

M I N N E S O T A

EDUCATOR

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2022



**Burnham to
lead AFL-CIO,
Fiereck takes
interim VP spot**

**Get involved, stay
informed during
legislative session**



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Complete courses at your own pace on MEA Online

Education Minnesota launched MEA Online, formerly LearnUpon, this spring. Members can access our catalog of professional development to improve their professional practice, earn CEU credits for relicensure and build union understanding and power.

Here are the courses now available for members:

- Assessment for Learning in Response to COVID-19 (Live Recording)
- Building Representative – Roles and Responsibilities
- Certified Negotiator Program for Education Support Professionals Part 1 – PELRA and Bargaining Team Dynamics
- Certified Negotiator Program for Education Support Professionals Part 2 – Member Engagement
- Certified Negotiator Program for Education Support Professionals Part 3 – Research and Costing
- Certified Negotiator Program for Education Support Professionals Part 4 – Preparing a Proposal and Communications
- Certified Negotiator Program for Teachers
- Classroom Mindfulness
- Community Engagement: Building Relationships for the Schools and Communities Students Deserve
- Costing Teacher Settlements
- Cultural Competency Training Part 1 – Relicensure
- Cultural Competency Training Part 2 – Relicensure
- Cultural Competency Training Part 3 – Relicensure
- Cultural Competency Training Part 4 – Relicensure
- Culturally Responsive Teaching Through a Racial Justice Lens
- Degrees, Not Debt
- Engage Students with “Crossroads: An Anthology of Resilience and Hope by Young Somali Writers” (Live Recorded Session)
- English Learners – Relicensure
- ESP Costing Spreadsheet
- Finding Our Way Through: Navigating the Mental and Emotional Challenges of Our Current World (Live Recorded Session)
- Google’s Applied Digital Skills Workshop
- Health Insurance Basics & Beyond
- Jim Crow of the North: Bringing Minnesota’s Diverse History Into the Classroom
- LGBTQ+ Training: Part 1
- LGBTQ+ Training: Part 2
- Local Elections Training for Referendums and School Board Races
- Meet and Confer
- Moving Lives Minnesota: Student-Driven Storytelling Around Immigration (Live Recorded Session)
- MRA I: Member Rights Advocacy
- MRA II: Member Rights Advocacy
- MRA III: Member Rights Advocacy
- Negotiating Equitable Benefits & A Family Friendly Workplace
- Negotiations Resources: Online Data & Information to Support Bargaining
- Positive Behavior Interventions & Instructional Strategies – Relicensure
- Public Employees Insurance Program (PEIP)
- Race Talk Messaging: What, Why and How
- Reading – Relicensure
- Rethinking Bargaining Surveys (CBOC 2021 Recording)
- Social Media, Legal Issues for Educators
- Student Mental Health – Relicensure
- Suicide Prevention – Relicensure
- Taking Effective Notes in Bargaining and Member Meetings
- Three Frames of Unionism
- Trauma I: Understanding Trauma and the Developing Brain
- Using Membership to the Max: Member Benefits
- Virtual Negotiating: Moving Bargaining Online (CBOC 2021 Recording)
- Wealth Inequality and the Impact on Public Education
- Worksite Unity Leader Training Part 1

No account creation is required. Go to <https://edmn.me/MEAonline> to find out more about MEA Online and how to access trainings.





THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

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The Minnesota Educator is published for members to share news about education issues and training opportunities for educators as well as union and political news that affects public education in Minnesota.

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Bernie Burnham leaves Education Minnesota to lead the Minnesota AFL-CIO, the state federation of labor representing over 300,000 members of over 1000 local unions. St. Francis teacher and local union leader Ryan Fiereck will finish her term as vice president until July 1.

We stick together because ‘the union makes us strong’

The American union movement has marched forward to music for as long as working people have come together to improve the lives of themselves and their families.

You learn the anthems after a rally or two, and most famous of all, “Solidarity Forever.” You know the chorus:

Solidarity forever

Solidarity forever

Solidarity forever

For the union makes us strong

The original version is more than 100 years old, but the lessons it teaches are still worth hearing, especially during the third year of this pandemic and one of the darkest times in all our careers as educators.

Writer and activist Ralph Chaplin started writing “Solidarity Forever” in 1912 while covering a miner’s strike in West Virginia that lasted 13 months and left more than dozen people dead on both sides.

I can imagine how much pressure the miners felt. How hard it must have been to stay together when the big money bosses were using all their influence, including violence, to tear the union apart.

Educators are feeling a less extreme form of that pressure today. I hear it in meetings. I see it in the social media posts. It’s a small erosion of our shared faith in unionism and in each other.

I’ve heard, “Their concerns are not our concerns” from one union about another. I’ve read versions of “the union cares more about that part of the state than this part of the state.”

The truth is that the officers of Education Minnesota have heard directly from educators in 135 locals—urban, suburban and rural—since the school year began. Rarely have we heard about an issue that didn’t touch nearly every member.

That’s why making progress on our shared goals for educators and students requires educators to keep supporting each other. No local is powerful enough to succeed alone.

About 200 of Education Minnesota’s locals have fewer than 50 members. About 120 locals have 51-100

members, four locals have between 1,000-2,000 members and only five locals have more than 2,000 members.

Do you think a governor listens to a Greater Minnesota educators’ concerns more closely when that educator is standing next to 86,000 other educators? I do.

On the other side, no politician can dismiss an issue as a “metro problem” when there are tens of thousands of educators from Greater Minnesota sending petitions and saying it’s their issue, too.

Despite all the stress we’re feeling, educators still have more reasons to keep together than drift apart. It’s an idea that was written into “Solidarity Forever” a few years ago by the folksinger Steve Suffet. His new verses:

*They say our day is over; they say our time
is through,*

*They say you need no union if your collar isn’t blue,
Well that is just another lie the boss is telling you,
For the Union makes us strong!*

(Chorus)

*They divide us by our color; they divide us by
our tongue,*

*They divide us men and women; they divide us old
and young,*

*But they’ll tremble at our voices, when they hear
these verses sung,*

For the Union makes us strong!

The verses remind us that when we join together in union, we’re not just committing to improve our own lives. We’re making a bond to each other. We’re embracing the fight for something bigger than ourselves. And that something will keep us strong.

Together,



Twitter: @DeniseSpecht



Denise Specht

COVID-19, vaccine guidance updates

Education Minnesota continues to share and update information around the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as it relates to schools and our members.

The FAQ on vaccines continues to be updated to reflect the latest federal changes and the bargaining resource section includes the latest version of a sample vaccine MOU for local unions.

Education Minnesota also still has available FAQs around CDC and Minnesota Department of Health guidance, blended learning, testing and resources around online learning.

Go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources/classroom-tools for up-to-date resources and information.

In the member portal of our website, there are numerous bargaining resources, including locally-negotiated MOUs around pandemic-related issues.

