Almost half of local contracts settled

The number of settled local 2017-19 contracts is approaching 50 percent, according to Education Minnesota data as of press time. This round of bargaining has a number of issues to deal with such as unrequested leaves of absence (ULA), tiered licensure and the rights of unions. Legislation eliminating statutory default language on unrequested leaves of absence (ULA) or layoff in Minn. Stat. 122A.40, subd. 11 passed the Legislature in June 2017. Local unions are on unrequested leaves of absence (ULA), tiered licensure and the rights of unions. Legislation eliminating statutory default language on unrequested leaves of absence (ULA) or layoff in Minn. Stat. 122A.40, subd. 11 passed the Legislature in June 2017. Local unions are making sure their contract language for layoffs does not just reference the state statute, but has language in place that outlines how layoffs will be handled. At least 11 local unions have reported bargained changes to their ULA language in their 2017-19 contract. These locals made changes to existing language using Education Minnesota’s suggested language. Locals who have approved the new ULA language include Holdingford, Cass Lake-Bena, Warren-Alvarado-Oslo and St. James. Education Minnesota will be sharing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) strategy this spring, focusing on locals who have only statutory references or no ULA process language in their current contracts. As court cases and proposed legislation to strip unions of their collective bargaining rights continues, locals are encouraged to include maintenance of membership language. School districts must continue to honor our members’ decision to belong to our union, and the maintenance of membership language. Education Minnesota has developed and encouraged all locals to bargain is one element of protecting the rights of a union and members’ right to choose to belong. Other major contract issues this year have been class size, testing and the need for more student service specialties. Economic welfare and the ability to attract and retain high quality educators also remain high on the priority list for bargaining teams. The St. Paul Federation of Teachers will be voting on their agreement with the district as of press time, after approving a strike in early February. They reached a settlement just one day before the strike was to begin. Educators bargained for, and received, additional supports for English language learners, students in special education and laid the groundwork for a partnership to increase funding for public schools. Education Minnesota has numerous resources to help those locals who are still bargaining. For resources to help support your local’s bargaining, sample language, a contract and salary schedule look-up tool and settlement reports, go to www.educationminnesota.org/member-benefits.aspx#Bargaining-alley.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Read the article about the EPIC report on the importance of high-quality teacher preparation programs and how they connect to recruitment and retention of educators. Then answer the question, “What do you think is needed to improve recruitment and retention of educators?” and send it to us via email, Twitter or Facebook to be entered into a drawing for a $25 Target gift card.

Email us at educator@edmn.org or post on Twitter or Facebook using #MMEDucator. Find us on Facebook at Education Minnesota and on Twitter @EducationMN. Answers will be run in next month’s Minnesota Educator. Congratulations to last month’s contest winner, Michael Marschel of Royalton.

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CORRECTION: In last month’s issue, the local name of Education Minnesota-Roseville was incorrect on page 7. The Minnesota Educator regrets this error.

PREPARATION ROOTED IN EQUITY

The latest report from Education Minnesota’s Educator Policy Innovation Center (EPIC) focuses on the importance of linking high-quality teacher preparation programs to the state’s standards for licensing teachers, a connection the Legislature covered last year.

The report, “The Merits of Teaching Preparation Grounded in Equity: Critical Components for Developing and Retaining Educators Who are Responsive to Minnesota’s Diverse and Complex Communities,” documents how graduates of high-quality teacher preparation programs can raise student achievement and increase education equity.

Read more about the report and the educators who worked on it on page 3.

A publication for the members of Education Minnesota

M I N N E S O T A

E D U C A T O R

A publication for the members of Education Minnesota

March 2018
Educators must stand together to challenge harmful policies

There’s an old saying that you can’t put a square peg into a round hole, but it’s not true. A big enough hammer can bash home any peg, if you don’t mind breaking everything else in the process.

I’ve been thinking about that as I watch national networks get it all wrong about how to pound their solutions onto local issues. I doubt they care about the collateral damage of their actions.

For example, there’s no grass-roots call in Minnesota for exotic types of school vouchers. Polls consistently show Minnesotans are very happy with their local schools and teachers. But our union still expects to fight another voucher bill this year at the state Legislature.

The most powerful national networks in the right are pushing vouchers, so vouchers will be pushed on Minnesotans. Americans for Prosperity, the political arm of the Koch network, argues taxpayers should subsidize private or parochial school tuition. As does the ever-evolving Freedom Foundation of Milwaukee, which worries about K-12 education “monopolies.”

We expect another one of those voucher-backing groups, the pro-business American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC, will use the new federal tax law to use for right support for local government, including school districts. Shortly before the tax bill passed, five Minnesota lawmakers signed a letter from ALEC lobbying Congress to eliminate the deduction for state and local taxes used by people in states with good public services, like Minnesota.

“Especially in the highest taxed states, the loss of the deduction will increase community demands for more responsible management of government resources,” the letter says.

