

Education Minnesota

MEA conference emphasizes restorative practices, attracting new teachers

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ST. PAUL, Minn., Oct. 18, 2017 – Minnesota's largest professional development event for educators is back Thursday and Friday with a continued emphasis on helping students on the margins and a renewed focus on encouraging aspiring teachers to get their first jobs and stay in the profession.

The union-sponsored Minnesota Educator Academy, or MEA, conference, is Thursday and Friday, Oct. 19 and 20, at the Saint Paul RiverCentre. The event is from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Thursday and 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday. Sessions and speeches on Thursday are free and open to the public, but Friday sessions are restricted to members of Education Minnesota.

The 2017 conference features sessions on social justice advocacy, restorative practices, engaging students and keeping them in school, using technology in the classroom, and more. The job fair will return to the conference with 16 districts scheduled to participate.

The keynote speaker is Jeff Duncan-Andrade, East Oakland teacher and nationally recognized expert in teaching children living in poverty. Duncan-Andrade lectures around the world and has authored two books and numerous journal articles on effective teaching practices in schools. Duncan-Andrade will speak during the general session, which begins at 11:15 a.m. Thursday in Roy Wilkins Auditorium.

Other featured speakers include National Education Association Vice President Becky Pringle, who will lead a panel discussion on trauma-informed teaching and restorative practices at 9:50 a.m. Thursday in Ballroom A. Keron Blair, executive director of the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, who will talk about love as an act of resistance, or how educators can use their voices and knowledge to advocate for the type of public schools their students deserve. Blair will speak at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, also in Ballroom A.

Dr. Anne Gearity returns to the conference this year to share her insights into the mental health of students. Gearity has a mental health practice in Minneapolis and is on the clinical faculty of the University of Minnesota Department of Child Psychiatry, School of Social Work and Post-Graduate Certificate Program for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. Her intervention model is widely used to change attitudes and teaching approaches for stressed children.

There are more than 110 sessions over the two-day conference. Educators can also check out education-related products, services and programs in the NEA Member Benefits-sponsored MEA exhibit hall on Thursday.

Some notable workshops with strong visual appeal include:

“Fidgety Fairy Tales: The Mental Health Musical” 8:30 a.m. Thursday. Ballroom G. Reimagine familiar fairy tales to reduce the fear around children’s mental health, including The Ugly Duckling (bullying) and The Three Little Pigs (anxiety.)

“Mindfulness and Stress Reduction for Teachers” 2:50 p.m. Thursday. Ballroom A. Teachers learn practical mindfulness exercises for managing the stress of teaching, finding calm and avoiding burnout.

“Want to Teach Reading and Math? Try Singing!” 2:50 p.m. Thursday. Ballroom G. Learn the latest neuroscience research in how cross training the brain can raise reading and math achievement through music.

Thousands of educators, support professionals, parents and others attend the MEA conference every year. Educators attend the conference on their own time. Organized groups of Minnesota educators have met annually since 1861.

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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