

M I N N E S O T A

EDUCATOR

DECEMBER 2021 / JANUARY 2022

**Tequila Laramée
named the
2021-22 ESP
of the Year**

**Media series highlights
unsustainable working
conditions**



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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Phone: 800-652-9073 or 651-227-9541
For information about union activities, work and resources, go to www.educationminnesota.org.

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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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Education Minnesota's 2021-22 ESP of the Year Tequila Laramée poses outside her classroom at Bethune Community School in Minneapolis.

Educators must lead during pandemic surge, equity backlash

I've been touring Minnesota with the leadership team of Education Minnesota for the past few months, and I've heard over and over that educators and parents want similar things from their public schools.

They want schools that equip their students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to pursue their dreams. They also want Minnesota's children to have an education that will help our nation avoid the mistakes of its past.

Those goals feel almost too aspirational for many of us right now. We're in the middle of what many educators are calling the most difficult school year of their careers. Their working conditions are relentlessly demanding—and exhausting.

The current surge of COVID-19 infections in Minnesota, plus the absence of short-call substitutes, plus thousands of unfilled school staff jobs, equals an unsustainable situation in the long term and, in some places, one that may not last until May.

Meanwhile, the well-organized, toxic national campaign against everything educators do to make our schools safer, more welcoming and effective for our BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students continues.

On Nov. 2, Minnesotans rejected the so-called critical race theory candidates in most school board races, but certain politicians — and the big money groups that support them — still believe it's a winning issue.

When the Legislature comes back in 2022, I believe a few lawmakers will introduce bans on teaching about race in Minnesota schools, as 12 states already have, according to Education Week.

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum signed such a ban in November, prohibiting any content expressing that, "racism is systemically embedded in American society and the American legal system to facilitate racial inequality."

While a similar ban won't be signed into law here, the debate itself could demoralize students of color, drive more educators of color out of the profession and make many overworked teachers hesitate about offering the lessons that need to be taught.

This all sounds frustrating, and it is, but there's hope for a better future. It all depends on us, the educators,

and finding our voices in the debate. We're not doing anyone any good if we don't say what's happening in schools.

Minnesotans are ready to listen.

The headline in Minnesota's largest newspaper on Sunday, Nov. 14, was,

"Minnesota teachers say the school year is already the most stressful of their careers." It followed similar stories on TV.

The attention matters. The federal and state governments are investing millions in public schools and educators can influence how the money is spent. In Rochester, the district started offering \$1,500 hiring bonuses after local ESPs told the news media about unfilled jobs.

It's the same story about the attacks on equity. Educators' endorsed school board candidates usually defeated anti-equity candidates when educators simply said what they do, why they do it and how it benefits all their students.

Despite the protests of a loud minority, most parents are fine with their schools giving students the tools they need to consider the role of race and racism in American history and society—but those parents need to hear the real story.

There will be many opportunities in the next few months, from the news media to lobby days to our union's political endorsement process, to simply sharing our story with the neighbors over coffee and doughnuts.

It's a tough time right now and I know we're all looking forward to the winter break, but staying silent won't help. Speaking up can make all the difference.

Together,



Twitter: @DeniseSpecht



Denise Specht

Minnesotans support schools, honest education in recent elections

Strong majorities of Minnesota voters on Nov. 2 supported their local school districts in levy referendums and largely rejected school board candidates who wanted to deny students access to the information and skills they will need to thrive in a multiracial Minnesota.

Voters in many—but not all—places chose to increase their own taxes to support their students and schools. These ballot questions are not the way to fund schools—but until the Legislature fixes this broken system, it's what we've got.

Education Minnesota's Political Action Committee makes funds available for locals to use in school board or levy campaigns. If your local has an election coming up or is already planning for the fall of 2022, please reach out to Jim Meyer, jim.meyer@edmn.org or 800-652-9073 x4813, for levies and referendums or Anna Brelje, anna.brelje@edmn.org or 800-652-9073 x4841, for school board races.

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!



