Get active, stay informed

The 2018 legislative session begins Feb. 20 and while it is not a budget year, there are still important issues around education being discussed. This issue of the Minnesota Educator includes information on a variety of programs and issues Education Minnesota members can help to advocate for, as well as the ways for members to get involved and stay informed during session.

Education Minnesota has developed a set of legislative priorities for this session, including supports for full-service community schools, expanding access to pre-K programs and ways to better attract and retain educators. We are also working with a coalition on the Minnesota Miracle 2.0. Read more about what issues we will be focusing on this session on page 3.

Education Minnesota provides its members with multiple ways to stay informed about and get involved with the Legislature, including a new texting program. Read more about how you can use your voice to support public education and students this year on page 3.

Minnesota residents owe $25.65 billion in education debt and the only way we’re going to make progress on this critical issue is to build momentum and bring attention to it. Read about Education Minnesota’s Degrees, Not Debt program and how you can help fix the student debt crisis on page 4.

Last year’s Legislature completely changed the way teachers are licensed in Minnesota. Education Minnesota is working to make sure those changes are implemented correctly and members are informed on how it affects their license. Read more about the changes on page 5.

Early childhood and adult basic education teachers are not equal to their peers when it comes to salary and union protections. A task force of Education Minnesota members has been working to fix that through legislation. Read more about the task force and its work on page 7.

Educators across the state are joining together through coalitions and affinity groups to help with recruitment and retention of educators of color. Read how Education Minnesota is supporting their efforts on page 8.

Not only is the Legislature heading to work in February, precinct caucuses for the 2018 election are being held Feb. 6. Read about how you can support public schools and stand up for your students on caucus night on page 4.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

President Denise Specht motivates members to fight against bills that would further remove the high standards for teacher licensure and the ability to unionize. Page 2

Unions Matter series. The loss of collective bargaining rights hits home for a Minnesota educator, with her children teaching in Wisconsin and Iowa. Page 6

Technology in Schools series. A Minnewaska elementary science and math teacher, Nathan Lund, brings technology into every aspect of his teaching. Page 8

Education Minnesota’s Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning awards National Board scholarships, first professional development grants of the year. Pages 9 and 10

ESP trainings on safe work environments held all over the state. Page 10

Legal brief. School districts may not individually bargain with employees. Page 11

Trainings on new licensure system available. Page 12

The Election 2018 coverage in this issue is an independent expenditure prepared and paid for by Education Minnesota PAC, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 in support of named candidates. This material is not approved by the candidates nor are the candidates responsible for it.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Read the article about the upcoming legislative session and how you can get involved. Then answer the question, “What issue could Minnesota tackle at the Legislature this year that would help you most in your classroom or the profession?” 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 MNEdEducator. Find us on Facebook at Education Minnesota and on Twitter @EducationMN.

Congratulations to last month’s contest winner, Dan Rassier of ROCORI. See a selection of answers to last month’s question on page 2.
Fighting back against the ‘deskilling’ of teachers

One of the first things I see when I get to work every morning is my state license to teach elementary education. It sits in a thin black stand on a cabinet behind my desk. I keep it there as a reminder that teaching requires more than everything else, and as a tangible symbol of the hard work that went into becoming a professional teacher in Minnesota. Unfortunately that license and the licenses held by more than 50,000 E-12 members of Education Minnesota are now the latest battleground for two conflicting visions for public education.

Lowering the standards for receiving a license and entering the teaching profession has been the goal of certain corporate-backed groups for more than 10 years. They also favor high-stakes testing, support vouchers and oppose the right of educators to organize into unions.

On licensure, for example, the American Legislative Exchange Council, or ALEC, has pushed its Alternative Certification Act since 2006. ALEC is a nonprofit group financed by corporate and private interests including the infamous Koch brothers, and works with state-level politicians to pass model legislation.

The ALEC bill does not require formal training or student teaching to obtain a teaching license. Instead, the bill makes it possible for anyone to become a fully licensed teacher in Minnesota without any formal training in how to teach, just as in Oklahoma and Utah. The law makes it possible for someone to become a fully licensed teacher in Minnesota without any formal training in how to teach, just as in Oklahoma and Utah. The law makes it possible for someone to become a fully licensed teacher in Minnesota without any formal training in how to teach, just as in Oklahoma and Utah. The law requires only a high school diploma and a clean background check. Arizona, Oklahoma, and Utah now only permit districts to hire people as teachers with no formal training in pedagogy.

Unfortunately, the 2017 Minnesota Legislature passed a teacher licensing law that puts Minnesota in the same company as Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Utah. The law makes it possible for someone to become a fully licensed teacher in Minnesota without any formal training in how to teach, just as in Oklahoma and Utah. Minnesota went from having some of the most rigorous standards for becoming a teacher in the nation, to a state with some of the lowest. The investors in the for-profit side of the charter school movement have been especially supportive of lowering licensure requirements, or eliminating them entirely. ALEC’s current charter school bill, the Next Generation Charter Schools Act, says, “teachers in public charter schools shall be exempt from state certification requirements.” According to the ALEC website, the current chair of the group’s education committee is Tom Bolvin, an executive with K12 Inc., a for-profit company and the largest operator of online charter schools in the United States.

We can guess why for-profit education businesses oppose high standards and rigorous training for dedicated professionals who combine academic training with experience to create a teaching creativity demand higher compensation over a career. Organized educators have the leverage to negotiate for better pay and benefits, which raises wages for all educators in the market because managers must pay to retain talented employees.