Getting social!

Educators use social media as a way to connect with their communities, colleagues and the world. We will feature posts from Education Minnesota members and locals each issue! Make sure to follow Education Minnesota on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Pinterest!



Where are you reading your Minnesota Educator?

Congratulations, Bailey Cronin, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, for being this issue's winning submission!

We love seeing all of the places where you are reading your Minnesota Educator!

Email a photo to educator@edmn.org or share it on social media using #mneducator of where you are reading your Minnesota Educator to be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Target gift card! Submissions are due March 4. Happy reading!



Educators in the news!

Education Minnesota members are often interviewed in their local newspapers or TV station. We will feature a quote each issue!

“

The more connections and networks we can make with kids, there's a better hope we can have them come back and work within our communities as well.

”

– Derek Grahn, a Breckenridge High School business teacher, in the “Building what matters: Education and economy intertwined in MN” article in Wahpeton Daily News, Jan. 10. Grahn is a community liaison for a program which connects local professionals and students researching or completing projects.

Burnham to lead statewide AFL-CIO labor federation, Fiereck takes on interim leadership position

Education Minnesota Vice President Bernie Burnham was elected president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO this December, leaving her post at Education Minnesota Feb. 1. Burnham, president of the Duluth Federation of Teachers before being elected vice president of Education Minnesota in 2019, is replacing Bill McCarthy who retired. She is the first person of color to lead the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

The Education Minnesota Governing Board appointed Ryan Fiereck interim vice president. Fiereck will serve until July 1, when the statewide officer team elected at this April's Representative Convention will start their term.

Fiereck looks forward to opportunity

Ryan Fiereck is a business and technology teacher in St. Francis, where he has worked for almost all of his 17-year career. He currently sits on the Education Minnesota Governing Board and is Education Minnesota-St. Francis local president, where he represents licensed, nutrition, preschool, transportation and office staff, as well as education assistants.

"I am excited about the opportunity to support our locals and our members," said Fiereck. "I hope my perspectives, especially from the last two years, as a K-12 teacher, working parent and local union leader can help elevate the conversations we need to be having about education right now."

Fiereck lives in Bethel with his wife, who works as an education assistant in St. Francis, and his three young children.

"We have shared in the struggles that everyone has had the last two years," he said. "We will continue to work on the best solutions possible through learning through each other's stories."

Fiereck said that as president of a local with members in six different job categories, he has had conversations with every educator about issues in their work.

"We're seeing real-life sub shortages in every group we have in St. Francis," he said. "We have the vacancies, and concerns about not being able to recruit."



St. Francis business and technology teacher Ryan Fiereck, speaking here at the 2019 Representative Convention, steps into the interim role of vice president. Fiereck has been involved in his local, state and national unions.

Fiereck wants to use his new statewide leadership position to highlight those issues and make sure every educator feels valued and supported in their work.

"Each workplace is different," he said. "Our bus drivers might not look at their buses as classrooms, but they are. The office professionals are the first people students and families interact with, and that's important. I want to bring forward what I've heard and what I know to help elevate the professions."

Coming from a wall-to-wall local also means Fiereck is bringing in robust experience to help locals with contract negotiations support. A large piece of the Education Minnesota Vice President's role is to coordinate the Organizing for Settlement Grants, which allows locals to receive state union dollars to help support their local bargaining and organizing work.

"I really want to support that local need during my interim position," he said. "I want to do what I can to help locals now, for those like mine that are still negotiating, and also get them set up for the next round."

St. Francis' experience as a district that is "too big to be small, and too small to be big" is also something Fiereck wants to bring to his work with locals across the state.

"We have districts that have so many different needs," he said. "We need to talk about all the different types. The commonalities between us, and we have a lot of differences. We have districts that are doing well and those that aren't. In St. Francis we get held to the level of the bigger districts around us like Anoka-Hennepin and Elk River, but we share a lot of the struggles of rural Minnesota with no commercial tax base."

Fiereck's activism with Education Minnesota came as he started attending state union activities and found them to be a great place to learn and network.

"I realized that we're not alone in this," he said. "There is power in whatever room you are sitting in that can help solve problems."

As Fiereck started attending those meetings, he noticed something about the rooms he was in.

"I started going to the Representative Conventions when I was 30, and I wasn't seeing any leaders my age," he said. "I know it's the same sentiment our members of color have."

Fiereck also started hearing from other younger members who were having a hard time getting through their local union structures to be active, so he went to Education Minnesota leadership and helped create the NextGen EdMN program.

"We tried to teach people to bring new people into the union and bring creative ideas in," he said. "I still think there's a value in that. We had a lot of fun and we were able to do things differently. We created a little bit of a community. Many people who went through our group have taken on leadership roles in their schools and unions."

The program doesn't exist in its previous form anymore, but Fiereck knows that member engagement, especially younger members is something we need to keep working at as a state union.

"Most people can't get engaged with the union work, for free, as a young parent," he said. "We always have to look for ways to get creative and work with them. If you lean into the union work, the union work will respond. Who's willing to do the work?"

Fiereck knows he will have a limited time in the role, but is excited about the opportunity.

"I will do the work for the short time and head back to my district and the classroom," he said. "We don't have any time to waste. I'm excited to do the work on members' behalf. I look forward to the collaboration. Let's get moving and work together."

Burnham brings educator lens to labor work

Bernie Burnham never thought she would be elected president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, the state federation of labor representing over 300,000 members of over 1,000 local unions, but she said everything in her life has led her to this moment.

"Most educators don't associate themselves with labor," she said. "We don't see ourselves as a part of the greater labor movement."

Burnham didn't either, until she started getting involved with the Duluth Central Labor Body as president of the Duluth Federation of Teachers. She immediately saw the connection and support that kind of organization can provide.



Bernie Burnham speaks to the crowd at a 2019 Education Minnesota rally. Burnham takes office as the Minnesota AFL-CIO president Feb. 1.

"We can help them and they helped us. They helped us pass referendums and turn over our school board," she said.

After being elected vice president of Education Minnesota, the first person of color to hold a statewide officer position, Burnham started getting involved in the AFL-CIO state organization.

"I started as co-chair of the racial justice committee and then became a general board member," she said. "It didn't take me long to see that this was a place for my passions of education, labor and equity."

So when the then-AFL-CIO president announced his retirement, Burnham put her name in and received support from unions across the state.

"Labor impacts everyone, not just our unions. It's about making life better," she said. "We've got to have good schools and people have to have good jobs to make our communities strong. We need to bargain and be able to speak up in our workplaces. I can be part of the process to move forward."

Burnham remembers well the feeling she had after Act 10 passed in Wisconsin, stripping unions of their collective bargaining rights. And she knows how easily that could happen in Minnesota.

