School Administrative Unit #7
Meeting Minutes

Date	August 13, 2026
Time	6:00 p.m. SAU School Board Meeting
Location	CAES

Attendance

School Board Members

Clarksville		**Colebrook**		**Columbia**		**Pittsburg**	
P	Julie Semprebon	E	Tim Stevens	P	Kristin Brooks	P	Lindsey Gray
P	Linda White	P	Cayenne Amey	E	Stacey Campbell	P	Jamie Gray
E	Kathy Koperwhats	P	Rhonda Lyons	P	Diane Little	P	Willard Ormsbee
		P	Robert Murphy			E	Daniel Kurtz
		E	Mary Jolles			E	Reggie Parker
		P	Rick Bagley				
		P	Julie Brunault				

Stewartstown		**SAU #7**		**Public**
P	Lisa Kenny	P	Bridget Cross, Business Manager	?
P	Betsy Gray	P	Dana Hilliard, Superintendent	Betty MacKillop
P	Philip Pariseau	P	Jen Mathieu, Curriculum Director	Linda Kuhn
		P	Chris Paquette, IT	Paul Kuhn
		E	Jen Noyes, Student Services Coordinator	
		P	Elizabeth Griffin, CTE Director	

Roll Call:

- The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Vice Chairman Jamie Gray

Principal Wheelock passed out a day in the life of a Mohawk student sheet.

Hearing of the Public: Open hearing of the public at 6:02pm. Close hearing of the public at 6:03pm.

Superintendent Hilliard spoke about what is required to be posted for the public. The notice of the meeting details is required but agendas are not. Regarding bids and proposals- those materials should not be included in the public packet and are not necessary to be. Confidential documents are also not required. We include a great deal more than is required in our public packets online.
Julie B. asked about sealed bids and opening them at board meetings. Bridget explained that our policy doesn't state it's required to be as that was the school board's interpretation if it followed your policy.

Agenda Adjustments: None

Reading of the Minutes:

<u>Lindsey Gray/Linda White</u>: Motion to approve the minutes of May 14, 2026
Vote: Motion Carries

School Administrative Unit #7 Reports
Superintendent Dana Hilliard – We were awarded the Tillotson grant for the SAU study in the amount of $22,400. In October the consultants will be visiting all three schools to meet with staff, students and Administration for information regarding the makeup of our schools. They will be reviewing budgeting, transportation, facilities, staffing, and programming. In about 15 weeks the study should be completed and will provide 4 options – 1 with no changes and the other 3 will be based on options that they provide. We don't know what those will look like until they're presented. We will meet collectively to review the 4 options and determine next steps. Right now, the SAU staff are just providing them with information. They plan on sending out surveys as well to gather data. This will hopefully strengthen the quality of education while keeping our taxes as low as feasibly possible.

Special Services Director Jennifer Noyes –
She is out on vacation but if anyone has any questions they can reach out.

Technology Director Chris Paquette –
Alma new year seems to be working well. We seem to be on track for the new year. Matt and Chris are reviewing all devices to ensure they are ready for students and staff this upcoming school year. Instrasystems is reviewing all of our access points and units to see if we can consolidate this. Backups are still being looked into.

Curriculum Director Jennifer Mathieu –
I'm not sure which is busier – summer or the school year. DOE has changed how they do their grants. We've had a lot of back and forth and are not allowing activities that were previously approved.
Been working on licensing with some of our new hires and others who are working on renewing or attaining their license. We did have 2 staff members who became Teachers for 26-27 that were previously employed in SAU 7 as Paras.

Business Manager Bridget Cross –
Bridget reviewed her report and some highlights.

CTE Director Elizabeth Griffin –
Elizabeth introduced herself and provided an update regarding programs. Health Sciences will be moving to Pittsburg School. The Principal is hoping some Pittsburg students will enroll. 2 new IRC's – phlebotomy and medical assistant certifications will be provided to students who wish to pursue these. Academic integration- how are we increasing this in our CTE programs? We will implement 1:1 with teachers and training throughout the year so that multiple teachers can teach within the CTE programs. We will be very data driven with our CTE staff so we can evaluate students and have the data. Elizabeth is working with Chris and Jenn M to get embedded credits within that program. Lastly, the employer agreement and student agreements will be utilized this year. The employer agreement shows the expectations to employers on what students should be doing at the workplace. Student agreements set expectations as well for those that enroll in a work-based program or CTE class. On August 31st at 3pm there will be a CTE information session with the CTE Director. We are asking business partners, parents and students to attend.