Defending the value of rigorous teacher preparation is entirely consistent with our mission of advocating for students. To no educator’s surprise, students tend to learn more from well-trained educators. Linda Darling-Hammond, one of the most respected American researchers on teacher quality, wrote in a 2000 research paper: “The most consistent, highly-significant predictor of student achievement in reading and mathematics in each year tested is the proportion of well-qualified teachers in a state: those with high certification requirements are in a major and in the field they teach.”

Education Minnesota will work with supporters of public education in the Minnesota Legislature during the 2018 session to fix the worst flaws of the licensure bill, but success is uncertain. Election year politics and the constitutional issues surrounding the leadership of the Senate will be major obstacles. Our chances will improve with the victory of pro-education candidates in the November elections.

There are also some options we can pursue with local school boards to ensure students are getting high-quality teachers, and teachers who come from backgrounds that get the support they need. We can also take steps to increase transparency about new licensure law. You will hear more about that in the next few months.

There are some defenders of this new licensure law who would argue that other educators are being left out of the teacher shortage. They are wrong. This law does nothing to retain teachers, who are leaving our profession at an alarming rate. As our union think tank, the Educator Policy Innovation Center, noted in its 2016 report, “Smart Solutions to Minnesota’s Teacher Shortage: Developing and Sustaining a Diverse and Valued Educator Workforce,” the raw materials and creative incentives for teachers to stay is key. As one expert said, you can’t fill a leaking bucket.

As I said, this licensure law is part of a vision, that of its most extreme, see school as factories for producing test scores, with students as the raw materials and teachers as mere presenters of scripted lessons with strict pacing. In his bleak assessment of the corporate agenda, “The One Percent Solution: How Corporations are Remaking America One State at a Time,” economist Gordon Lafer writes about ALEC’s current committee agenda, “The One Percent Agenda, ‘Together,’ ‘Remaking America One State at a Time,’ ‘The One Percent Solution: How Corporations are Remaking America One State at a Time,’ ‘The One Percent Solution: How Corporations are Remaking America One State at a Time.’

That’s what we’re resisting. We do not need a presenting a different vision, one in which every Minnesota student has access to equitable, well-rounded education that instills both a love for learning and prepares each child for a successful life. And in those school systems, well-trained, well-supported professional educators with the freedom and resources to do what’s best for their students.

That vision feel very far away today, but I still believe we will get there. Together.

*The most important thing I value in my union membership is that they keep an eye on what’s going on at our state and national Capitol that affects me as an educator.” – Jill Noise, Winona Education Association

* “@EducationMN The most important thing I value in my union membership is the fact that they keep a collective voice that supports our kids!” MNEducator*

* Nikh Roosavl, Education Minnesota-Wrenshall

* “I value the collective bargaining process.” – Melissa Williams, Education Kirksfield

What is the most important thing you value in your union membership?”

In last month’s Minnesota Educator, we continued the “we want to hear from you” campaign on your rights and benefits, and here is a selection of the answers. Look on page 13 for this month’s question and how to submit an answer. Your answer enters you into a drawing for a $25 Target gift card!

“I value the union paying me to focus on the work and not with all the ‘stuff’ that can be very distracting!” – Dan Kasser, Education Minnesota-KOORI

“The union gives me time to focus on working with students and not with all the ‘stuff’ that can be very distracting!” – Dan Kasser, Education Minnesota-KOORI

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* “I value the collective bargaining process.” – Melissa Williams, Education Kirksfield

* The most important thing I value in my union membership is a strong, collective voice that supports our kids! MNEducator*
Session to focus on policy issues

The 2018 Minnesota legislative session begins Feb. 20, and while it’s not a budgeting year, there will be plenty of policy bills to be discussed and some funding debates.

Now more than ever, educators need to have their voices heard so that our priorities of strong public schools and support for students remain priorities for our legislators.

Education Minnesota believes that educators are the most effective advocates for public schools. The decisions state legislators make affect members’ classrooms, schools and the education profession in general. State funding dictates what districts can do about class sizes, special education caseloads, even the condition of buildings.

Education Minnesota will be working on issues relating to student loan debt, the expansion of full-service community schools, health insurance, licensure and special education.

While it is not a budget year, Gov. Mark Dayton ran on a campaign promise of increasing education spending each year he was in office. So far, he has kept that promise.

There is potential for additional funding to expand full-service community schools across the state. Districts like Dr. River and Rochester accepted state funds to create full-service community schools, which bring together public and private service providers to put social, medical and before and after school academic services and enrichment activities where they are most accessible—on the school campuses. This approach has been proven to improve school climate and student achievement.

Education Minnesota is also a partner in the Minnesota Coalition for Education Equity, which will be pushing for the “Minnesota Miracle 2.0.”

The coalition is pushing for universal, public pre-K, expanding and supporting full-service community schools and free public college.

Holding back attacks on unions and policies related to education will also be a part of this legislative session.

Education Minnesota will draft a bill to fix some of the problems with the state’s new tiered licensure system. Read more about the changes and how the new system might affect you on page 5.

As they did last year, Republicans plan to push for a bill that would strip local unions of their right to participate in a competitive bidding process for health insurance. The Health Insurance Transparency Act was passed in 2014 and allows unions to request that their district include the Public Employees Insurance Program (PEIP) in their bids. Many local unions have found this has kept their insurance costs down.

Educators should get to know the names of the chairs of the education committees. It is the job of each committee to hold public hearings on bills, put each bill into its best form and to recommend only those bills that the committee feels merit further consideration. Committee chairs can control who is able to testify and the overall discussion of a bill.

The chairs will be important people for members to communicate with throughout the session.