"We are just an election away from not having the support we need for labor, which in turn is what is best for families, students and communities," she said. "So many educators don't understand that connection and how important it is. We were tired before all this hit and now it's 100 times worse. But we have to raise our voices. No one is going to speak up for us. We have to do it."

That message is what Burnham hopes to lead with as she begins her term as AFL-CIO president. She also looks forward to learn more herself about the broader labor movement.

"I'm an educator and a lifelong learner," she said. "I want to listen and learn about how to do the job right. It's about building relationships. And it's not just one group, but many groups. In spite of the fact that there will be disagreements, there still is the commonalities. Our members are all different, but they are still dealing with the same things."

Burnham thanks the membership of Education Minnesota for the opportunities to lead within her union.

"I wouldn't be who I am today if I wasn't an educator and worked with educators," she said. "Everything has given me strength along the way and the belief that we can do better."

Loan forgiveness training available, federal pause continues

The federal government has extended its pause on student loan payments, interest accrual and student debt collection until May 1. This means borrowers now have until the end of April to make plans on how they will restart their payments.

This is additional good news for borrowers after the expanded loan forgiveness provisions that were enacted via a federal waiver on Oct. 6. These updates are critically important for those who are going to be participating, or are continuing to participate, in Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

Education Minnesota's Degrees, Not Debt program now has an online training available on the expansion of loan forgiveness options and the steps educators have to do in order to take advantage of this program.

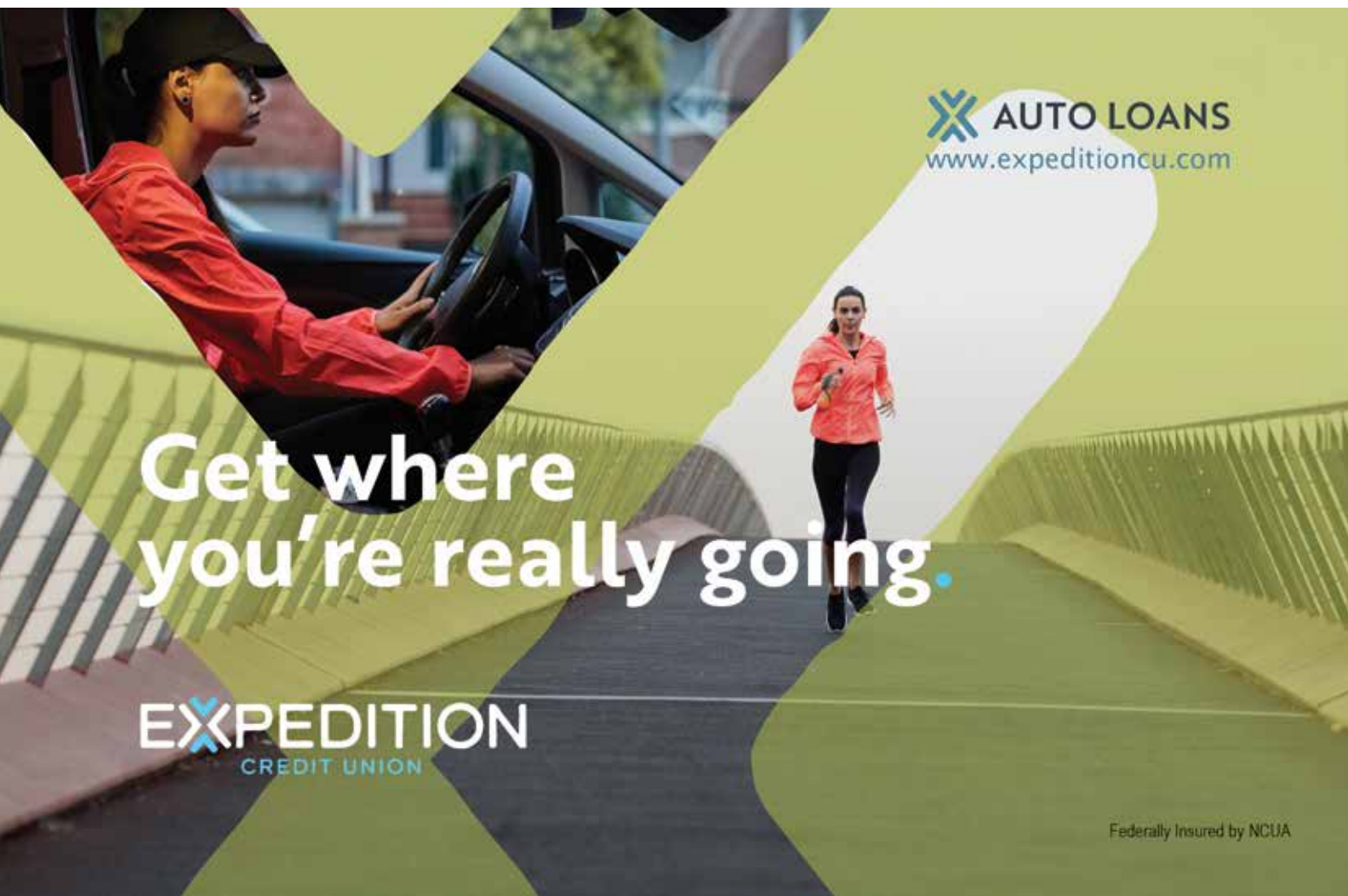
Educators can access the training on the free professional development platform, MEA Online - <https://meaonline.educationminnesota.org/dashboard>. Search the catalog for "Degrees Not Debt" or going directly to this link,

<https://meaonline.educationminnesota.org/catalog/courses/2443790>. By taking the training, those wanting support for loan forgiveness questions will have a solid foundation to understand options and from which to ask questions.

In general, an educator's ability to access and/or apply for forgiveness is going to be dependent on a number of factors. There are a few options for loan forgiveness options out there, but each come with a different set of eligibility standards, which is why Education Minnesota suggests taking the online training to start the process.

Once the training is complete and you have found your federal loan information on studentaid.gov, Education Minnesota staff can help guide you throughout the whole process.

Find out more about the union's Degrees, Not Debt program at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/degrees-not-debt.



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Legislative priorities focus on funding and supporting welcoming, racially just schools, pandemic recovery

Fully funding public education. Improving the living and working conditions for education support professionals. Addressing the issues in our schools the pandemic has put an even brighter spotlight on.

These are all issues Education Minnesota plans to bring forward during the 2022 legislative session, and push for legislation to move toward the fully funded, racially just schools Minnesota students and educators deserve.

Education Minnesota's full legislative agenda and information on numerous issues can be found at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature.

The agenda includes issues such as:

Increased education funding

If we're serious about making sure every student can pursue their dreams, our state needs to get serious about funding what works. One of the biggest problems is the state's share of funding schools hasn't kept pace with inflation—it's now 16.3 percent less than it was in 2003 in real dollars.