Personally, I don’t know anyone who asked to lose that deduction just so Congress could give huge tax breaks to multimillionaires, big corporations and hedge fund managers. And I’m sure the change came as an unpleasant surprise to the tens of thousands of Minnesotans who pre-paid their property taxes in December.

But ALEC got the tax policy it wanted from Congress, and regular Minnesotans helped pay for it. Hammer. Square peg. Collateral damage.

A third example of national groups swooping into to break things in Minnesota is more of a prediction.

In a few months, the U.S. Supreme Court will rule in Janus v. AFSCME in a way that we expect will eliminate fair-share fees for everyone working in the public sector in America. Such a ruling will weaken unions. Our opponents are delirious at the possibility.

The Freedom Foundation wrote about its plans to weaponize the ruling in a recent fundraising appeal, ‘which the unions won’t go away without a fight. They won’t go away even with a fight. The heat has to be increased until we drive the proverbial steel through their hearts and finish them off for good.’

The Freedom Foundation, which is based in Washington state, is run by the Bradley Foundation and is part of the Koch’s network of advocacy groups. The foundation has run door-to-door campaigns in the states of Washington and Oregon to persuade community members to quit their unions. Someone working for the foundation, or a similar organization, may be at your door this summer.

The most frustrating thing about all of this is that our school communities are as unique as our families. Just as we would resist a distant politician with an agenda of its own mandating how we live our personal lives, so we also resist when powerful lobby groups from Milwaukee, or Virginia, or Arkansas, use their power to impose bad policies on our schools.

They don’t know us. They don’t know the names of our students and the gifts and traumas they carry. And, from what I can see, they don’t have much interest at learning.

In contrast, Education Minnesota has worked to raise up the voices of our communities and individual educators. While they are top down, we are bottom up. We’ve seen it with community demands for more responsible management of government resources, or with Every Student Succeeds Act, or public support for the community schools—there’s an old saying that “you can’t put a square peg in a round hole.” Collateral damage.

And that’s the problem. Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist once said, “Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did, and it never will.”

We cannot be silent, and we cannot let them divide us, if we are to challenge policies that don’t fit our communities and may harm our students.

Together,

Twitter: @DeniseSpecht

Denise Specht, president

E-mail: Denise@edmn.org
Members of the EPIC report’s advisory team present their findings at a press conference at the state Capitol on March 16. Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan teacher Dennis Draughn talked about the importance of quality teacher preparation as being necessary for recruiting and retaining educators, especially educators of color. Other members of the team include (from left) Minneapolis science teacher Angela Osuji, Intermediate School District 287 behavior specialist Marcell Branch and University of Minnesota student Chris Peterson. They were joined by Education Minnesota President Denise Specht (not pictured).

New EPIC report: Well-trained teachers important for student success

In 2017, Minnesota’s state lawmakers drastically reduced the requirements to begin teaching in Minnesota classrooms when they created the tiered licensure system. The legislature created four tiers, each with a different level of teacher preparation. The link between teacher licensure and high-quality preparation programs was removed.

In response, Education Minnesota’s Educator Policy Innovation Center (EPIC) brought together a team of educators, teachers, school counselors and a teacher preparation student to study the effectiveness of the well-trained teachers and student success. The educators featured in this article were on the team.

“As a student, the new licensure system really makes me ask myself, ‘how do I go through a teacher prep program?’” said University of Minnesota student Chris Peterson. “When I get my license in two years, I will be able to teach people at who didn’t go to tens of thousands of dollars into debt. It cheapens the value of teacher preparation, which is sad because all the resources that go into teacher preparation really do matter. I know a lot of my classmates have said that they came to Minnesota specifically to get their teaching license because for so long the Minnesota license was thought of as one of the best.”

“I cannot imagine other professionals using a tiered system and I feel it is a step backwards for our students,” said Deanna Fossen, a teacher at the state of Minnesota’s Saint Peter residential treatment facility. “Given the option of going to a Tier 1 doctor or a Tier 4 doctor, I would choose a Tier 4 doctor. The problem is that students do not get to choose their teachers on their tier level. How are lowering the requirements for teachers going to help our students more? Not long ago, all teachers had to be ‘highly qualified.’ Now we are changing it to ‘anyone who went to college to be ‘highly-qualified.’”

Lawmakers made the decision to change the licensure system even though decades of academic research has concluded that quality teacher preparation, not the tier level, leads to better outcomes for students.

The report, “The Merits of tiering: ensuring that all teachers are prepared,” found that tiering is a solution and common goal as we move away from the rigid requirements that tied to theory and built on clinical experience, not only get educators ready to be in the classroom, but keep them in the classroom. More than 50,000 licensed teachers in the state are not working in classrooms.

“(This report) will give educators a perspective they may not have seen before, as we move away from the politics of which side is right, and move toward a common solution and common goal of making sure teachers are more than adequately trained and equipped to handle the first few years of their own classroom without being overwhelmed and leaving the profession,” said Tricia Miller, a Spanish teacher in Stillwater’s Lake Park High School. “There’s a weird narrative that anyone can go into teaching. If anyone can get in, to the profession, why are they not staying? It feeds what we do toward our retention and diversifying our workforce,” said Sumair Sheik, a career and college readiness specialist in Duluth.