• House Education Finance Chair: Carla Nelson (R), Rochester
• Senate Education Policy Chair: Eric Pratt (R), Prior Lake
• House Education Finance Chair: Jennifer Loon (R), Eden Prairie
• House Education Policy Chair: Sondra Erickson (R), Princeton

Education Minnesota makes sure professional educators’ voices are heard when policy decisions are made. We will be hosting brown bag lunches with legislators each week during session. During this time, we hope to engage them in meaningful conversations about education and union issues, as well as educate them on what is really going on in our schools.

Educators need a seat at the table because they, not the politicians, know what’s best for students.

Education Minnesota’s educators of color forums participated in a lobby day during the 2017 legislative session, meeting with Sen. Chuck Wiger.

Meet with legislators when they are back in your DISTRICT

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 the district and having any public meetings. Invite your local legislator to your school and classroom. The more they can see and hear about what is going on in their 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.

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.educationminnesota.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 actions affecting public 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@edmnn.org and put Capitol Connection in the subject line.

Connect with Hustle text alerts

Education Minnesota is launching a new texting platform, Hustle, which is a peer-to-peer mobile texting app. If you have given Education Minnesota your cellphone number, you may start receiving texts in regards to legislative issues that need your attention and 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.

GO TO www.ITSABOUTFREEDOM.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS.

JOIN US AT THE CAPITOL

FEB. 24

Your first opportunity to get involved this session is Saturday, Feb. 24, for the Working People’s Day of Action. The rally will take place at 11 a.m. in the Capitol Rotunda. Labor unions and those fighting for worker’s rights across the county will be rallying on this day to make sure we can continue to come together in union and give workers a powerful voice to stand up for themselves, their families and their communities.

Go to www.itsaboutfreedom.org for more details.
Student loan debt has become a significant financial burden for many college graduates. A recent study conducted by Education Minnesota found that recent graduates owed an average of $30,894 in student loan debt, with some individuals reporting debt as high as $33,000. This debt can make it challenging to save for a down payment on a home or other important life expenses.

Donais Donais, a high school social studies teacher in St. Louis County, has experienced the impact of student loan debt firsthand. "I had a decent amount of scholarships and grant help," he said. "But I still had a lot of debt to deal with." Donais said his family made too much money for Pell Grants, which are not enough to cover all expenses. "All of my local scholarships expired after the first year," he said. Donais said he was lucky enough to get about half his tuition covered, but still ended up with $33,000 in debt. "Even with that loaning, he was excited to start teaching," he said. "I got a job teaching social studies and I love it," Donais said. "I was making about $36,000 a year." Then he started graduate school to get his master's degree in special education. "Now I was sitting on $40,000 in debt after a year—and-a-half," Donais said. "But I still want to be a teacher and I never thought about not going to grad school. These are the steps I had to take, and I knew I would just have to deal with the repercussions later." Donais knows that he is actually considered to have a large amount of debt, and that "I am someone who wants to contribute to my community, but instead of buying a house, I am paying student loan payments," he said. "My student loan payment is higher than my car payment." Donais has looked into the options that are available to him, such as income-driven repayment plans, but has not yet found a solution that works for him. "I am not sure what to do with all of this debt," he said. "I do not want to sell my future in order to pay it off."
Changes to licensure system take effect

Editor's note: While many of the changes have been decided upon, the new board is still in the rule-making process, so the final rules and timelines may change. The information in this article is as up to date as possible. Go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources/credentials-licensure for more details and to stay informed. A training on the new system is also available. See page 12 for more details.

The changes to Minnesota’s teacher licensure system, put in place during the last legislative session, are now starting to be implemented.

The changes include a complete revision of the licensure structure for teachers, as well as a new board to handle the rules and standards for licensing.

Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board

The Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) now handles all licensing duties for the state of Minnesota. The PELSB will also be the body to consider teacher disciplinary issues.

Information about applying and renewing licenses is now available on the PELSB website, https://mn.gov/pelsb.

License renewals

Many licenses received a one-year extension, effective Jan. 1. All active, standard five-year licenses, including those set to expire in 2018, were extended by one year. The PELSB emailed those with licenses that were extended at the beginning of January and the online license database reflects the changed expiration dates.

Starting July 1, when a teacher with a standard license submits materials for renewal, the new license will be part of the new tiered system and be Tier 4.

On July 1, 2019, the PELSB will automatically convert all five-year standard licenses set to expire after June 30, 2019, to Tier 4. An example of the new expiration date and tiered system:

- Tier 1: Teacher A has a five-year standard license that currently has an expiration date of 2020.
- As of Jan. 1, that same license has been set to a new expiration date of 2021.
- On July 1, 2019, Teacher A’s license will automatically be converted to a Tier 4, and that license will have the same expiration date as the original, extended license: 2021.

The new legislation changes licensure renewal requirements, and it requires the PELSB to adopt rules for that process. One change that we know is coming for the renewal of Tier 3 and Tier 4 licenses is that starting in the 2018-19 school year, individual teachers applying for renewal can include teacher evaluations as evidence of successful teaching. Another change for those holding Tier 3 or Tier 4 licenses is that professional development focused on cultural competency will be a requirement at the time of renewal. Look to future publications for more information as the PELSB clarifies expectations for renewals.

New tiered licensure system

After July 1, all teachers in Minnesota’s public and charter schools will have one of the following licenses:

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4
- Short-call substitute license
- Long-call substitute license
- Lifetime substitute license

General overview of tiers

Tier 1

The Tier 1 license is designed for educators who are now captured under the language of the nonlicensed community expert, or NLCE. Minnesota schools will still have NLCEs in schools in the 2017-18 school year, but starting July 1, that category will be replaced by the Tier 1 license. Candidates for a Tier 1 license will need a bachelor's degree if teaching in any field other than career and technical education. Tier 1 teachers will not be in the teacher bargaining unit and will not accumulate years of probationary status.

