

What's new is AI that creates: text, images, audio and more, on request.

What AI is, and what it isn't



AI is...

- Pattern recognition at massive scale
- Prediction: the likeliest next word, image or answer
- Content generation from a prompt
- A tool that works best with a skilled person guiding it



AI is not...

- Thinking or understanding
- Exercising judgment or ethics
- Always accurate: it can be confidently wrong
- A replacement for the people who know the student

Five words that make the rest make sense



Prompt

The question or instruction you type to an AI tool.



Generative AI

AI that creates new content: text, images, audio, video.



Large language model

The engine behind chatbots, trained on huge amounts of text.



Hallucination

When AI produces false information that sounds convincing.



Bias

Skewed results that reflect gaps or inequities in training data.

17

AI tools educators in our region are already using or exploring

Grouped into five families

1. General-purpose assistants
2. Teacher toolkits
3. Built for special education
4. Accessibility and voice
5. Creating visual materials

General-purpose AI assistants

ChatGPT (OpenAI)

The best-known chatbot. Drafting, summarizing, brainstorming.

Claude (Anthropic)

Chatbot strong at long documents and careful writing.

Google Gemini + Gems

Built into Google Workspace. Gems are custom, reusable assistants.

Microsoft Copilot

Built into Microsoft 365. Available to students 13+ on school accounts.

Perplexity

AI search engine that shows its sources for each answer.

Grok (xAI)

Chatbot built into X. Serious child-safety concerns (see privacy slide).

Special education uses: drafting parent letters, simplifying text, brainstorming accommodations, summarizing research.

Free education versions for teachers



ChatGPT for Teachers

Free for verified U.S. K-12 staff through June 2028. FERPA-aligned protections; not used for model training by default.



Claude for Teachers

Launched July 2026, free for verified K-12 teachers. K-12 data agreement; conversations never used for training. Built with the AFT.



Gemini and Copilot on school accounts

Covered by the district's Google or Microsoft education agreement when used through school-managed accounts.



The key distinction: a school-managed education account is not the same as a teacher's personal free account. The protections only apply to the education version.

Teacher toolkits



MagicSchool AI

- 80+ ready-made teacher tools: lesson plans, rubrics, text leveling, IEP goal drafts
- Student-facing version with teacher controls
- Signed data privacy agreements available through SDPC



Brisk Teaching

- Chrome extension that works inside Google Docs, Slides and websites
- Levels a reading passage, gives writing feedback, builds quizzes
- Integrates with Claude for Teachers

Why teachers like them: ready-made prompts mean less time learning to "talk to" AI.

Built for special education



Goalbook

IEP goal and instruction toolkit. Its AI feature, Threads, connects present levels, goals and specially designed instruction.



Lessi

Turns IEP goals into lessons and visual supports. Exports accessible web pages, EPUB and braille-embossable files.



Nookly

Creates personalized visual supports, stories, songs and activities for autistic students and young learners.



SpEd Forms

The IEP system many Minnesota districts already use. Now beginning to add AI features.

These tools handle the most sensitive data we have: IEPs. Ask for a signed data agreement before use.

Accessibility and voice



ElevenLabs

Natural-sounding text-to-speech and personal voice creation. Free Impact Program voices for people losing speech, used with AAC devices.



Superwhisper

Speech-to-text dictation for writing. Can run entirely on the device, so audio doesn't leave the computer.



Seeing AI and Be My AI

Free phone apps that describe scenes, read text and identify objects for blind and low-vision users.



A clear line for deaf and hard of hearing students: AI captioning is not a substitute for CART or qualified interpreters. Its accuracy doesn't meet the legal accessibility standard.

Creating visual materials



Gamma

Builds slide decks, documents and web pages from a short outline.

Example: a visual lesson summary or a family-night presentation in minutes.



Napkin AI

Turns written text into diagrams, flowcharts and infographics.

Example: turning a classroom routine into a step-by-step visual.

Special education uses: visual schedules, concept maps, graphic organizers, more ways to show learning.