“How does that then ensure our students feel welcome in the classroom and succeed and achieve to their greatest potential?”

The report also looks at how proper teacher preparation programs also help in retaining educators of color.

“Minnesota needs more teachers of color, but using that as an excuse to lower standards is unacceptable and insulting,” said Dennis Draughn, a high school social studies teacher in Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan. “Trying to increase the diversity of the teaching staff by lowering the standards sends the message that we are not capable of meeting the standards to begin with. This is a slap at every minority teachers and just plain understand the expectations.”

“I have seen this first hand at West Education,” said Brandi. “My students come from diverse backgrounds. They face trials and tribulations on a regular basis. Some students deal with poverty. Others have been touched by the justice system—some as juveniles and some as adults. My students need a teacher who is just thrown into the classroom can’t meet. My students need teachers who, on their first day, can manage a class, calm a student and just plain understand the fundamentals.”

Read the full report and learn more about the EPIC program at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/Alabama-Policy-Innovation-Center.
Farmington band director receives national honor

When Erin Holmes was in eighth grade, she decided she wanted to be a band teacher and she hasn’t looked back since.

Holmes’ dedication to her career and her students is partly why she was named one of the “50 Directors Who Make a Difference” by School Band and Orchestra magazine.

Holmes’ classroom honors one director per state. This year, there were 880 nominations from across the nation.

Holmes is the director of bands at Farmington High School and has been teaching for 18 years. She currently teaches wind ensemble, varsity band, jazz ensemble, marching band and pep band.

Holmes started playing piano at an early age, but picked up the saxophone in fifth grade. At her small school, she had the same band director throughout middle and high school, who fostered that love of music and inspired her future career.

“As an eighth grader, there was just something that made me say, ‘I don’t want to do this. I want to be a band director for the rest of my life,’” she said.

Holmes has never faltered from that, and now she wants her students to experience the same passion and connection to music she felt sitting in her school’s band room.

“Music is so different because the kids that are here love music,” she said. “Whether it’s listening to music that is completely different than what we’re teaching on a daily basis to something they are feeling inside, it makes them have that drive.”

Even though she teaches band, the music comes second in Holmes’ classroom.

“You need to make them feel like they have a place here,” she said. “I want them to feel safe and know that I care.”

Part of how she “makes a difference” in her classroom is creating connections.

“We’re so lucky to be in this field because we get them for all four years,” she said. “With something like marching band, they are with us all year and all summer long, you can create even more connections with smaller groups.”

Holmes says her office door is always open, whether that is to listen to a piece a student is rehearsing or just to talk with a student who needs a listening ear.

Holmes also shares her stress with her students in order to make those connections.

“I have to let them know that I’m human, that we’re all human,” she said. “We have fun. We have down times. We have rough rehearsals. I admit all the time on the podium when I make a mistake. But that’s how we grow and how we learn.”

Janus v. AFSCME is a lawsuit filed by Mark Janus, an Illinois state employee. The suit challenges the authority of AFSCME and other public-sector employee unions to collect fair-share fees from all employees they represent. Janus will be heard by the court Feb. 26 and a decision is expected by June 2018.

The plaintiffs want the court to overturn a 1977 decision in Abood v. Detroit Board of Education. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled in Abood that teachers, firefighters, health care workers and other public employees have the right to join together to form a union, and the union would be their exclusive representative for bargaining wages, benefits and working conditions, just like workers in the private sector. SCOTUS also ruled in Abood that states could charge workers who didn’t want to join the union a fair-share fee that covers collective bargaining for everyone in a bargaining unit—members and non-members. If the plaintiffs prevail, fees for non-members would no longer be mandatory.

Who would it affect?

About half of the states, including Minnesota, have laws establishing mandatory “fair-share” or “agency” fees employees pay to unions. The remaining 28 “right-to-work” states either prohibit collective bargaining by public sector unions or ban mandatory dues and fees. Although the case directly involves AFSCME, a decision could affect all unions representing public workers, depending how narrowly or broadly the Supreme Court rules.

Who is underwriting the case?

The Liberty Justice Center, the legal arm of the right-wing Illinois Policy Institute, is arguing on behalf of Illinois state employee Mark Janus, the primary plaintiff. The Illinois Policy Institute has opposed efforts to increase state taxes and supported state spending cuts, converting public pensions to defined contribution plans and expanding voucher programs and charter schools.

What is a fair-share fee?

The fair-share fee represents the portion of union spending that is related to collective bargaining and enforcing a collective employment agreement covering everyone in a bargaining unit. In Minnesota, fair-share fees cannot be greater than 1 percent of the dues that the union charges full members. The fee ensures that individuals who get the benefit of a bargained and enforced contract help contribute to the cost of maintaining it. It does not include the union’s costs for campaigning for candidates and lobbying for issues at the state or federal level.