Education Minnesota supports these legislative proposals and more:

- Reverse the state's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it annually to inflation.
- Ensure all students, no matter what they look like or where they come from, have equitable access to welcoming schools where they see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- Fully fund special education costs at the state and federal levels instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.
- Make post-secondary education affordable and accessible so all students can pursue higher education free from the stress of unmanageable loans and debts. This includes expanding Minnesota's existing teacher loan forgiveness program and adding a permanent student loan advocate to enforce our recently passed Borrower Bill of Rights and pursue abuses by loan servicers and lenders.

- Invest in infrastructure and deferred maintenance in K-12 schools and college campuses, including heating/cooling and ventilation systems, so that all students—no matter where they live—are in high-quality learning environments and have access to a wide range of resources and a well-rounded education.
- Provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.
- Ensure sustainable funding for teacher pensions, including opposing any deviation from the 2018 pensions framework that does not address maintaining the purchasing power for retirees.

Student support staff

Student and educator mental health is a growing concern across Minnesota. Time and again, Education Minnesota members rank access to mental health supports as their number one concern.

The research is clear—when students have access to comprehensive support services, they do better in school. But our state trails the rest of the nation when it comes to investing in school counselors, nurses, social workers and other support staff our students need to succeed.

Education Minnesota will advocate for more school counselors, psychologists, social workers and nurses to meet our students' needs.

Time to teach and pandemic recovery

The pandemic made staffing shortage problems in our schools a crisis where districts are scrambling to hire and keep teachers and other school staff. While more solutions will surface, here's what the Legislature can do to start addressing these unsustainable shortages and the need to retain our educators:

- Extend paid COVID-19 leave for school staff who are sick, quarantining or caring for a loved one who is quarantining.

- Increase prep time by 50 percent so educators can talk with students and parents, grade homework and plan the next day's lesson during their contract day.
- Offer free or reduced college tuition and hiring bonuses to attract more educators to the profession.
- Offer more programs and financial assistance for paraprofessionals to be licensed educators.
- Allow retired teachers to return as substitutes without impacting their pension benefits.
- Provide schools with full-time substitutes based on their student enrollment numbers.
- Raise substitute pay to at least 90 percent starting wage salary for teachers.
- Pay teachers who cover a class for absent colleagues double their hourly rate and expanded prep time.

Full-service community schools

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that schools are truly the hubs of our communities. And our full-service community schools were even better equipped to quickly respond to family needs because of the relationships built with their partners. Education Minnesota supports providing \$90 million a year in state funding to help the state's existing 19 full-service community schools continue their work and allow other schools to become full-service models as well.

Special education

Educators working in special education feel they don't have enough instructional time because of their redundant and burdensome paperwork requirements.

Education Minnesota supports:

- Requiring the state to fund its portion of special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them. The special education cross subsidy will cost school districts about \$724 million in fiscal year 2021.
- Reducing local district paperwork requirements and caseloads for our special education educators.

ESP Bill of Rights

All education support professionals deserve the pay and benefits to sustain a family, safe work environments and a voice in their working conditions. Education Minnesota supports the following legislative proposals to improve pay and benefits for ESPs and elevate their

voice in decisions on staffing levels and working conditions:

- Require school districts and charter schools to pay their ESPs at least \$25 an hour. Every school employee should have the right to spend time at home with her or his own children, without working two or three extra jobs to survive.
- Ensure our hourly school workers, who perform critical jobs and are woefully underpaid, are eligible for unemployment insurance.
- Help educators and all Minnesotans get high quality, affordable health care. This includes allowing people to buy into MinnesotaCare and fighting for other public options.
- Require paraprofessionals who work directly with students to receive 16 hours of paid training prior to the beginning of each school year.
- Provide essential worker pay to ESPs who worked in-person during the pandemic providing childcare, food delivery and other support services.

Racially just schools

If we want all students to thrive and succeed, Minnesota must build culturally responsive schools that reflect the diverse students they serve. We can start doing this by:

- Increasing welcoming schools: Ensure all students, no matter what they look like or where they come from, have equitable access to welcoming schools where they see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- Attracting and retaining teachers of color: Increase starting salaries and create loan forgiveness, mentoring and other programs and protections to support educators on the job.
- Expanding ethnic studies curriculum: Develop a more accurate and holistic understanding of our state's diverse inhabitants, history, geography, government and economics. Education Minnesota members, students, parents and community allies will work together to demand new curriculum in their local school districts.
- Expanding trauma-informed practices: Create funding for schools with large racial disparities to provide trauma-informed professional development to all staff who work with students.

How to stay informed, get involved this legislative session

This legislative session is poised to look like no other. While final details on exactly how the session will run are being worked out, Education Minnesota still wants as many members as possible engaged in the process.

With the pandemic still affecting teaching and learning and a large budget surplus, educators need to have their voices heard more than ever before. Your voices help our priorities of strong public schools and support for students remain priorities for our legislators. Educators are the most effective advocates for public schools.

Share your story at a lobby day

Lobby days will be held virtually during the 2022 session. Local union and intermediate organization lobby days can be scheduled through your union and IO leadership and Education Minnesota staff. We will be hosting several issue-based lobby days, in addition to local lobby days, which are open to all active members. Issue lobby days will take place at 4 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays during the session. Topics to be determined. Go to www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature/lobby-days to learn more and see a schedule when announced.

Meet with legislators when they are back in their district

Even with the pandemic, we expect legislators to be back in the districts they represent during session. Watch your legislators' schedules to see when they are in the district and if they are having any public meetings. Invite your local legislator to your school, campuses and classroom, in a safe way. The more they can see and hear about what is going on in their local schools, especially during COVID-19, 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, contact your Education Minnesota field staff.

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. While they may be virtual this session, we still believe we will have many opportunities to testify. Contact Education

Minnesota's lobby team at lobbyteam@edmn.org if you're interested in testifying. The team can help you prepare your remarks and make sure you are where you need to be.

View our legislative agenda online, connect with our lobbyists on 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! Contact lobbyteam@edmn.org if there is something you care about that you would like us 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. Read our full legislative agenda at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature.

Read the Capitol Connection e-newsletter

Every Monday during the legislative session, Education Minnesota sends an e-newsletter called Capitol Connection to all members. Capitol Connection summarizes the most recent actions affecting public education at the Legislature, and looks ahead to upcoming activities. If you're a member and don't receive Capitol Connection once the session begins, contact webmaster@edmn.org and put Capitol Connection in the subject line.

Connect with Hustle text alerts

Education Minnesota uses 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 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.

Applications open for local union GOTV positions

A new part of Education Minnesota's campaign work is having paid local union positions to help get the word out about worksite actions and more.

The Education Minnesota Political Action Committee (PAC), which is made up of members from across the state, has expanded its campaign work in locals to include a new position—the local union GOTV leader.