Kim mentioned that schedules were done but students do have 5 days to change their schedules so enrollments/classes could change.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business:

<u>Cayenne Amey/Rick Bagley</u>: Motion to approve the 2026/2027 Coaching/Mentor Agreement with Esther Asbell in the amount of $4,000.00
VOTE: Motion Carries

NHSFFP's North Country School Funding Tour – They plan to come to the North Country on October 1st to speak with the North Country and will discuss how the states lack of obligation on assisting in funding still causes it to fall on the local taxpayer. We will announce the venue. They will speak to the public and boards.

ED306 Presentation – Jenn M spoke on the ED 306 rules which revised minimum standards for public schools' approval. All schools must follow these to be an accredited school. There were a few major changes such as the graduation requirements – prior it was based on seat time but now it has mostly switched over to competency language. Elizabeth will discuss some of the changes to CTE and ELO (outside of schoolwork-based learning opportunities). The local control piece of this is to determine the competencies that we use.
You must have a licensed principal and school counselor. They determine the size of students per grade level in each classroom. They do provide some guidance on instructional time. For graduation it is based on competencies. It includes recess for Grades K-6 but not snack or lunch.
Local Assessment & Accountability- paper trail and data to prove we are meeting the competencies with our rubrics, etc.. Classes can have competencies from different subject areas as well (history class includes English if they are writing reports). The basic 1, 2, 3, 4 counts or a rubric which dives deeper into what they must be competent with. It assists teachers in seeing if they are lacking in one area or require enrichment.
We must show student progress via report cards and progress reports.
For K it's more play-based curriculum.
For Grades 1-8 it includes specials and more intensive teaching strategies.
In HS students must engage with and apply ELA and Math competencies every year of enrollment to include embedded credits.
Kristin asked if the people who wrote this were teachers or worked in the classroom. Kristin thought 30 students in a classroom was excessive. Dana did say the team did interview and get recommendations from education staff. We also need to understand that there are larger schools that may easily have this many students. Dana said we are incredibly blessed with smaller classroom sizes in the North Country. Elizabeth said small groups are easier with more students as well.

CTE changes – They want the same language and standards amongst all CTE centers and programs. Must align with CBE and attain national industry standards. Must notify and inform students of the programs.
Must improve access to all students and communicate the opportunities available. Sending and receiving schools must connect and align schedules. Pittsburg had 9 out of 17 students show interest in CTE for the 26/27 school year. All competencies must align with industry standards nationally, review your business partnerships, and support postsecondary education. Removal of clusters based on specific programs (business cluster, culinary cluster, etc..) CTE can improve upon FACS/electives. Open more pathways than they currently have.

Transcripts – if we have a student who relocates here – how do we know what competencies they have met? We are looking to include competencies met on their transcripts.

Counseling – Jen N wasn't here to present but please contact her with any questions. The board was provided with the slides.
Standards make up the puzzle pieces to meet the competencies.
Transferable skills "work study practices"
Competency is the overarching item
Standards are below and then the learning target is tied to this.
Jenn M showed an example of the Math competencies for all grade levels and courses.

The board took a 10-minute break at 7:03pm. The meeting resumed at 7:14pm.

Cayenne Amey/Rick Bagley: Motion to adopt the SAU #7 Competencies and Curriculum
VOTE: Motion Carries

HB1300 and HB 564 Presentation –
These are signed laws- no more debate; these have passed into law.

HB1300: Single question: Do you want to impose a tax cap on your local budget and your SAU budget? If voted yes, you vote yes for both. 3/5 majority to pass (combined for SAU budget). Individually it would be 3/5 vote in your town to cap that budget. This will be voted on in November 2026. The cap on the SAU is limited to 6%.