Tier 2

The Tier 2 license will be the designation for teachers trained in other states who are now required to pass the Minnesota performance assessment. Any Tier 2 license in Tier 3 will be replaced by the Tier 4 license. This license will be eligible for renewals.

Tier 3

The Tier 3 license is the first license that will be issued to teachers trained in Minnesota teacher preparation programs or in other states that meet Minnesota’s requirements and who have passing scores on content and pedagogy exams. These teachers are in the teacher bargaining unit and must complete three years of successful teaching and performance criteria. Tier 3 teachers who got to Tier 3 via Tier 2, then up to two years of successful teaching at Tier 3, can be credited toward the Tier 3 teacher’s three-year probationary requirement. This license will be eligible for unlimited renewals and must be renewed every three years.

Tier 4

The Tier 4 license is the designation for all teachers who have a current five-year, professional license when this transition occurs. Going forward, requirements for a Tier 4 license include all of the requirements for Tier 3, a minimum of three years of teaching in Minnesota, and any additional requirements on the basic skills exam (or one of the alternatives approved by the board), and evidence that the most recent teacher evaluation did not place the teacher on an improvement plan pursuant to teacher development and evaluation law. These teachers will be in the bargaining unit. Tier 4 licenses will be eligible for unlimited renewals and must be renewed every five years.

Substitute licenses

A short-call substitute license will be available for those who have completed a teacher preparation program in Minnesota.

A temporary short-call substitute license will be available to an applicant who holds a baccalaureate degree from a U.S. college or university, or the equivalent, if an administrator proves they can complete the work in the three-year period for short-call substitutes with licensed teachers.

A long-call substitute is one who replaces the same teacher for 15 or more consecutive days. A long-call substitute teacher shall hold a Minnesota license valid for the assignment.

A lifetime substitute license is for Tier 3 or 4 Minnesota teachers who have retired and do not collect retirement annuities, or someone who holds an out-of-state teaching license and receives a retirement annuity. These licenses will not be subject to a renewal process.
Losing union rights hits home for Caledonia ESP

As a mom, Deb Cody is of course proud of her children. As a paraprofessional, she is even prouder that two of her children became teachers. As a leader in her local union in Caledonia, Deb is nervous about losing collective bargaining rights because she sees the effect it can have on the education profession with her daughter teaching in Wisconsin and her son in Iowa.

Deb is a special education assistant who helped to organize the Education Minnesota Caledonia Educational Support Professionals local.

“It’s a great feeling that my kids are union members,” she said. “My dad was a union member, and I like to think we are continuing to build our strong family union history.”

Deb’s daughter Lauren is a fourth-grade teacher in Wisconsin. She is in her second year of teaching, which means she started after the Act 10 law stripped away educators’ collective bargaining rights. Lauren made the decision to join her union this year, because she saw the benefits the union has provided to her mom.

“My mom is active in the union, and that is what motivated me to also get involved,” Lauren said. “I have learned a lot from her experiences. I have seen her work through numerous injustices, and it has really opened my eyes to how important it is to be part of the union.”

But Lauren said as a first-year teacher, she just couldn’t afford the dues, and she sees other new teachers making that same choice.

“It is very expensive to be part of the union at my district,” she said. “So much so that I could see others deciding against getting involved because of the price. It is not incredibly common for new teachers to be in the union. I have to believe that part of it involves the cost and part of it is lack of knowledge about the union.”

When Lauren was in college, she was told by many people to get out of the field of education.

“There is certainly a negative political climate throughout Wisconsin regarding public education,” she said. “If people who truly want to instill a love of lifelong learning into students are going to be discouraged from doing so, who will we have left?”

Lauren hopes to get more involved with her union and sees the value of her membership.

“I have a core group of people with experience I can trust and turn to with questions or concerns,” she said.

Deb’s son Kalyn has been teaching in Iowa for eight years, but started his career in Arizona, which is a right-to-work state, so he was not part of a union.

“When I got to Iowa, I knew I had to be a union member even though I was broke, I knew it was important,” he said.

Kalyn not only joined, but got involved, serving as a building representative in his local union for the last three-and-a-half years.

When the Iowa Legislature passed the bill that took away educators’ collective bargaining rights last year, Kalyn was upset but lucky. The Des Moines district where he teaches worked on a contract extension right after the bill was introduced. The district signed the agreement two hours before the bill was passed into law.

“In the places around us though, there is big, big anxiety,” he said.

The new law has not only reminded Kalyn about the importance of unions, but the importance of elections too.

“You forget what a benefit to the middle class a strong union is,” he said. “You take it for granted because it’s always been there. But we still have a mess on our hands politically. The Legislature is taking up vouchers now. But we have a governor race in 2018, just like in Minnesota. Elections matter a lot.”

Kalyn also helped a friend who taught in another district get involved, serving as a building representative in his local union for the last three-and-a-half years.

“Wanting to do part-time work,” he said. “She won the seat, but we won by about 100 votes.”

Deb sees the differences between working in education in Minnesota and her children’s experiences in Wisconsin and Iowa.

“As a union member, it helps me realize how fortunate I am to work in a state with a strong union,” she said.

And she plans on working to make sure we keep our union strong.

“If we don’t work toward keeping our union, we are going to lose it,” she said.

“It can happen so quickly. (Seeing what happened in Iowa) absolutely it motivates me. I feel strongly and talk often to others about the benefits of being a union member.”

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ECFE, ABE teachers continue legislative fight for equity

Despite more than 40 years of programming in Minnesota, licensed teachers in both Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) have legislatively been treated very differently from their K-12 counterparts.