The past two elections, Education Minnesota has had local worksite action leaders, which will still be a great resource for members in their school buildings and on campuses. But the PAC has decided to create a new position to help with this work.

The PAC also knows that in 2022, we have the power through our democracy and union to vote for public education and protect our collective bargaining rights. But we need educators at the forefront of that movement.

This get-out-the-vote leader position in each local will:

- Assist the local union in building capacity to exercise political power.
- Lead 2022 worksite action leaders in implementing the campaign plan at targeted worksites.
- Coordinate local union efforts with the statewide Education Minnesota campaign.

GOTV leaders will be eligible to receive a stipend of \$1,200 for leading this work from February–November 2022.

Activities and duties required of the GOTV leader, in order to earn a stipend:

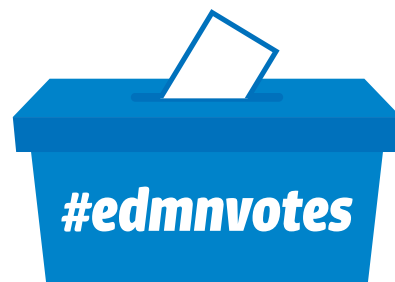
- Attend the March 4-5, 2022, Education Minnesota political conference training in the Twin Cities. (Planning for in-person participation, dependent on COVID-19).
- Participate in 30-minute monthly or biweekly Zoom meetings with an Education Minnesota political organizer and a cohort of other local union get-out-the-vote leaders.
- Participate in an individual 10-15-minute monthly or biweekly Zoom or phone check-in with assigned Education Minnesota political organizer.

As in 2018, Education Minnesota's Political Action Committee, made up of members from throughout the state, voted to continue with our new, transparent and member-focused endorsement process. Education Minnesota's campaign microsite, www.edmnvotes.org, also has multiple other ways to get involved.

- *Nominate your worksite or campus to host the governor for a full- or half-day shadowing educators.*
- *Submit a question for the gubernatorial or legislative candidate questionnaire.*
- *Contact your PAC representative to learn more about the process.*

- Assist in recruitment of worksite action leaders for targeted buildings in the local.
- Assist with campaign communications to worksite action leaders by email, text and Zoom about the campaign activities at worksites. Support worksite action leaders in their efforts.
- Lead social media and texting tactics for the local union in the campaign.

Learn more and apply today at www.edmnvotes.org.





Education Moorhead members Kristi Rowekamp, Jeff Offutt and Dr. Jean Sando joined Education Minnesota President Denise Specht and North Dakota United President Nick Archuleta at a press conference in December to speak about the impact substitute shortages is having on students and staff.

‘At a Breaking Point’ media tour continues to highlight more of the issues facing educators this year

The “At a Breaking Point” media tour and Education Minnesota officer tour of locals continued this fall, as part of the union’s efforts to tell the real story of what is happening in our schools this year.

Education Minnesota officers have been visiting local unions and intermediate organizations this year, hearing members tell stories in every part of the state about how their work this year feels unsustainable. As of press time, they have visited with more than 130 member groups.

COVID-19 didn’t create the issues facing Minnesota educators this school year, but it did shine a brighter light on them. After their listening tour, Education Minnesota leaders decided to use the union’s collective power and voice to draw attention to these issues through a media series called “At a Breaking Point: Educating During COVID-19.”

The first media event in the series took place in Rochester Oct. 19, where the issue of education support professional staffing was highlighted.

In November, a press conference discussing special education was held via Zoom.

“Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, special education teachers were dealing with unsustainable caseloads and paperwork requirements,” said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht. “Now, with additional evaluations of recovery services needed and staffing shortages, the situation in our schools is even worse, and we are seeing special education teachers leaving the profession.”

Elk River special education teacher Katelyn Mathews shared her story of overburdens of paperwork and not having enough time to do her work, even with the additional hours she puts in outside of school.

“The lack of special education teachers increases our caseloads,” she said. “Unfortunately, we’ve already had two evaluators quit this year in our district because of workload issues and we’re seeing the number of referrals for special education increase.”

Jasman Myers, an EBD teacher in North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale, spoke at the press conference about the challenges of being more in-person this year.

“We actually had some successes thanks to COVID, being virtual, connecting with families who might not be able to get to the building for an IEP meeting during the day,” she said. “But now that barrier has been put back up. I spend a lot of my personal time to connect with families because nights and weekends might work better for them and to create an IEP that looks like that student.”

Specht discussed how there are financial opportunities at the state level to help release some of the pressures happening in special education. Special education funding is part of Education Minnesota’s legislative agenda.

“Special education has never been properly funded by the state and federal governments, even though those are the entities who put mandates on these educators,” she said. “We appreciate the funding the state has

provided in the last few years to help put a Band-Aid on these costs, but it's still not enough. The state is looking at a surplus and we will continue to advocate for more funding for special education."

In early December, the media tour went to Moorhead and joined with North Dakota United, their educator union, to highlight the issue of substitute shortages.

"This issue isn't about educators being out too much," said North Dakota United President Nick Archuleta. "We need our educators to be able to stay home when they need to, whether for personal or health reasons. The contract signed by the district grants them time off and they should be able to use it like any other working professional."

"We have a critical sub shortage in our district," said Dr. Jean Sando, Education Moorhead local president. "Using our prep to cover for each other adds stress but it is an alternative to nothing. But when we have teachers coming to school sick because they don't want to put the burden on their colleagues, that isn't good practice anytime and it certainly isn't good practice in a pandemic."

"Prep time is the scheduled time for teachers to create and enter scores or assignments, quizzes and tests, talk with students, colleagues, parents, administrators, gather or create classroom materials, run copies, complete online training, read information from building and district administration, meet with team members,

meet permanent members or curriculum materials, read response emails, listen to and respond to phone messages, etc," said Moorhead teacher Jeff Offut. "Oh, and of course, that's when we get to go to the bathroom. When teachers spend their prep time in another teacher's classroom, the work that they would have done still needs to be done if it will be done."

Specht and Archuleta not only participated in the press conference but also did radio interviews and an editorial board visit at the Fargo Forum newspaper about the substitute issue and others facing educators this year.

At a breaking point

The Education Minnesota officers and executive director have visited with more than 130 locals throughout the state this fall and winter, with plans to continue more.

At each meeting, they are hearing stories of staffing shortages in every area of education, staff mental health concerns, physical health concerns related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and more.

Your union wants to know we hear you. Beyond the media tour, Education Minnesota staff are working with local unions to assist with bargaining and support their members. From COVID bonuses to forgoing staff meetings, there are success stories we will continue to highlight, as well as bring these issues forward to the public, district administration, the Legislature and the governor.



Special education teachers from across the metro joined Education Minnesota President Denise Specht at a press conference in November to highlight the unsustainable working conditions they have faced both before and during the pandemic.

Recent contract negotiations bring big wins for ESP locals

Numerous education support professionals are seeing improvements to their salaries, benefits and working conditions thanks to contract negotiations.