For more information about the Janus case and other attacks on unions, go to www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy.aspx#attacks-on-unions.

Unions launch ad campaign ahead of Supreme Court decision

WHAT IS JANUS V. AFSCME?

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Bringing computer science concepts into her elementary classroom started as a fun activity for Angie Kalthoff, but now it is her passion. **Kalthoff now technology integrationist in the St. Cloud district and spends her days helping educators bring tech into the classroom and integrate it into their existing lessons.**

“I started teaching English to English learners at Discovery Elementary in St. Cloud, and soon after, my district received a grant for iPod Touches,” she said. “I started to look at how we could use them for pre-literacy in schools.”

Kalthoff then found the resources on Code.org while teaching summer school.

“I wasn’t really sure what coding meant for elementary students,” said Kalthoff. “I started with Code.org because kids were able to drag and drop blocks while learning computer science concepts. In addition, they had free unplugged lessons for educators that helped me make the connection to my classroom. They have puzzles online that teach to computers or tablets to learn these concepts. They have card games to teach about conditionals or you can pretend your friend is a robot as you learn about binary.”

Teaching other skills by using technology is also something Kalthoff works on in her district.

“The variety of apps available for educators has grown in the past few years,” she said. “But you need to ask, ‘What are they doing and how do you apply those skills in other areas?’ We won’t just create an iMovie to create a movie. But how do you problem-solve the story, what are the approaches to putting it all together?’”

Andrea Wilson Vazquez, a Makerspace teacher and innovation coach at Intermediate District 287, also found that passion for computer science after volunteering with CodeDojoTC and TechnovationMN through the local not-for-profit, Code Savvy.

“I started implementing coding clubs at my school and before I knew it, the momentum had grown so much that I began working with classroom teachers to integrate computer science into their existing curriculum. I discovered a passion for teaching all learners digital problem-solving and creative computing,” said Wilson Vazquez.

Both Kalthoff and Wilson Vazquez say that integrating computer science and computational thinking into classrooms has rippling benefits for students.

“You’re not focusing on just programming or controlling robots,” said Kalthoff. “You’re thinking about your thinking and how to gather data and break things down. You have to break it down step-by-step. When I see a student who is really articulate in their writing and using great detail, I talk to them about how they could have a career in computer science because they are creating an algorithm with their words,” Kalthoff said.

“Computer science and computational thinking teach us an amazing set of problem-solving skills, including breaking a problem into smaller parts (decomposition), following a set of steps or instructions (algorithms), recognizing patterns and paying attention to the most important parts of a process or a problem (abstraction),” said Wilson Vazquez.

Kalthoff and Wilson Vazquez have taken their love of computer science and coding and are now helping other educators learn how to integrate them into their classrooms.
Member help wanted in 2018 elections

The 2018 election will be one of the most important of my lifetime. These elections are, at the same time, the most important in Minnesota education history. Let’s not fool ourselves or think somebody else will step up. Right now, it’s on us.

We must once again join together in union, stand up and fight back. Too long, we’ve been granted the freedom to join together and negotiate a fair return on our work. Starting today, we can help win the 2018 elections and tell you the truth.

Winning in 2018 won’t be easy. It will be early mornings, late nights and a kind of extraordinary self-discipline we didn’t know we possessed. We have our work cut out for us. Victory can be ours if we start immediately.

With urgency, humility and moral conviction, I offer the following three ways to get involved in the 2018 campaign to get the most out of the Education Minnesota candidates into elected office:

- **Make a personal commitment to get—** and stay—involved in the 2018 campaign. This is the single most important thing you can do. Your willingness to offer yourself is of critical import to the healthy functioning of our democracy. We need your dedication, time, heart and commitment.

- **Research, Learn, Educate. Vote.** Stay laser focused on the issue that matters most to you. Don’t let candidate platitudes distract you. After all, what matters most: your care for kids, your family and values, your commitment to the profession of education.

- **Be a Worksite Action Leader in your building, school, worksite or on your campus.** Worksite Action Leaders teach critical thinkers and powerful advocates who won’t take no for an answer. You are the ill-behaved ones who will make history.

**Winning in 2018.**

We need resilient folks willing to put themselves out there, stand up, take an extra step, speak out and take action for the public good.

Worksite Action Leaders are the vanguard of our movement in 2018. They are the frontline of our advocacy and leadership. Worksite Action Leaders will—single-handedly—decide whether we win or lose. No charismatic leader can substitute for a network of organized organizers working collaboratively for governing power. This is the history of the labor movement. This is the reason we have a 40-hour workweek and a weekend. We are the people.

More than 33,000 educators did not vote in the last midterm election in Minnesota. To overcome the associated obstacles, we need a cohort of 1,200 Worksite Action Leaders identified, recruited, trained and supported to win in 2018. Education Minnesota has 17 field offices across the state, fully equipped with professional, well-organized, poised and eager staff—advocates. We are ready, willing and able to support educators who want to take on the work of building worksites, schools and on their campuses.