> **Concerns:** Undermines local governance. Bypasses traditional sessions where communities workshop budgets. Forces school district tax cap decisions onto the November general election ballot, completely out of sync with when local school districts actually draft annual budgets. Tax rates are driven by factors that are completely out of our control, such as assessed valuations, fund balances from prior years, federal and state revenues. Imposes a state dictated, hard to overturn, question that requires 3/5 super majority. Ignores the state obligation as it doesn't fix structural educational inequalities or the state's failure to adequately fund public education, which drives local high tax rates.
>
> All warrant articles are part of the tax cap- so if you have a warrant article that allots $100,000 into the budget, that's considered part of the 6% tax cap.
>
> Concerns regarding SAU office 6% cap: We have multiple districts and separate voting towns; some could approve and others could reject. If both tax caps are approved (district and SAU), will make it difficult to meet both requirements- cannot vote differently for one than the other. Tax cap vote will be approved on the district level while the SAU 6% must have 3/5 majority to pass amongst all votes amongst all the towns. The 6% cap includes all operating costs of the SAU. We may be able to exclude Special Ed services, farm to school, and psych services. If we do, we are still beyond the cap for 26-27. Preliminary estimates based on 26-27 allocations and the 6% threshold on the $1.6 million budget is that we may have to reduce by $558,836 OR if we can deduct the services $192,020.
>
> If Health Insurance premiums go up- we still have to provide it, but if the cap is approved, we cannot pay more than what the default is (from previous year).
>
> Other concerns on HB1300- Tax Cap on District: Local tax cap may be overridden by a 3/5 majority on a budget question by paper ballot. Two of the factors used to calculate the maximum tax levy are not known by the warrants being posted or prior to the March annual meeting (inflation and net new taxable

growth). If the tax cap is approved in 2026 it would be effective for 27-28 & 28-29. If it's approved again in 2028 it's effective 29-30 and 30-31. Tax cap expires 1/1/2032.

Other concerns on HB1300 6% cap on SAU budget: Unsure if SAU tax cap can be overridden by a 3/5 majority on the district budget warrant article by ballot. If DRA says we didn't meet the district tax cap or SAU tax cap and no override was granted, the school board must reduce the appropriation. This means a budget that was approved by the voters will need to be reduced further, causing further cuts. The SAU budget is generally approved prior to the districts as a portion is part of the district budgets.

The tax cap is on the local portion of the school tax rate. The issue is that our tax rate is not driven by the **budget**, it's typically driven by the lack of revenues. This includes lack of adequacy aid received from the state (less Title funds). We keep our budget as low as we possibly can, still meeting the minimum adequate education requirements.

This is a state driven mandate question in the general election. Every town and city in the state has the opportunity to pass an individual tax cap on their own; the state is now dictating that we must take up this question.

Many questions remain unanswered regarding how DRA will calculate the tax caps to ensure compliance. We will not have all budgets prepared early enough to determine if we meet the cap.

School and SAU budgets are human driven- reduction in significant staffing decreases and direct loss of educational, extracurricular, and opportunities/services. Tax caps limit our ability for public schools within SAU 7 to remain competitive and offer 21st century educational opportunities.

If we cannot feasibly meet the SAU budget cap, limited options remain that could include closure of the SAU office and having to contract out all of these services and loss of local control.

HB564: SAU budget is now separate and implemented by paper ballot. Each town's ballots will be packed up and delivered to Columbia, who will have to sort them and give the final result of the vote. If the SAU budget does not pass, it goes to default- the previous budget of the previous year: no salary increases or benefit increases; you are frozen. This has to be warrant article 1 if the tax cap was approved in November.

We don't have a retention fund balance to use as a safety net.

Lawyer will be coming September 10, 2026, to do an informational presentation on all of this information.

Hearing of the Public:
Linda asked about busing to Pittsburg if it is budgeted. We explained that it was.
<u>Cayenne Amey/Linda White</u> : Close hearing of the public at 8:06pm.

Other Business:
Need to schedule a public hearing to accept and expend the Tillotson Grant on September 10, 2026, at 6:00 pm SCS. We will also hold an informational session for the community that our Attorney will present and provide a zoom option for the community.

Lindsey asked if it was legal to move the ballots and what process there was.

Non-Public: None

Meeting Dates:
SAU School Board Informational Session on HB 1300 and Public Hearing to accept NCHF Tillotson Grant will be Thursday, September 10, 2026, 6:00 pm Stewartstown Community School - Joint School Board Meeting will begin directly after
SAU School Board Meeting Thursday, Oct 29, 2026, 6:00 pm Clarksville Town Hall

Adjournment:
Cayenne Amey/Julie Brunault: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:09pm.
VOTE: MOTION CARRIES

Respectfully Submitted,
Bridget Cross
Business Manager

Board Adopted: August 13, 2026