ESPs have been on the frontlines of the pandemic response, most often being the workers staffing the in-person child care, delivering meals and materials, and doing the one-on-one, in-person support for students who need it.

"When we feel better, confident and less stressed so do the students we help," said Jamie Yokley, an ESP and negotiations team member in Ada-Borup-West.

Ada-Borup-West settled its first contract as a part of Education Minnesota this November. Negotiators bargained numerous wins that they hadn't received before, including paid holidays, reducing their salary schedule from 20 to 12 steps, a health insurance increase, a \$500 403b match, a \$500 COVID stipend, guaranteed representation on district committees, a 2.5 percent increase on the salary schedule each year and longevity increases.

"All of the wins, better pay, more pay toward our health insurance, paid holidays

and all the rest were important to me, because now I feel like I have a voice," said Yokley. "It not only helps us paraprofessionals but it helps the students too."

In Oglivie, the ESP local bargained an overall total package increase of just under 23 percent for its two-year contract.

"Employees are thrilled with the wage increase," said Lori DeYoung, Oglivie ESP lead negotiator. "Also the OESPA employees were pleased that the union and Oglivie School District worked together to get the back pay to the employees in their paycheck before winter break."

Oglivie ESPs bargained to cut the first three steps from the salary schedule each year and added a 1 percent increase to the salary schedule each year. As this resulted in some individuals gaining more per hour than others, the union negotiated a minimum increase to each employee's hourly rate. In the first year, each

employee receives no less than \$1.30 per hour increase and in year two, no less than \$1.07. This also resulted in step 1 increasing from \$12.55 to \$14.63 over two years.

Other contract wins for Oglivie were an increased vacation/paid time off payout upon retirement from 50 percent to between 70-90 percent based on years of service and slight increases to their health insurance.

The paraprofessionals in Byron settled their contract last summer, with a major focus on being able to retain the staff they had and recruit more, as well.

The local bargained for pay raises, family health insurance that is affordable, removing the superintendent approval of their personal days and limiting or getting rid of the paras having to work at the before- and after-school

program on snow days and giving them the decision on how they would like to get paid for that day.

"As a result of bargaining, we have retained all the paras we have and have hired all but one or two

paras we need for the district, with a \$1.25 raise this year and \$1 next year and moving up two steps starting this year," said Karen Grev, the local president of the Byron ESPs.

The other wins give paras more autonomy in their work, with choosing if they want to work on snow days or take a personal day, and having their personal days that had been approved by the superintendent moved to approval by the building administrator with no reason for the request needed.

"We didn't go in with much on the bargaining table to start out with, but we were able to get them to listen to us and to understand why the paras as a group were unhappy with some of the policies the district had," said Grev. "We also didn't get some things we wanted but as a group in whole we were happy with the way we were treated, which wasn't always the case in other years, and the items we did get were fair to all."

"When we feel better, confident and less stressed so do the students we help."

– Jamie Yokley, Ada-Borup-West ESPs

Member Honor Roll

Congratulations to the Education Minnesota members who have been honored for their work in the last year.

Association for Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Year

- Luke Becker, Agricultural Science and Technology Instructor and Career and Technical Education Coordinator at Braham High School has been named the 2022 National ACTE Teacher of the Year.

SHAPE America Teachers of the Year

- Jessica Matheson, Rockford, and Jen Heebink, Buffalo, have been named 2022 Central District Teachers of the Year for adapted physical education (Heebink) and health (Matheson) by the Society of Health and Physical Educators. They both are now in the running for SHAPE America's National Teacher of the Year award, named in April.

2020-21 MMEA Music Educator of the Year

- Kathleen Radspinner, a music educator in Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, was named the 2020-21 Music Educator by the Minnesota Music Educators Association.

National Board Certified Teachers

The following Education Minnesota members earned National Board Certification in 2021:

- David Ellefson, Rochester
- Kristin Shively, Anoka Hennepin
- Melody Snyder, Edina
- Jennifer Goetz, Saint Paul
- Allison Zaccardi, Saint Paul
- Alexander Johnson, Minnetonka
- Jennifer Matejka, Minnetonka
- Brooke Reeves, White Bear Lake
- Jessica Talsky, Roseville

The following Education Minnesota members recertified their National Board Certification in 2021:

- Kris Anderson, Saint Paul
- Wendy Aro, Saint Paul
- Jeffrey Beckstrom, Minnetonka
- Angela Jorgensen, Hastings
- Sara Schreiner, Osseo
- Lacey Smith, Cook County
- Allison Theissen, White Bear Lake
- Debra Thibault, White Bear Lake
- Kathleen Walsh, Saint Paul
- Joseph Weyer, Roseville



Education Minnesota's newest public ad campaign features stories of educators going above and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic.

New ad campaign celebrates work of educators during pandemic

The latest phase in Education Minnesota's "Believe in 'We'" paid media campaign is a series of new ads that began airing online and on statewide television.

The new phase is titled "Pandemic Lessons," and the ads feature educators across the state who have found ways to persevere and find creative ways to create community in their classrooms during these trying times.

The ad campaign is meant to be a parallel to the "At a Breaking Point" media tour. Education Minnesota knows the importance of sharing out the unsustainable working and learning conditions our members are facing this year, but also believes we need to celebrate the amazing work that is happening in spite of that—because of the dedication and resilience of educators.

These ads will also appear on social media, on video sites such as YouTube and various targeted websites. The ads will drive viewers to the campaign website, www.BelieveInWeMN.com, to watch longer videos telling the stories of the good work our members always do.

Featured in the new ads are educators from across Minnesota, including elementary teachers who found ways to build school community virtually and an elementary teacher who brings her own life story into her classroom.

At the start of the pandemic, Spring Lake Park teachers Maggie Lee and Theresa Phillippo started talking about how to connect with not only their own students but the entire school when they couldn't physically be in the same space.

The Northpoint Elementary School teachers created a "Masked Reader" video series where each week a school staff member would have an emoji over their face and read a book that was shared out on FlipGrid. Students would then record their guesses to who it was, and could watch and respond to each other on the virtual platform about who everyone thought was the reader.

Teaching, at its core, is all about relationships. It's about establishing a connection that opens a student's eyes to a world of possibilities.

So, when the pandemic shut schools down, educators found themselves facing a daunting challenge:

- Drawing, on the fly, a never-before-attempted distance learning plan.
- Helping prepare and deliver school lunches for students who relied on them.
- Providing day care for the children of essential workers on the front lines.
- Sharing precious bandwidth and space at home with their own family.
- And, above all, finding together what to connect with students.

These are the stories of educators who show us that even a pandemic is no match for their passion for teaching.

Go to www.BelieveInWeMN.com to see the full campaign.