Full dues paying members of Education Minnesota are at the heart of the 2018 campaign. You are the force to take on the single最大 woman, child and person—not-gender-affiliated, in our beloved state. Your reach, scope and moral authority are unmatched. You are king and queen makers of the power and leadership.

Education Minnesota is the voice of professional educators and students. Too few of us take time to reflect on the history and significance of what that means. Voice is much more than the mere act of speaking or verbal utterance. In word “voice” comes from the Latin “vocem,” which later gave us the word “vociferous” and “advocate.” On one hand, our vocation is more than our job. On our other hand, advocate is put ourselves out there—to use our voice and advocate for the reason we’re here at all in the first place. Voice, voting and advocacy are intimately related and inextricable from one another. Every single educator I’ve met has a firm grasp on why they are and why they do what they do. We must, to survive in an election setting. Each educator has a voice and a vocation; about this I have no doubt. Further, every one of us is slowly being woke to the idea that we are one historical, simultaneously, another dimension to our work. That dimension is electoral advocacy. We can win in 2018.

Freed, affordable childcare, healthcare, good housing, equity, universal pre-K and full-service community schools, voices, the abolition of education debt, dignity at work, free college and more are on the ballot once again. These values and virtues are all within our reach and are in our power. To become a 2018 Worksite Action Leader in your building, worksite, school or on your campus, contact your Education Minnesota field staff for more information.

- **Matt Ryg**

Ryg is Education Minnesota’s Field Campaign Coordinator

The Minnesota Legislature convened its 2018 session on Feb. 20. Education Minnesota encourages its members to get active this session and make sure pro-education legislation gets passed.

Share your story at a lobby day

Educators are the best people to tell the stories of what is happening in Minnesota schools and Education Minnesota has a way for its members to make an on-the-ground difference on your campus. All local unions or membership groups can sign up for a lobby day. Education Minnesota will set up appointments with the legislators in your area, provide you a short briefing on what is happening at the Capitol and provide you with resources for how to share your story effectively. Substitute, mileage and food reimbursements are available. For more information, visit www.eduminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature/details-on-lobby-days.

Meet with legislators when they are back in your district or state

While most of the policy takes shape at the Capitol, legislators are often back in the districts they represent. Watch your legislators’ schedules to see when they are back in their district. While waiting for appointments, you can invite your local legislator to your school and classroom. The more they can see and hear about what is going on in your local schools, the more likely they might be to fight for what you need. If locals or members want to schedule a formal meeting with the legislator while they are in the district, contact your Education Minnesota field staff. Don’t know who your local legislator is? Find out on our Policy Action Center at www.eduminnesota.org/policyactioncenter.

Rochester Education Association member Tucker Quatone testified against a Senate bill that would have allowed tax credits for private school tuition during the 2017 session.

Raise your voice by testifying at a hearing

Committee hearings are a focal point of the legislative process at the Capitol and give educators the chance to share their stories and make their voices heard. Contact Education Minnesota’s lobby team at lobbyists@eduminnesota.org if you’re interested in testifying before a legislative committee. The team can help you prepare your remarks, make sure you’re on the agenda and get you in the right place at the right time.

View our legislative agenda online, connect with our lobbyists and issues you care about

Education Minnesota has lobbyists who spend their time fighting for public education and educators every day. But we still want to hear from you! Not only do we want to connect you with our Capitol staff, but the Capitol lobby team can help pass on your messages to legislators as well. Contact lobbyteam@eduminnesota.org if there is something you want to say that you would like to fight for. Education Minnesota’s legislative agenda is an overarching vision of what the organization believes the Legislature should do to ensure Minnesota has the best learning and working conditions in its public schools. The guiding principles of this year’s agenda are: Improving teaching leads to improving educational outcomes, engaging students is a crucial step toward their career success and investing in quality learning environments. Read our full legislative agenda at www.eduminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature.

Visit, use the Policy Action Center

Education Minnesota’s Policy Action Center website is designed to keep members informed on important education issues, help them find and track legislation, connect with members of U.S. Congress and state legislators and give them the tools needed to be a successful education advocate. Members can send emails to their legislators, either with provided messages on certain topics or their own messages. Go to www.eduminnesota.org/policyactioncenter to see what Education Minnesota has put together to keep you up to date.

Read the Capitol Connection e-newsletter

Every Monday during the legislative session, Education Minnesota sends an e-newsletter called Capitol Connection to all members for whom we have email addresses. Capitol Connection summarizes the most recent action being taken by education at the Legislature, and looks ahead to upcoming activities. It’s an inside look at how legislative work affects our schools and students. If you’re an Education Minnesota member and don’t receive Capitol Connection but would like to, contact webmaster@eduminnesota.org and put “Capitol Connection” in the subject line.

Connect with Hustle text alerts

Education Minnesota is launching a new text messaging platform, Hustle, which is a peer-to-peer mobile messaging app. If you have given Education Minnesota your cellphone number, you are automatically opted in to our text alerts regarding to legislative issues that need your attention or action. If you receive a text, you will be able to write back and engage in a conversation about how to get involved and active.
Read Across America focuses on celebrating reading, diversity all year long

The National Education Association’s yearly celebration of reading, Read Across America, is focusing on celebrating a nation of diverse readers.