Minnesota state law currently protects as licensed community education teachers (ECFE and ABE) from continuing contract and tenure law. In a past issue of the Minnesota Educator, Education Minnesota President Denise Specht wrote: “ECFE teachers and our adult basic education (ABE) teachers must have the same salaries, benefits and protections as other public education teachers...A big step toward this equity means that Minnesota’s law must be changed so all our licensed teachers are covered by a continuing contract and tenure law.”

Education Minnesota created an ECFE/ABE task force to focus on this issue in 2014. The members of the task force, along with Education Minnesota staff, have worked tirelessly since then to change this law. The task force is recommending one sentence be removed from the law: “A license which is required for an instructor in a community education program pursuant to this subdivision shall not be construed to bring an individual within the definition of a teacher for purposes of section 122A.40, subdivision 1, or 122A.41, subdivision 1, clause (a).”

Those sections offer K-12 teachers continuing contract and tenure protection, while the ECFE and ABE teachers are basically deemed “temporary/seasonal.”

The task force has worked tirelessly in the past legislative sessions to get this offer, but the session shall not be construed to bring an individual within the definition of a teacher for purposes of section 122A.40, subdivision 1, or 122A.41, subdivision 1, clause (a).”

Furthermore, their school districts usually place them on only a separate salary schedule but also a separate seniority list. This means they are not eligible for benefits. Many work split shifts, evenings, Saturdays and/or during the summer. Many of these teachers do not receive equity with their K-12 colleagues in retirement pensions are much lower because of lower pay, they are prevented from bumping. Additionally, retirement pensions are much lower than colleagues in the K-12 system because of lower pay and no job security because of the schedules they work could be cut or altered with little notice.

These services come at a cost to many of the teachers themselves. Many ECFE and ABE teachers are offered part-time hours, which means they are not eligible for benefits. Many work split shifts, evenings, Saturdays and/or during the summer. Many of these teachers do not receive equity with their K-12 colleagues in retirement pensions are much lower than colleagues in the K-12 system because of lower pay and no job security because of the schedules they work could be cut or altered with little notice.

Education Minnesota will be introducing a bill in the coming legislative session, asking that the exclusion of these teachers be removed so that they are covered under the continuing contract statute.

The next Minnesota legislative session begins next month, you might ask, why is political capital needed?

First, ECFE and ABE are partially funded by a district’s community education program, not the general fund. Thus, management in ECFE and ABE programs often use money as an excuse to hire and fire licensed teachers at will and pay by the hour, sometimes.

Second, when ECFE and ABE programs were both placed under the funding stream of community education, other instructors in youth and adult enrichment did not need teacher certification. ECFE and ABE teachers, however, were required to be licensed by the Minnesota Department of Education and to complete the same number of continuing education credits for relicensure just like their peers in K-12 and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Third, in the past 40 years, the demographics in Minnesota changed greatly. The influx of new immigrants and refugees meant broadening the scope of services to English education, GED, adult diploma, job skills, citizenship, family literacy, dual language programs and early intervention. The mission of both ECFE and ABE programs remained the same: to offer resources; to give information, ideas and skills; to apply research and best practices that support Minnesotans and their families.

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Furthermore, their school districts usually place them on only a separate salary schedule but also a separate seniority list. Thus, even if they are certified to teach in a K-12 area, they are prevented from bumping. Additionally, retirement pensions are much less than colleagues in the K-12 system because of lower pay and no job security because of the schedules they work could be cut or altered with little notice.

Education Minnesota staff, with the help of union members and community force members have worked tirelessly for legislative action for many years in 2014. The members of Education Minnesota staff, with the help of union members and community force members have worked tirelessly for legislative action for many years in 2014.

Education Minnesota also recently published a report entitled, “Advocating for Early Childhood and Adult Educators.” Education Minnesota members and staff contributed research and language to the report. The report includes a strategic plan for bargaining priorities with key language as bargained by Education Minnesota and is used in various collective bargaining training sessions and presentations across the state.

Heather Turngren, a Minneapolis ABE teacher and task force member, said, “Today’s ECFE and ABE teachers have many, if not all, of the same requirements as their peers in K-12 but do not receive equity with continuing contract, tenure or salary. It’s time to right this wrong!”

The task force will be hosting a lobby day during the 2018 legislative session on March 8. If you would like to attend and lend your voice to this issue, please email Education Minnesota Public Affairs Assistant Ashley Behrens at ashley.behrens@edmtn.org.

If you are not able to attend the lobby day, please contact your local legislator and ask him or her to support the bill. Commentary written by the Education Minnesota ECFE/ABE task force

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When Waleid Hassan talks to his students of color at Osseo High School, they say he has been the only teacher of color they have ever had.

“Sometimes it’s a struggle because how often do white kids see themselves represented in a professional field? A lot of students don’t see people of color represented in professional roles,” he said.

The recruitment and retention of educators of color is a part the work Education Minnesota and the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color in Minnesota is focused on for the last few years, and will continue to work on this legislative session.

Less than 4 percent of Minnesota teachers identify as a person of color or American Indian.

“We already have a teacher shortage in Minnesota,” said Hassan. “To bring it out even further, we’re putting together some type of bill that provides incentives to students of color, American Indian students to go into the profession."

Education Minnesota has partnered with the coalition on their legislative agenda, summer conference and other efforts.

The coalition has been focused on five ways to increase and retain teachers of color and American Indian teachers in Minnesota.