This Jackson student was so excited her teachers were working phone banks she brought over some brownies!

Thank you Jackson teachers and volunteers for your efforts tonight. Less than one week to #voteYES for Shakopee.



Where are you reading your Minnesota Educator?

Congratulations, Fran Simpson of Southern Plains Education Co-op, 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 Jan. 7. 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!

“

I go into school everyday with a positive attitude. And you know, I love what I do, I love what I do. But I'm tired.

”

– Tami Schumacher, a second-grade teacher from East Grand Forks, in a Minnesota News Network story which ran in multiple news outlets, Oct. 27. Schumacher encouraged administrators to ease pressure on teachers to make sure students are caught up academically, and focus instead on their mental well-being.

ESP of the Year driven by lifelong love for kids

When the kindergarten students Tequila Laramée was working with couldn't quite remember their letter sounds, she came up with a song on the spot. The kids not only sang it that day, but the day after that and the day after that.

That love for her students and helping them learn is a big reason why Laramée was named Education Minnesota's 2021-22 Education Support Professional of the Year.

As an associate educator at Bethune Community School in Minneapolis, Laramée assists the licensed teacher in the classroom with small literacy and math groups, behavioral support, and social and emotional support for students.

For Laramée, working in schools has also always been about building a welcoming and inclusive classroom community.

"I always wanted to be a teacher so I could be an adult in the school who looks like my students, who reads to them and helps them," said Laramée.

Laramée was the first person in her family to attend college, and has had to put her education on hold right now, but hopes to finish her degree and work as a teacher or counselor in Minneapolis Public Schools.

"I want to show and educate students in poverty that they have choices," she said in her submission essay for the ESP of the Year award. "I want to introduce them to careers they maybe haven't thought of and I want them to know they do not have to become stereotypes or a product of their environment."

Laramée makes an impact on students' lives in her current role in big ways.

"Tequila is an excellent educator and has a firm grasp of what students need," said Kari Ehlers, the kindergarten teacher at Bethune who works with Laramée, in her award recommendation letter. "From arrival to dismissal, she is engaged with students, supporting them, encouraging them, and redirecting them as needed. She is able to connect with our students in such a caring and loving way that all the children feel safe and secure in her presence. Tequila also has made many impactful relationships with families, reaching

out regarding students, providing support, and helping families feel our Bethune love."

Laramée has worked in many different roles in Minneapolis Public Schools, including the before- and after-school program, which she continues to do.

"I work with students even more than the licensed teachers," she said. "We do lunch duty, recess and more."

"My children love her. They talk about her every day at home and love going to school to work with her," said LaQuanda Jarrett, a parent at Bethune in her award recommendation letter. "She helps my children see the value in themselves, she makes sure they see themselves in the classroom environment and she makes sure they feel included. She is always proactive and helpful whenever I ask for help or have a concern."

Laramée says that making sure ESPs are a valued part of their school community will be an issue she hopes to highlight with her new title.

"Just because we don't have a license, doesn't mean we aren't qualified to be an important part of the classroom," she said. "There are so many things ESPs can do."

"When so many have not felt seen or heard in the educational system, Ms. Tequila fights against that narrative," said Greta Callahan, president of teacher chapter of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and Education Support Professionals, who nominated Laramée for this award and previously worked with her at Bethune. "She invites our parents in to read to the class, come on field trips and be a presence in our school. At conferences, she is always there, and our families rave about what a blessing she is to their children."

The mindset of supporting ESPs is also what has gotten Laramée into union advocacy work.

Laramée has organized with the MFT in the summers, engaging with members, signing them up to be



Tequila Laramée

members of the union and inviting them to be an active member.

"I feel confined to my building, so organizing gives me a chance to meet, listen and connect with members," she said. "One conversation led to a licensed teacher eager to get more involved, ready to support ESPs and interested in becoming a board member."

Through that work, Laramée was nominated and elected to the MFT ESP Executive Board.