The event moves its focus from the traditional celebration of Dr. Seuss’ birthday on March 2 to celebrating reading all year long and celebrating the diversity of our country’s students and authors.

This year marks the 21st anniversary of Read Across America Day.

The NEA has resources, ideas and artwork available online to create a reading event on March 2, or anytime throughout the year.

Read Across America is also partnering with First Book to offer books featured by the NEA at reduced rates to educators who serve kids in need. To celebrate RAA Day, First Book is offering $20 off RAA titles with their NEA Read code. For more information or to order books, go to www.fbmarketplace.org/read-across-america.

The American Federation of Teachers also has numerous resources on how to bring more diverse books and authors into classrooms.

The American Federation of Teachers also has numerous resources on how to bring more diverse books and authors into classrooms.

The AFT has also compiled recommended books and authors, share ideas and get educated on topics that matter. Education Minnesota has

WEBSITES FEATURING RESOURCES ON DIVERSE BOOKS, AUTHORS

Education Minnesota resources

Education Minnesota has collected recommendations on books and authors from its members, as well as websites with more suggestions. To read more, go to www.educationminnesota.org/news/education-headlines.

NEA Read Across America

The NEA’s Read Across America page has posters, calendars and other classroom resources featuring book lists and classroom activities featuring diverse books and authors. Find out more about the program at www.nea.org/grants/886.htm.

AFT Share My Lesson


Other state affiliates

The California Teachers Association and Hawaii State Teachers Association have both started work on their own programs to promote diverse books and authors. Learn more about their programs at www.cta.org/californiareads and http://www.nea.org/grants/2014.htm.

Are you retiring at the end of this school year?

You may qualify for Education Minnesota Retired membership at NO additional cost!

Have you been an Education Minnesota member for at least 10 years?

Register today www.educationminnesota.org
Erik Brandt, a St. Paul English teacher and IB coordinator, traveled to the Netherlands six times to help review the IB literature curriculum used across the globe. Brandt wanted to see a big, inner-city, public high school represented in the decision-making process, so he applied and was selected for the role. "I'm always encouraging teachers in IB schools to get involved," he said. "They need to apply to become examiners or workshop leaders. We have a wealth of knowledge in Minnesota and not enough of us out there being leaders." So often we doubt ourselves and we don't think we're worthy of applying for something. We are. So many of our teachers are skilled and wise. If there's an opportunity for you to share your skills and wisdom, go for it!

**St. Paul teacher helps develop international curriculum**

Minnesota is home to a group of newly-named National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) as of December 2017. Next Level B...
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WWW.EDUCATIONMINNESOTA.ORG | MARCH 2018
Selection of delegates underway for 2018 Education Minnesota Representative Convention

Plains are underway for the 2018 Education Minnesota Representative Convention, taking place April 27-28 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington Minneapolis South. The work delegates will do at this year’s RC will demonstrate and celebrate our collective strength and wisdom as Education Minnesota and plan our work going forward. Make plans to represent your colleagues on issues that affect all educators by seeking a post as a delegate or alternate. Major business for delegates includes acting on changes to the union’s constitution and bylaws and considering any proposed amendments to the legislative positions, action items and the Education Minnesota Statements of Principles. Delegate selection process has begun at the local union level. March 25 is the deadline for local presidents to inform Education Minnesota of those who will be delegates and alternates to the RC. The number of delegates allocated to each local and statewide affiliate is determined by the number of members. Delegates are chosen by open nominations and secret ballot in the local or state affiliate of Education Minnesota. Interested members should contact their local president for details on how to participate.

Education Minnesota provides one standard hotel room for one night for each local sending at least one delegate and one round-trip mileage reimbursement per delegate. Local presidents have details on the financial arrangements and hotel reservations. In addition to the formal business, delegates will be able to meet other educators involved in union work.

ABOUT THE RC

What: The Education Minnesota Representative Convention, commonly called the RC, is the statewide union’s highest governing entity.
When: The RC takes place annually to set policy for Education Minnesota. The 2018 RC will be April 27-28.
Where: DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington Minneapolis South
How to participate: Delegate selection is underway through local unions. Locals and state affiliates choose delegates by open nomination and secret ballot. Local presidents have details about logistics for delegates. For information about the RC, go to www.educationminnesota.org and log in as a member. Choose “Representative Convention” from the “Events” menu.

Semifinalists named for Minnesota Teacher of the Year

The candidate field for this year’s Minnesota Teacher of the Year has been narrowed to 43. A selection panel of business, community and education leaders chose the semifinalists from an initial field of 167 candidates from across the state. The panel will review the semifinalists’ portfolios and additional video submissions and select about 10 finalists from among the group.