"We would get 80-90 responses in a matter of hours of releasing the videos," said Lee. "That's what they needed. We had to come in with the positive attitude of 'at least we're still together,' and focusing on what we still can do together and not what we can't."

"This was our way of not only continuing the fun that we always have had," said Phillippo. "But making sure that they continued to see smiles on people's faces."

Lee and Phillippo also created a Northpoint's Got Talent program where students filmed themselves doing something at home, and the school watched the videos together and voted.

In another video, Rochester teacher Criselda Martinez shares that creating relationships with her students even though they couldn't physically be together was her biggest focus during the pandemic.

"We would have 'cafécito con compañeros' which means coffee with companions," she said. "The children didn't bring coffee but a morning drink. The kids simply just wanted someone to talk with."

Martinez had virtual field trips and even virtual dance parties to help stay connected with her students, which also strengthened their relationship, as she was able to see more into their personal home lives and meet their families and pets.

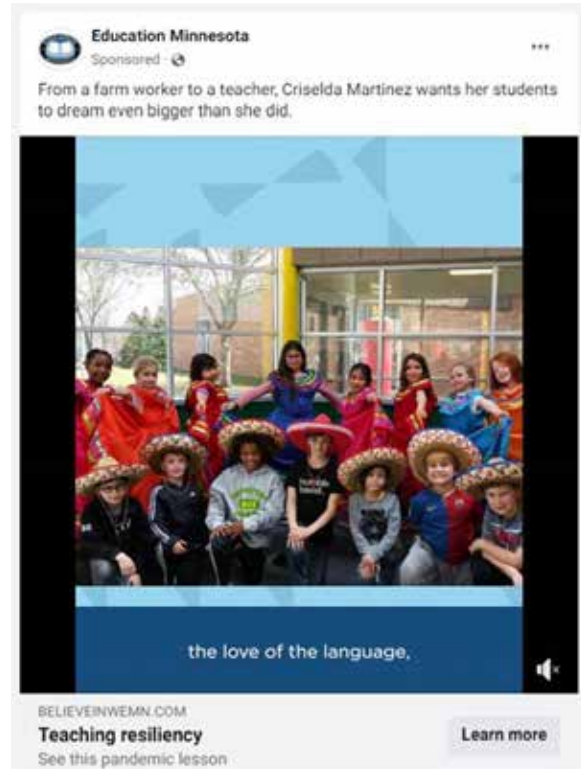
"I want my students to take with them the love of the language, the love of acceptance and being who they are and who they can be," she said. "I want them to take the knowledge they have acquired and take it with them in all aspects of their lives."

More videos will be released throughout the next few months featuring more educator stories, such as Luke Becker, an agricultural science and technology instructor and career and technical education coordinator at Braham High School, who brings students ideas to life in big ways; Timothy Ray, an education assistant in Minneapolis who brings his own life experiences to his work; and Elizabeth Averbeck, a human geography teacher in Kasson-Mantorville who brings learning about the world and our commitment to equity into her classroom in exciting and engaging ways.

See all of the videos at www.BelieveInWeMN.com, and share them on your social media channels to highlight the amazing work of educators throughout Minnesota.



Watch for the ads on TV and numerous social media platforms.





THE PEOPLE'S PATRIOT PROJECT

Educators start national group supporting veterans, first responders that prioritizes mental health

Mark Petersen left the military in 2002, but knew he still wanted to be of service to others. In addition to becoming a teacher in St. Francis, he became a volunteer firefighter. Through that work, he realized that there was a support missing for the people who help keep our communities safe.

"These people give everything to their work, and for many firefighters it's voluntary," Petersen said. "I started to look into what we could do to give them something to honor that time."

Petersen took his work with young people and connected that to his idea of supporting first responders.

"You can start meeting their social-emotional needs once their basic needs are met," Petersen said.

Petersen then expanded his work to support of veterans.

"We're losing between 17-75 service members a day to suicide, because we're not getting to them," Petersen said. "And 76 percent of first responders are former military."

Petersen started putting more and more ideas together, and talking with educator colleagues when he would attend Education Minnesota, National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers events.

"Many educators in Minnesota are closely or directly associated to military or first responders," he said. "I started pulling in educators who believed in the mission."

From there the We, The People's Patriot Project was born, with Petersen at the helm and many other educators across Minnesota, including Andrea Eichmann from Hastings and Erik Hendrickson of Robbinsdale.

The vision of the organization is to provide a community and network of support, with the necessary tools, insights and resources to aid in the rehabilitation of veteran and current service members and civil servants to go through a recovery process and transition into real-world opportunities and situations.

The organization's website states, "We want to help provide more fulfilling life memories and experiences by providing resources and facilities that will show an appreciation for the sacrifices and service these members have already provided to our country and community. Adding to their memories and experiences for the main purpose as they have sacrificed their livelihood to promote the life securities and freedoms we all share as Americans."

Petersen now has a national network of partner organizations and supporters he can call upon whenever they need them.

"We saw that a veteran was suicidal in Florida on social media and were able to get someone by his side in 40 minutes," he said. "I have 190-plus organizations that are affiliates that we can call and connect them with people."

When the pandemic limited in-person opportunities to connect, Petersen and others started a virtual "happy

Learn more about the We, The People's Patriot Project at www.thepeoplespatriotproject.org and www.facebook.com/groups/thepeoplespatriotproject.

hour," where they were able to connect with people and share out how the organization can help. From there, they started a YouTube series which started getting nearly 40,000 viewers each week. "We Got Your 6 at 6 – Patriot Playtime," is now a weekly podcast and livestreamed video that is shared on Facebook, YouTube, Spotify and I Heart Radio.

"On the show, we're able to have our organizations come and share about the work they are doing," said Petersen. "And we always try to have a musical guest, someone who is a veteran or first responder."

The group also has a program called "Lighten the Load." This program helps people financially with whatever they need, whether it's a meal, a vacation, a bill paid off or a vehicle.

Petersen has also helped create a Heroes in the Classroom Caucus at the NEA for educators who have served or are serving or those wanting to support students who have family members serving.

Petersen hopes that by sharing more about the organization it helps get out the message that we can all have feelings and if you need to ask for help, to please do so.

And he knows that his work as a teacher is directly connected to the work he does in this organization.

"We have children in our classroom who are the kids of the people who serve our communities and our country," Petersen said. "The word patriot has been co-opted, but the best way to fix that is by educating people, just like we do everything else. Educate, come together and get everyone working in the same direction, so no one's life is taken for granted."