"Holding an at-large position, I contribute to being a voice for ESPs that cannot be at meetings, rallies and in other ways," she said. "I listen to their concerns and be that ESP-to-union bridge to help resolve their concerns. I work hard every day to show students, staff, administrators and families how much value ESPs are to our schools."

Laramée's dedication to her union work matches her dedication to her students and that was recognized by others within MFT.

"After observing how fair and pragmatic she has been on the board, I nominated her for our Joint Treasurer position. She won with over 90 percent of the vote," said Callahan. "This accomplishment stands out for multiple reasons- this was a joint chapter vote; not only do ESPs support Ms. Tequila, but our licensed chapter does as well. Also, she made history. Ms. Tequila is the first ESP to ever serve in our Joint Treasurer role. I am so proud to have this amazing role model and leader as a colleague."

In her new role this year, representing ESPs throughout Minnesota, with this award, Laramée hopes to inspire others to stand up and speak out.

"I stand up and speak for what I believe in, for what ESPs deserve and for our students. I show up, work hard and do my best at whatever it is I am doing," she said. "I find many ESPs are so busy and don't have the time to be involved. I believe it is so important to be involved, because we're not just fighting for ourselves, we're fighting for the safety and education of our students. They are our future."

Tequila Laramée works on letter sounds with her kindergarteners at Bethune Community School in Minneapolis. Laramée's dedication to her students and her advocacy for education support professionals through her union work is why she was named Education Minnesota's 2021-22 ESP of the Year.



Loan forgiveness program updates offer new opportunities for educators, all workers

There are new opportunities for educators and other public workers who want to take advantage of the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, thanks to the Biden administration and the work of both our national unions. One of our two national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers, has been at the center of a lawsuit that has resulted in specific enforcement of new rules that expand options for loan forgiveness.

From now until October 2022, the U.S. Department of Education will be waiving two of the four PSLF requirements. The first is that qualifying payments had to be made under an income-driven repayment plan. The second is that only payments made on Direct loans could count toward PSLF qualification.

The waiver allows past ineligible loan payments based on payment plan or loan type to count toward the 120 total payments needed to qualify for PSLF. These changes will fulfill a promise of forgiveness made to hundreds of thousands of student loan borrowers.

Requirements that remain in place include being employed within government, a 501c3 not-for-profit or another not-for-profit organization that provides a qualifying service and working for that employer full-time.

In October, the AFT also announced the settlement of a 2019 lawsuit between the AFT and the U.S. Department of Education and its former Secretary Betsy DeVos. The lawsuit plaintiffs, including an Education Minnesota member, sued DeVos as some of the 97 percent of PSLF applicants whose applications were rejected because of mismanagement of the program by the administration and improper behavior by loan servicers.

As a result of the settlement, the Department of Education now must review any application for Public Service Loan Forgiveness that was denied prior to November 2020. The DOE will automatically begin looking at rejected applications to determine if applicants have made at least 10 years of loan payments. Even if applicants don't qualify for immediate

discharge, the federal government will notify borrowers who were previously denied and update them on the new conditions in the waiver. Denied applicants will also receive information on the steps they need to take to remedy their situation which may result in either an immediate discharge of debt or placement on a path to have their debt discharged down the road.

The lawsuit settlement also will provide an enforcement mechanism for the temporary waiver put in place by the Biden administration to ensure that deceptive practices by servicers are remedied.



Education Minnesota members who are interested in seeing if these new opportunities help them qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness should take the following steps:

- **All interested members should first verify your loan type.** Members can access your loan data on studentaid.gov. This system allows you to see a summary of all of your loans you have taken out via a federally-backed program. You can find out what kinds of loans you have, when they originated, how much you have to pay and which servicer holds your loans. To access the site, you will need an FSA ID and password.
- **If you have federal loans other than just Direct loans, you will need to take three steps.** Step one is to consolidate your Family Federal Education loans (FFEL) and Perkins loans into a Direct Consolidation loan by Oct. 31, 2022. After the consolidation is complete, you must then submit a PSLF form

to your loan servicer to verify your employment and apply for PSLF.