• Transforming climate and curriculum in PreK-12 schools and colleges and universities.
• Supporting pathways to teaching for diverse youth and paraprofessionals.
• Induction and retention support for in-service teachers and teacher preparation students.
• Trying to eliminate discriminatory teacher preparation tests.
• Providing scholarship incentives for high school and college students and students teaching stipends for people.

Oscar Del Sebastian, an art teacher at Wellsstone Elementary in St. Paul, is involved with the coalition, as well as Education Minnesota’s educators of color forums, the League of Latino Educators and the American Indian Education Professionals.

He said the coalition works directly with the union and other stakeholders, because of the support they can provide and the ability to share resources with people working toward the same goal.

“The goal of the coalition is to be a bridge for other organizations,” he said. “It is important for Education Minnesota to maintain a presence in social justice and racial equity issues. These issues are a reality every day for our members. We need to promote that.”

Juanita Ortiz, an English language learner and Latino culture teacher at Phalen Lake Hmong Studies Magnet School, has been working on issues relating to support for educators of color for a long time, but found a stronger voice in Education Minnesota and the coalition.

“People call it an achievement gap, an opportunity gap. I call it a teacher gap,” she said. “We need teachers of color. We have the answers to help reduce this gap.”

“When a district doesn’t support hiring teachers of color, but your union does, you don’t feel alone.”

Del Sebastian echoes the call for a stronger voice on this subject, and encourages all educators to get involved.

“People get hung up on the name of our cause. People get this impression it’s about non-white people, but it’s not. It’s about equity,” he said. “It’s about creating a voice for the people that don’t have a voice, and creating a space for people that need a space to do that.”

Education Minnesota is hosting two lobby days during this legislative session—one for union members of color, and one to talk about social justice issues.

If you would like more information about Education Minnesota’s educators of color forums, go to www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/Educators-of-color.

For more information about the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota, go to www.tocaimn.com or like their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/tocaimn.

When Nathan Lund first started teaching, he planned his lessons straight out of the middle school math textbook but knew he wanted to do more.

“Sometimes I was disengaged,” he said. “I was going straight out of the textbook and it was overwhelming for me, plus the kids weren’t excited.”

After earning his master’s degree, Lund got involved in project-based learning and using technology.

“I always just add some sort of project-based learning to whatever we’ve done,” said Lund, a fifth-grade math, science and social studies teacher in Minnewaska.

“And I’m going to find ways to get that in there with technology.”

That integration of technology into his classroom is why Lund was named Minnesota’s 2017 PBS Digital Innovator.

The PBS Digital Innovator program is a master development opportunity for PreK-12 educators whose innovative use of technology and media create exciting learning experiences for their students. The 2018 session is an “all-star” version of the program, so they are not accepting new applications.

The program was like a TIES conference on steroids, Lund said. He was able to network with educators throughout the country who are also focusing on using technology in their work.

Lund did a “mystery Skype” with a teacher in Indiana he met through the program.

“They’re fourth-grade class is meeting my fifth-grade class and they are going to have to figure out where we are from,” he said. “We’re going to tie it into our geography and science lessons.”

Lund has often used PBS content in his classroom, especially when he was teaching early elementary grades.

To find other materials to supplement his style of learning, Lund says he spends a lot of time on Pinterest and other online resources to find ideas. It’s simple stuff that the teacher can do in the classroom, he said.

“Don’t do some of the crazy tech stuff that others are doing with 3D printers or a bus that simulates hurricanes,” he said. “The way that students use technology in my room is just like using a book. They are also using it as a means of expressing themselves.”

When he was teaching fractions and multiplication, Lund discovered his students weren’t getting it using just pen and paper. So, he had them run in the hallways.

“They ran based on their height and found their time,” he said. “They tracked their times and figured out how fast they were running. Then the class had to figure out who was fastest based on their height.”

When it was time for his students to learn about topographic maps, Lund had them go outside and take a picture of various places around the school using an app called Pic Collage.

“They took those pictures and tried to recreate it,” he said. “They drew where they thought the highest levels were. Then they took said and tried to make the set up. They documented the whole process with photos and described what they did in their Seesaw learning journal.”

Lund shares videos, photos and links to his classroom projects frequently on Twitter. You can follow @WaskaScience5 and see more of his projects.

Lund said he understands educators having a hesitation about bringing a lot of technology into the classroom, but he would encourage people to try as much as they can.

“You don’t have to keep up with me, you have to keep up with the kids,” he said. “It’s just trying and letting the students teach me. Failing to learn is huge. We learn a lot together. If the kids are asking for it, try it. If they are looking bored or need a new way, you don’t have to change what you teach but the way you get it across.”
Foundation awards first grants of year

Education Minnesota’s Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Board of Trustees awarded its first set of grants and scholarships this year. Other grants will be awarded later this year. A second application period will be open for the professional development grants for classroom teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty, with applications due April 6. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, go to www.edmnfoundation.org.

Education Support Professionals Professional Development Grant

Professional Development Grants are intended to provide education support professionals (ESPs) with opportunities to take the lead in acquiring and sharing new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, working with parents, etc. ESPs may request up to $1,500.

Beth McMahon
MSCF-Northland Community and Technical College-East Grand Forks
$2,160

Tamara Thell
MSCF-Anoka Technical College
Attend the Oncology Nursing Society’s 43rd Annual Conference
$2,696.43

Christina Wilson
MSCF-Anoka Technical College
27th Annual Convention of Academy of Medical/Surgical Nurses
$1,655

National Board Certified Teacher Scholarship

If you are an Education Minnesota member, licensed to teach and have three years of teaching/counseling experience, you are eligible to apply for a scholarship to help offset the costs to become a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT). The Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning grants at least 10 scholarships up to $500 per component, up to $1,000 per application, toward the application process for National Board Certification once per year.