The 2017 Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Corey Bolman, will announce his successor at a banquet May 6 at the Radisson Blu Mall of America in Bloomington. Candidates include pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade, ECPE and Adult Basic Education teachers, from public or private schools. They must meet the program requirements and submit a portfolio to be considered for the award.

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The semifinalists are listed with their school, district and subject area.
Needs assessments key in building school improvement plans

The Every Student Succeeds Act has replaced No Child Left Behind. Minnesota’s state ESSA plan was revised and approved by the federal Department of Education and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Now, educators across the state must learn about how this may impact their work. It is not immediately clear that there actually will be an impact to their work, but there is an opportunity for educators to make an impact on the plan.

The Minnesota Department of Education will begin identifying schools in the fall of 2018. Those identified schools will fall into two primary categories: targeted support schools or comprehensive support schools. While there are differences, all identified schools must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, which will be used to select evidence-based interventions and strategies that will help develop their improvement plans. Schools will then implement those improvement plans.

If schools fail to improve or are identified again, it could lead to more rigorous interventions with MDE. Those interventions will begin with another comprehensive needs assessment. It is a three-year cycle—one year for planning and two years of implementation.

MDE’s state ESSA plan details the following: “At schools and districts in the first year of identification will establish leadership teams, engage stakeholders, complete comprehensive needs assessments and root-cause analyses, identify evidence-based practices that fit and are feasible, and submit two-year school improvement plans by March 1. The remainder of the year will focus on acquiring or repurposing the resources needed to do the work ahead, operationalizing evidence-based practices, usability testing, and preparing staff for new practices.”

So, what is a comprehensive needs assessment and why should educators care? A comprehensive needs assessment can include several surveys, focus groups or conversations that are used to gather input or data. The information and data gathered should provide a detailed picture of the strengths and needs of the students and the school community, as well as the internal and external barriers to success.

Simply put, a need is the gap between what is and what should be—the gap between the present and the future. Seems easy, but if you are looking for useful data and valuable input, then it is essential to be asking the right questions.

One Friday in February, Education Minnesota brought together many individuals to create a comprehensive needs assessment that addresses the needs of all students no matter their race, economic background, gender, language, where they live or where they come from. It was a time of learning for everyone in the room. All the participants, including teachers, educational support professionals, housing advocates, education equity advocates, diversity and inclusion advocates, district officials coordinating after-school programming and school board members contributed.

Participants brought their expertise, their stories and their values to this work. The group started designing a student comprehensive needs assessment. However, the overall comprehensive needs assessment for a school must include input from families, school staff, the broader school community, the business and non-profit community and the state.

Last week, I led a training on trauma-informed education and restorative practices. Educators wanted to move forward with additional professional development and school structures to implement what they were learning. They know it will make a difference for struggling students, but also the entire school community and school climate. They also know that it will help retain teachers. Trauma-informed education and restorative practices are evidence-based interventions, ones that a school could build an improvement plan around.

Imagine staff, students and families completing a comprehensive needs assessment and the school discovers there is a need for doing something different around discipline procedures. The comprehensive needs assessment can be a tool to move a school to change. Change that educators want, not just administrators or politicians.

The comprehensive needs assessment will drive the improvement plans, and it will drive the evidence-based interventions and the money to support them. But the real promise of a comprehensive needs assessment done well is not just the assessment itself, but the engagement that should come with the process.

It is a real opportunity to discover what our students, families and educators need to become more successful. It is a time to examine the nature and causes and set priorities that will bring about equity for students.

If your school is identified next fall, please look to Education Minnesota to support your work with a sample comprehensive needs assessment. In the meantime, if you are interested in contributing to the work of building a comprehensive needs assessment that will engage the entire school community, please contact Paul Winkelaar, Education Minnesota public affairs specialist, at paul.winkelaar@edmn.org.

Jess Anna Glover Glover is a staff attorney for Education Minnesota.
**EDUCATION MINNESOTA OPPORTUNITIES**

**MEMBER-LED SESSIONS WANTED FOR SUMMER SEMINAR**

Education Minnesota is looking for members to submit proposals for sessions they would like to lead at the 2018 Summer Seminar. Summer Seminar is part of the Minnesota Educator Academy and offers high-quality professional development, leadership training and networking opportunities. It will be held July 30-Aug. 1 at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota.

Members are invited to submit a session idea regarding professional practice. Potential topics could include culturally responsive teaching, curriculum and assessments, school climate and learning communities, teacher leadership or student engagement. Sessions run an hour-and-a-half.

Sessions led by Education Minnesota members are typically some of the most popular ones available at Summer Seminar. Here are some of the member-led sessions that filled up quickly last year:

- **Evaluating Teaching for Success** for Students and Educators
- **Student-Driven Digital Portfolios**
- **Diversity and Cultures: Teaching and Learning through Graphic Novels and Comics**
- **Trauma’s Impact in the Classroom**

All of us have things we excel at in the classroom—from helping students thrive to performance assessments to best practices in restorative justice—so please, consider sharing your skills with fellow educators at Summer Seminar.