- If you have Direct loans, but have never done any paperwork, you will need to submit a PSLF form to your loan servicer to verify employment and apply for PSLF.
- If you have Direct loans and have certified your PSLF-eligible employment, then you just need to wait.

Education Minnesota members have access to an important tool for this process called Summer, which is a free benefit of membership with the AFT.

Summer is an online platform that assists members in applying for and completing the loan forgiveness process. Summer can help members:

- Enroll in income-driven repayment plans and manage annual income recertification for these plans;
- Complete the PSLF Employment Certification Form and manage the PSLF certification and application process, including reaching out to your employer and getting an electronic signature for you;
- Find other options for loan forgiveness programs, including state- and occupation-based loan forgiveness, and get assistance applying for them; and
- Talk through options with Summer's borrower success team so they understand how to best maximize their loan repayment and forgiveness options.

Members can register for Summer at members.aft.org with either your local number and last name, or your member ID number. Direct access can also be provided by members who email DND@edmn.org.

Education Minnesota members also have access to assistance through our Degrees, Not Debt program.

Members can access training on loan forgiveness options, including one on these new PSLF changes, on MEA Online. Specific questions on this program can be emailed to DND@edmn.org but our Degrees, Not Debt team would appreciate specific questions from folks who have read up on the PSLF waiver and taken the training online.

The waiver allows past ineligible loan payments based on payment plan or loan type to count toward the 120 total payments needed to qualify for PSLF. These changes will fulfill a promise of forgiveness made to hundreds of thousands student loan borrowers.

What PSLF requirements are waived through October 2022?

Previous requirements

- *Repay under an IDR plan.*
- *Make 120 qualifying payments.*

Waived changes

- *Past payments under any payment plan count.*
- *Past ineligible loan payments may count toward 120 total payments.*

Unchanged requirements

- *Employed by government, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit or other not-for-profit organization that provides a qualifying service.*
- *Work full-time.*

Redesigned website focuses on better search function, expanded content offerings

Education Minnesota is proud to announce our new and improved website at www.educationminnesota.org, which launched in early November.



The new site includes a refreshed and modern design, with an improved search function and easier accessibility on mobile devices.

Besides a new design, we have reorganized and expanded our content offerings and made it easier for members and local leaders to find the tools and resources they need to succeed.

Some items for members to look for:

- Easy to use navigation bars at the top of the page.
- A link for new members to join our union at the top of the homepage.
- An events calendar with clear navigation.
- Links to share pages, Minnesota Educator articles, news releases and more on prominent social media platforms at the top of most pages.
- A much more intuitive and faster search function.

- A robust member portal featuring bargaining resources, member benefits, internal elections, local leader materials and much more.

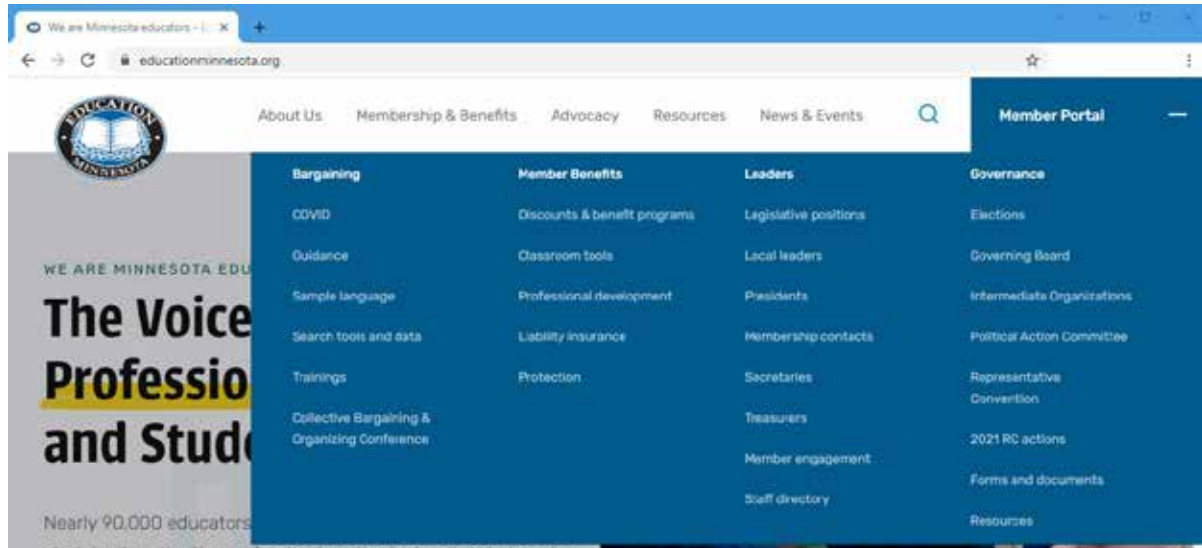
To access the valuable content in the Member Portal, Education Minnesota members will need to either create a new account or activate your account from our previous website. Your previous password on the old site did not migrate over, so you'll have to create a new password as well.