Lynn Andersonson-Adams
Big Lake-Education Minnesota
Mathematics - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Joe Burk
South St. Paul Teachers’ Association
Science - Early Adolescence
$1,000

Jennifer Coenen
Rochester Education Association
Generalist - Middle Childhood
$1,000

Jessica Cook
Duluth Federation of Teachers
Exceptional Needs Specialist - Early Childhood through Young Adulthood
$1,000

Brian Durgin
Rochester Education Association
English as a New Language - Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood
$1,000

David Ellefson
Rochester Education Association
Science - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Joshua Grossman
Rochester Education Association
Social Studies: History - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Nonie Kouneski
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
Social Studies: History - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Benjamin Latrop
St. Paul Federation of Teachers
English Language Arts - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Lisa Malcomb
Education Lake Superior
Art - Early and Middle Childhood
$1,000

Amber Marsh
Big Lake-Education Minnesota
Literacy: Reading-Language Arts - Early and Middle Childhood
$1,000

Angela McCormack
Big Lake-Education Minnesota
Mathematics - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Kimberly Nagorski
Big Lake-Education Minnesota
Mathematics - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$500

Lori Ringen
Rochester Education Association
Music - Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood
$1,000

Greg Schoenebeck
Rochester Education Association
Mathematics - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Marta Stoeckel
North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Education Association
Science - Adolescence and Young Adulthood
$1,000

Tony Stroeing
Education Minnesota-Osseo
Music - Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood
$1,000

Kelly Stroeing
Rochester Education Association
Generalist - Middle Childhood
$1,000

Laura Willis
Rochester Education Association
Generalist - Middle Childhood
$1,000

Thank you, educators!

Every year, thousands of kids and adults thank educators who were influential in their lives at Education Minnesota’s State Fair booth. We will feature a selection in each issue of the Minnesota Educator this year. Keep an eye out for your name!
ESP trainings on safe working conditions

Each spring, Education Minnesota hosts regional meetings across the state exclusively for education support professional members, focusing on ESP-specific professional development and providing an opportunity for members to network with each other.

The focus of this year’s regional meetings will be a training on how to advocate for safe working conditions.

ESP across the state deal with workplace injuries and other safety concerns each time they walk through the doors of a school. Their role in supporting students with behavior and/or mental health challenges is critical to the success of those students, and to the overall educational ecosystem in a school.

And yet, ESPs also report a persistent lack of respect for what they do each day.

This training will provide skills and strategies for ESPs to advocate for safer working conditions while continuing to meet the growing and changing needs of students—focusing specifically on positioning ESPs as a critical voice in educating the whole child. This training is free to full members of Education Minnesota.

Most meetings will begin at 5 p.m. with dinner. The training will immediately follow. Certificates of participation will be provided upon completion of the training.

The meetings also provide ESPs with an opportunity to socialize and network with other ESPs in their district and other districts in their area. Registration will be online only at bit.ly/ESPmeetings2018.

Affordability from page 4

teachers to get loans forgiven, but he knows there should be a better way.

“We need to get a hard time understanding what public service loan forgiveness even looks like.”

Donais has been working with Education Minnesota’s Degrees, Not Debt program to understand more about what loan forgiveness options are and how to apply for them. He is also going to share his story with legislators this year as well.

The Degrees, Not Debt program is hosting two lobby days during the 2018 legislative session.

Education Minnesota’s legislative priorities around student debt, created by members, include:

• Affordable college for Minnesota residents.
• Creation of a student loan ombudsman in the state government to act as an advocate for consumers against abuses by loan servicers and lenders.
• Improved and more consistent loan counseling for students at all levels of education, including assistance with available loan forgiveness programs.
• Expansion of Minnesota’s existing teacher loan forgiveness programs to provide adequate funding and increase eligibility to include additional areas in which educators work and there is a shortage, including school counselors, licensed school nurses, occupational therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists and other instructional support personnel.
• Replication of the public service loan forgiveness program at the state level to provide relief to all public employees.

Donais hopes that his story and others like it will help make some change.

“I don’t feel like everything should be wiped away,” he said. “I’m OK with having a stake in the game, but it has to be a game that can be won.”

Foundation grants from page 9

Classroom Professional Development Grants

Classroom Professional Development Grants are intended to provide teachers with opportunities to take the lead in acquiring and sharing new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, working with parents, etc. Up to $1,500 may be requested.

Pearl Cheng Dakota County United Educators ACTFL at National Chinese Teacher Conference $1,500
Jessica Cook Duluth Federation of Teachers Council for Exceptional Children Conference $1,300
Amanda Creed-Schnack Robbinsdale Federation of Teachers Supporting Parent-Child Relationships $1,500
Heidi Dubé Rochester Education Association Yoga Calm in the Classroom $1,245
Jenny Eckman Education Minnesota-Roseville ENVoY for Excellence $1,500
Laura Forst Central Education Association Minnesota Music Educators Association Mid-Winter Conference 2018 $550.39
Leslie Froasaki Blackduck Education Association Peacemaker Training $1,500
Sara Johnson St. Paul Federation of Teachers Teacher’s College Pre-K Institute $1,500
Jason Koester Mendalj Education Association Instrucor Training $1,500
Amy Landherr Rochester Education Association Montessori at Franklin AMS Conference 2018 $1,500
Kristen Longway St. Paul Federation of Teachers Teacher’s College Pre-K Institute $1,500
Andrea Serrano Robbinsdale Federation of Teachers Supporting Premature Babies and Their Parents $1,500
Patrick Varro Fridley Education Association Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health Conference $1,500