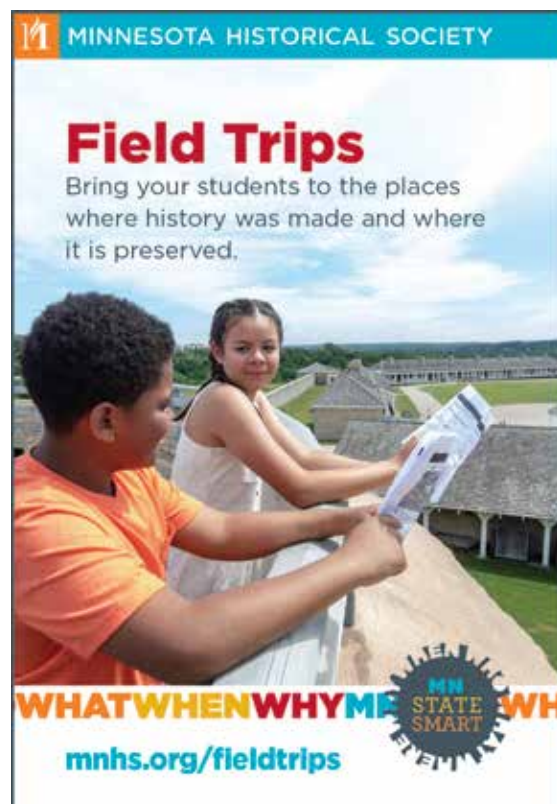
2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year candidates

The 77 candidates for the 2022 Minnesota Teacher of the Year were announced at the end of January. See the list of the teachers at www.educationminnesota.org/news/awards-and-honors/teacher-of-the-year.

A selection panel representing Minnesota leaders in education, business and government chooses the Minnesota Teacher of the Year from individuals who are nominated and who then choose to become a candidate. Panelists review candidate portfolios, review video submissions of semifinalists and interview finalists in person.

Education Minnesota organizes and underwrites the program, which means the union handles only the business of running the program, not the selection process. Minnesota is the only state in which the union runs the program. Most are run through the state's department of education.

2022 Minnesota
TEACHER
of the **YEAR**
58th Anniversary



Apply for funding to attend the AFT Convention

The American Federation of Teachers will hold its biennial convention July 14-17 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center in Boston.

The biennial AFT convention is the most important policymaking body for the union. Delegates will consider an array of issues through resolutions as well as constitution and bylaw measures.

Delegates also will elect the AFT president, secretary-treasurer, executive vice president and the vice presidents for the national union.

Education Minnesota will provide funding for one local delegate from each election district, one ESP local delegate and one Higher Ed local delegate (a total of 28 funded delegates).

Local presidents will receive an information packet from the AFT that includes a tentative schedule, hotel information and conference forms.

To be eligible, local delegates must first be elected from their local. Local members who would like

to apply for state funding should go online to <https://www.cvent.com/d/38q31p> and complete the funding interest form by March 4.

Names of state funded local delegates will be selected by a drawing on March 11. Funding includes airfare, hotel accommodations and meals along with additional convention expenses.

For questions on state funding, contact Janel Engesser at 800-652-9073 ext. 4867, 651-292-4867 or janel.engesser@edmn.org.

2022 AFT CONVENTION: July 14-17, Boston

To be considered for state funding, please fill out the Funding Interest Form at <https://www.cvent.com/d/38q31p>.

Forms must be submitted by Friday, March 4. Selection will be made Friday, March 11.

If you have problems with the online form, please contact Janel Engesser at janel.engesser@edmn.org or 651-292-4867 or 800-652-9073, ext. 4867.

Delegate selection underway for 2022 Rep. Convention

Plans are underway for the 2022 Education Minnesota Representative Convention, taking place April 22-23 at the Saint Paul RiverCentre. Represent your colleagues on issues that affect all educators by seeking a post as a delegate or alternate. Education Minnesota leadership will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and keep members informed of any changes to the convention or safety and mitigation plans as the event gets closer.

Major business for delegates includes acting on changes to the union's constitution and bylaws and considering any action items or proposed amendments to the legislative positions and the statements of principle. This year, delegates will also elect Education Minnesota's three statewide officers, as well as two National Education Association Directors.

March 18 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. Interested members should contact their local president for details on how to participate.

For in-person events, Education Minnesota provides one standard hotel room for one night for each local sending at least one delegate, parking up to a pre-determined amount and one round-trip mileage reimbursement per delegate. Local presidents have details on the financial arrangements and hotel reservations.

Learn more about the RC and elections in the member portal of www.educationminnesota.org.

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

Unemployment Insurance Fraud: What You Need To Know

What Is Unemployment Insurance (UI) Fraud?

UI fraud happens when someone knowingly collects unemployment benefits by providing false or inaccurate information when they file a claim. Due to the economic crisis and other factors during the pandemic, we have seen UI fraud increase.

How To Know You've Become a Victim

Unfortunately, most people don't find out they are victims of UI fraud until the damage has already been done. People typically find out that they are victims of fraud when:

- They receive benefits-related paperwork in the mail that shows benefits they didn't apply for (such as Form 1099-G, used to report income from unemployment benefits)
- They get a call from their employer or a past employer saying an unemployment claim has been filed under their name
- They try to file a legitimate benefits claim and are subsequently denied

Additionally, many taxpayers learn they are victims of fraud only after they file their federal taxes and are alerted by the IRS that they didn't report all of their income. And some retired people have found out they were fraud victims only when the Social Security Administration alerted them their benefits were being reduced.

All active and retired Education Minnesota members qualify for the Education Minnesota ESI complimentary Identity Theft Recovery plan from Securus ID. You can also upgrade coverage or add your family at negotiated rates.

Visit educationminnesota.securusid.com to enroll or learn more. You can also contact Securus ID at 877-833-9041 info@securusid.com.



41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 651-292-4856 800-642-4624
esi.educationminnesota.org esi@edmn.org

Paid for by ESI, not by dues. ESI is self-supporting; revenues provide benefits, service and consumer education for members. What do YOU want to know? Send questions to esi@edmn.org.





THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Education Minnesota
41 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55103

MEA conference courses now on MEA Online

**Nearly one dozen courses from our 2021 MEA
conference are now available on MEA Online!**

Included in the new courses are:

- *Creating Gender Inclusivity Through Language, Curriculum and Sharing Stories*
- *Sing Today—Read Forever! How to Use Music-Making to Raise Reading Achievement*
- *Teaching Gifted Learners- Advice From Minnesota Educators of the Gifted and Talented*
- *Trauma I and II- Understanding Trauma and the Developing Brain*
- *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*
- *Culturally Responsive Classroom Mindfulness*
- *Culturally Responsive Teaching for Muslim Students*
- *From Exhibit to Classroom- Deepening Native American Content Connections*
- *Getting Started With Project-Based Learning*
- *A Panel With Minnesota Teacher of the Year and Finalists*

**Find these classes and more on the professional learning
platform FREE to all Education Minnesota members.
Classes are available for all seven relicensure categories!**

**No account creation is required. Go to [https://
edmn.me/MEAonline](https://edmn.me/MEAonline) to find out more about
MEA Online and how to access trainings.**



MEA

MINNESOTA EDUCATOR ACADEMY