Education Minnesota members who had an account on the previous website should have received an email with a link to activate your account on the new site on Nov. 9. Please check your spam or junk inboxes. If you didn't receive an email, please contact us at webmaster@edmn.org as we may have an old email address on file.

After setting a new password, you'll be taken to a screen to log in with your email address and your new password. These will be your login credentials moving forward.

To create a new account, visit this link: <https://www.educationminnesota.org/member-registration>.

We hope you enjoy the new [educationminnesota.org](https://www.educationminnesota.org)!



Education Minnesota members will need to reset their password and log in to the new website interface to see the expanded member portal.



IMPROVING THE NATIVE AMERICAN NARRATIVE IN MINNESOTA SCHOOLS

Most Minnesotans lack an in-depth understanding of the state's Native tribes, including their histories, governments, and culture.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's Understand Native Minnesota campaign wants to change that. From its podcast series to listening sessions and research, Understand Native Minnesota is working to improve younger generations' understanding of Native Americans.

Learn more at [UnderstandNativeMN.org](https://www.UnderstandNativeMN.org)

  [@NativeMNFacts](https://twitter.com/NativeMNFacts)



Shannon Barrett, president of the Rochester Paraprofessional Association, speaks to a reporter about paraprofessional staffing shortages in the district as part of Education Minnesota's "At a Breaking Point: Educating During COVID-19" media series. Barrett shared her story, along with other paraprofessionals, teachers and Education Minnesota President Denise Specht, who called on the district to use their millions in federal relief funding to help hire more important staff.

Officer listening tour inspires media series highlighting unsustainable working, learning conditions

The Education Minnesota officers have been visiting local unions and intermediate organizations through the fall, hearing members tell stories in every part of the state about how their work this year feels unsustainable. COVID-19 didn't create these issues and others facing Minnesota educators, but it did shine a brighter light on them. Education Minnesota leaders are now using 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.

At the time, Rochester had more than 80 open paraprofessional positions.

"This doesn't mean that our students are not getting the high-quality education and services they deserve," said Shannon Barrett, president of the Rochester Paraprofessional Association. "It means our teachers and our paras are working extremely hard to cover and catch up on paperwork after school. It means paras are covering positions they were not hired or trained to do and this is unsustainable."

"Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, education support professionals weren't given the respect or pay they deserve," said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht. "Now, districts in Minnesota have \$13 billion in federal funding to help pay our educators a full-time, living wage so we can attract and retain people who want to do this work and care about our students."

Rochester received almost \$16 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) from the American Rescue Plan bill passed in March.

After the media event, Rochester Public Schools began offering \$1,500 signing bonuses for paraprofessionals. More media events are planned to highlight the substitute shortage and how that impacts other educators having to cover classes, as well as special education teacher workload concerns.

These issues will also be at the center of Education Minnesota's legislative activity when the Legislature reconvenes Jan. 31.