Espregional meeting schedule

• Feb. 8: Brooklyn Park, Education Minnesota Brooklyn Park office
• Feb. 15: Cambridge, Sidelines Sports Grill
• Feb. 22: Apple Valley, 6-8:30 p.m., Education Minnesota Apple Valley office
• Feb. 27: Rochester, Kahler Apache
• March 1: Minneapolis, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers office
• March 8: St. Cloud, Education Minnesota St. Cloud office
• March 15: St. Paul, Education Minnesota St. Paul office
• March 22: Detroit Lakes, Speak Easy Restaurant
• March 27: Winona, Green Mill
• April 3: Owatonna, Torey’s Restaurant
• April 10: Grand Rapids, Eagles Club
• April 19: Fairmont, Green Mill at Holiday Inn
Individual dealing with employees—an unfair labor practice and a contract violation

A small school district in Minnesota desperately needs a high school biology and chemistry teacher. The previous teacher retired at the end of the year, and despite posting the position all spring and summer, the district received no applicants for the position. To attract applicants, the district reposts the position and offers a $3,000 hiring incentive beyond what is in the salary schedule. A teacher accepts the position and receives the bonus one week before school starts.

Although this incentive may seem like a win-win for the district and the teacher, if the position is covered by a collective bargaining agreement and the district provides the incentive without any agreement by the local union, it is likely that the district has committed an unfair labor practice and a contract violation. By unilaterally offering an employee the bonus described above, a school district would likely be committing an unfair labor practice (ULP) in violation of Minnesota labor law because the district is effectively usurping the role of the local union in negotiating terms and conditions of employment with a bargaining unit member.

Some school districts have asserted that offering a hiring bonus prior to the commencement of an employee’s first day of work is permissible because the person is not yet a member of the bargaining unit. Although no Minnesota case law directly addresses this issue, courts and labor boards in other states have overwhelmingly held that the timing of the payment is irrelevant, and the additional compensation is unlawful as long as the position the employee is to assume is covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Individually bargaining bonus pay with a new employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement is also a violation of the collective bargaining agreement that locals should grieve. Most contracts contain a “recognition clause” stating that the district recognizes the local union as the exclusive representative of all employees in the bargaining unit. By offering an additional payment to a bargaining unit employee without the local’s prior written consent, the school district would likely be violating the recognition clause, as well as the salary provisions of the collective bargaining agreement.

Other examples we have seen of unlawful individual bargaining include attempts to negotiate compensation or benefit agreements for long-term substitutes that deviate from the collective bargaining agreement. Under PELRA, any individual who replaces an absent teacher for more than 30 workdays is a member of the teacher bargaining unit, and therefore the terms and conditions of that employment are covered by the collective bargaining agreement by default.

Locals may be worried that challenging bonuses or incentive payments will generate resentment by the employees who received the additional pay or create financial hardship for an employee who might have to pay the employer back if the legal challenge is successful. This is understandable; however, most courts, labor boards and arbitrators have only ordered districts to cease and desist from individual bargaining in the future and have not ordered any repayment by affected employee(s).

If you become aware of individual dealing in your local, contact your local member rights advocate, who will consult with your Education Minnesota field representative about possible resolution. It may be difficult to challenge actions that occurred many years ago, but every situation is unique. Your field representative will work with Education Minnesota’s legal department to advise your local on the best strategy.

**David Aron**

Aron is a staff attorney for Education Minnesota.

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**LEGAL BRIEFS**

If you become aware of a possible unfair labor practice or contract violation, you should consult with your local Education Minnesota field representative for advice on possible resolution. It may be difficult to challenge actions that occurred many years ago, or that are no longer relevant to current employees. Your field representative can assist you in finding the best strategy.

**United Educators Credit Union**

United Educators Credit Union was established in 1957 to benefit Minnesota Education Association members. Originally named MEA Credit Union, we assisted with the specific financial needs of the education community. Throughout the years — from strikes and natural disasters, to times of prosperity — the credit union was there.

In addition to the great rates, low fees, and personal service you deserve, UECU members have access to money-saving discounts and programs designed to help meet your personal or professional goals.

In addition to being the Education Minnesota ESI sponsored credit union, UECU has two business development officers to work with your local. Terry Weber and Nancy Brady have worked in credit unions for over 20 years. Contact them today for school visits with members, classroom speakers on financial literacy, literacy grants, scholarships and more!
THE 2017 Minnesota legislative session brought major changes to the state’s teacher licensure system and the governance of that system. The new law reflects a dramatic departure from Minnesota’s past, and it is intended to propel policymakers into high standards for teacher licensure. The changes include a complete revision of the licensure structure for teachers, as well as a new governing board.

To help navigate the changes and what they mean for educators across the state, Education Minnesota has developed a number of trainings that are available through our Minnesota Educator Academy’s professional development opportunities.

The “Teacher Licensure Update” training provides an overview of the new tiered licensure system, which qualifies for each, the renewal structure for each tier, and the license limitations. The training will also discuss the new Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), which is now in place and which takes over all of the duties previously assumed by both the Minnesota Department of Education’s licensing division and the Board of Teaching.

The “Pink Slip Process: Banagining Layoff Language and Discussing the Divide Around Seniority” training is designed to equip negotiations team members with the information and understanding they need to negotiate contract language related to the new tiered system. Finally, a 10-minute meeting on the new tiered system and its implications will be rolled out in the coming months.

For more information on any of the trainings, contact your Education Minnesota staff.

In addition, there is more information about tiered licensure and the transition to that new system, available on page 5 of this issue, as well as on our website at www.educationminnesota.org/resources. tieredlicensure.