If selected to present, Education Minnesota will cover the cost of the presenter’s attendance at the other sessions offered during Summer Seminar, double-occupancy lodging and meals, and mileage and to and from St. Ben’s. That equals three days of professional development for free.

Go to http://bit.ly/118-rpf and fill in your session title, description, objectives, intended audience and more. Please submit your session idea by March 23 to be considered.

Registration to attend Summer Seminar opens May 4. Information on attending the event can be found at www.educationminnesota.org/events/summer-seminar.

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**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ESP regional trainings focus on school safety**

This spring, Education Minnesota is offering a free training for education support professionals called “Advocating for ESP Safety and Voice.” The trainings will be held at locations across the state. Attendees will learn about skills and strategies to advocate for safe working conditions while continuing to meet the growing and changing needs of students. The training is specifically designed for ESPs as a critical voice in educating the whole child.

To submit an opportunity:
- Send a complete description of your opportunity to educator@edmn.org.
- Send your item by the first Friday of the month to be considered for the next month’s Opportunities page. Include daytime contact information.

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**MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**

The Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health will host its 22nd annual Child & Adolescent Mental Health Conference April 15-17 in Duluth. Classroom and special education teachers are encouraged to attend. Ninety-plus breakouts will focus on evidence-based strategies designed to help students with social, emotional and learning needs.

Find the meeting nearest you and register at www.educationminnesota.org/resources/esps/esp-regional-meetings.

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**ESPs as a critical voice in educating the whole child.**

The training will take place on four days in March and April from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Minnetonka Community Center. For more information or to apply, go to www.mnmacm.org/annual-child-adolescent-mental-health-conference.

**Two Ford’s Theatre summer workshops**

Teachers of grades 3-12 are invited to attend the two Ford’s Theatre summer workshops: “The Seat of War and Peace” and “Civil War Washington.” These workshops take place July 8-13 and August 5-10. Each workshop will focus on investigating perspectives related to the nation’s capital’s monuments and memorials. “Civil War Washington” takes place July 8-13 and will have participants looking at the nation’s capital as President Lincoln would have known it during the Civil War. The registration fee for both sessions is $500, which includes airfare, hotel, daily transportation and light breakfast and lunch each day.

Applications are due April 2. For more information or to apply, go to www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs.

**Mental health**

For detailed information and online applications, please visit www.mach.org.

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Applications are due April 2. For more information or to apply, go to www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs.

**Free elementary, science teacher summer institute**

Hamline University is offering its free Rivers Institute at two locations this summer. Rivers Institute is a daylong summer program designed to increase teachers’ knowledge in water related content, enhance STEM-focused investigation skills, expand literacy skills, and encourage area educators to translate professional experiences into meaningful, engaging classroom investigations for students. The St. Croix Institute is June 25-27 and the Mississippi Institute is July 23-25. The focus for the institutes is on elementary and middle school classroom teachers, as well as science specialists in teams of teachers.

For detailed information and online applications, please visit www.hamline.edu/education/cege/rivers-institute.html.

**CLAS SROOM RESOURCES**

NEA Works4Me has practical tips for educators

The National Education Association houses tips for educators across the country on its Works4Me website. Topics include classroom ideas for new teachers, ways to motivate older students to read, tackling long-form math problems and new apps for use in the classroom. The site also allows users to search by academic subject, classroom management, educational equipment and supplies, learning activities, student skill sets and teaching methods. Educators can also sign up for a biweekly e-newsletter that includes teaching strategies and classroom resources.

To see tips or sign up for the e-newsletter, go to www.nea.org/works4me.

**GRANTS AND AWARDS**

**Education Minnesota professional development, classroom grant applications due April 6**

The Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is offering its classroom, education support professional and higher education faculty professional development grants for a second time this spring, with applications due April 6. Higher education members can request up to $3,000 and ESP and teacher members can access up to $1,500.

For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, go to www.edmnfoundation.org.

**Grants available for purchasing diverse books**

The NEA Foundation is awarding grants for public school libraries to be able to purchase diverse books. The Read Across America Library Grants will be awarded to public schools serving economically disadvantaged students to purchase diverse books valued at up to $1,000. The application deadline is March 30.

For more information, go to www.nea.org/grants/886.htm.

**HO W TO HELP THE PARKLAND COMMUNITY, EDUCATORS, STUDENTS**

In the wake of the recent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers have set up resources for other educators to help those affected by the tragedy and provide financial and emotional support.

Educators can send a condolence message to the students, families, educators and staff of the Parkland community here: https://actionnetwork.org/forms/supportforparkland

The NEA, AFT, Florida Education Association and Broward Teachers Union have partnered to create a Broward relief fund to provide resources and support to the students, families, educators and staff at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. https://www.affwe.org/parkland

The FEA has put together a list of resources for supporting students through trauma, along with ways to help including the Resources page and Broward Relief Fund. https://neafwe.org/parkland

The AFT has put together a webpage of resources that will be updated as the push for more legislative action continues. www.aft.org/our- community/we-care-we-fight-we-show-after- parkland-time-action-now