Where AI can help



Less paperwork

Drafting progress notes, adapted materials and parent letters, so staff time goes back to students.



Personalization at scale

Materials leveled, translated or reformatted for each learner.



Access

Image description, text-to-speech, braille-ready files and AAC voices.



Transition planning

Exploring careers, practicing interviews and building independence skills.



Future readiness

Students will live and work with AI. Teaching them to use it well is part of the job.

"Our role is to ensure students are prepared for the future." Council for Exceptional Children

What to watch for



Confidently wrong

AI makes up facts and sources. Every output needs a human check.



Bias in, bias out

Ask vendors whose data trained the tool, and whether students like ours were included.



Over-reliance

Scaffolding a skill is different from replacing the thinking a student needs to build.



Equity gaps

Devices, internet and training aren't equal across students and families.

***“An algorithm
can't know a
child.”***

Teri Marx and David Bateman, Council for
Exceptional Children, on AI and the
future of the IEP

A simple way to sort the tools



Go, with a signed agreement

Education versions that offer a FERPA data agreement. Confirm it's signed before staff use.

ChatGPT for Teachers, Claude for Teachers, Gemini and Copilot on school accounts, MagicSchool, Goalbook, Lessi, SpEd Forms



Caution: no student information

Fine for teacher tasks like slides, visuals and dictation. Keep names and IEP details out unless reviewed.

Brisk, Gamma, Napkin, Perplexity, Nookly, ElevenLabs, Superwhisper, and any personal free account



Stop: not for school use

Documented safety failures, or student data going somewhere it shouldn't.

Grok (Common Sense Media: "among the worst we've seen"). Student information in any consumer chatbot.

Protecting student information in practice



Keep out of AI tools unless your district authorizes it

- Names of students or family members
- Addresses, birthdates, student ID numbers
- Parent, guardian or emergency contacts
- Discipline, health or disability details tied to a student
- Clues that identify a student when combined, such as grade + disability + school

Before you type a prompt

1

Use an approved tool. District-approved, with a signed data agreement. Not a personal account.

2

Share only what's needed. Even in approved tools, use "Student A" for names, 00/00/0000 for birthdates.

3

Combine the data. Use group or class results instead of one student's scores when you can.

4

Check the output. Review it before it goes into an IEP or home to a family.

Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. § 13.32, subd. 13): technology providers can't use student data commercially, must return or destroy it within 90 days after a contract ends, and schools must notify families about these providers each year.

Two lines AI doesn't cross



IEP translation

AI translation alone does not meet the legal standard for official IEP documents. A qualified human translator is required. AI-assisted drafting plus human verification is the right model.

Basis: IDEA, FERPA, Title VI and Lau v. Nichols (1974); OSEP policy letter on IEP translation (2016)



Access for deaf and hard of hearing students

AI captioning does not replace CART captioning or qualified interpreters. It can supplement, never substitute.

Basis: accuracy of current AI captioning does not meet the legal accessibility standard

Questions worth asking

1

Which AI tools are staff and students already using, and who approved them?

2

Do we have an AI policy? Have we reviewed MSBA/MASA Model Policy 625?

3

Which tools have a signed data privacy agreement, and who keeps that list?

4

How do we make sure AI tools are accessible to our deaf, hard of hearing, blind and low-vision students, staff and families?

5

How will staff learn to use AI well, including what never goes into a chatbot?

6

How do we keep AI in a supporting role on IEP teams?

The companion site has the full set of 13 questions.

Where to go next

Minnesota

MDE: AI in Education
MSBA/MASA Model Policy
625

Special education

CEC AI Hub
CIDDL
OSEP IEP translation letter
(2016)

National frameworks

TeachAI Toolkit
CoSN: AI in K-12
EDSAFE AI Alliance

Data privacy

Student Data Privacy
Consortium
Common Sense Privacy
Program



Companion site: Artificial Intelligence in Special Education. Everything from today, plus links, glossary and all 13 questions. See your handout for the link.

AI is a powerful tool. People who know the child make the decisions.



Questions and discussion

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