At a breaking point

The Education Minnesota officers and executive director have visited with 71 locals throughout the state this fall, with plans for more meetings throughout the rest of the year.

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 bargain 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.

Plans begin for Election 2022 work with an increased focus on member activism and engagement

Education Minnesota is beginning preparations for its Election 2022 work, which will once again focus on member activism at educators' worksites and member engagement throughout the process.

Elections taking place in 2022 include Minnesota's governor, state auditor, secretary of state, attorney general, the entire state Legislature, the federal House of Representatives and many local races, such as school board and district levy elections.

Education Minnesota knows the importance of these elections as it relates to our union's priorities of winning full funding for education, to provide students and staff with the resources they need to succeed, and racial equity proposals to make sure our schools are welcoming to students, no matter what they look like or where they come from. This election is also vitally important to the protection of our union and collective bargaining rights, as we have seen those stripped away by anti-union legislatures and governors in Iowa and Wisconsin.

At the statewide level, Education Minnesota's Political Action Committee, made up of members from throughout the state, voted to continue with the new, transparent and member-focused endorsement process.

For the gubernatorial race, all candidates will be invited to participate in a process that requires them to:

- Participate in a candidate forum, held virtually in January, which all members will be invited to attend.
- Spend a full- or half-day shadowing educators at work.
- Engage in roundtable conversations with educators.
- Complete a candidate questionnaire, created by educators, that will be shared publicly, and
- Participate in a screening interview with the Education Minnesota PAC board.

Members are invited to begin to submit questions for the candidate questionnaire, which will also be used in the legislative and local races. If you have ideas or questions, please email public.affairs@edmn.org or watch for a formal submission website to be shared on Education Minnesota's social media channels.

Members will also be able to submit their worksite for consideration to be the site candidates visit as part of the endorsement process.

Education Minnesota will also be starting its worksite action leader program again, with members taking the lead on sharing voting information at their worksites and in their locals. Any interested member should reach out to their Education Minnesota field staff. Multiple opportunities for trainings and conferences on how to do this work and why it is important will be available to members in 2022.



The 2017 Political Conference featured a gubernatorial candidate forum, which kicked off Education Minnesota's most inclusive and transparent endorsement process in history. That process will take place again this year, with a virtual forum taking place in January. Details will be shared on Education Minnesota's website and social media channels.

MEA conference brings together best of in person, online

Education Minnesota’s 2021 MEA Conference was held both in person at the Saint Paul RiverCentre, and virtually.



More than 250 members attended in person, while more than 700 logged on to livestreamed classes. Hundreds of members also took part in the asynchronous classes available on the MEA Online platform.

“Thank you for attending,” said President Denise Specht, in her remarks at the start of the keynote session. “Educators remain committed to being the best we can be.”

The most popular classes included mental health supports for students and educators, racial equity and social justice-focused sessions and those that fulfill the teacher relicensure requirements.

Both the virtual and in-person conference featured a keynote speak by Dr. Seema G. Pothini, an author and national speaker who works with the Equity Literacy Institute.

“Educators have the power to change the world simply by making connections and allowing students to show up authentically,” Pothini said.

Pothini spoke about the need to humanize every student and see them for their authentic selves. She shared her story as a student of color in Richfield, who had teachers who honored their own heritage which then allowed her to feel comfortable celebrating hers.

She shared messages of finding your “why” as an educator, and being the one to make a difference in students’ lives. Pothini reminded educators of their power to stand up to bias and racism, and eliminate the systemic barriers standing in the way of all students succeeding.

Also speaking during the general session was the current Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Natalia Benajmin.

Benjamin spoke about the stress on educators throughout the pandemic and why students need their educators to show up for them, now more than ever.

“Students need more feedback. More one-on-one. More attempts at trying. The need for social-emotional learning has never been higher,” she said. “And what is good for our students is also good for us.”

Many courses which were livestreamed during the conference are now available for asynchronous completion on MEA Online.

What did members say about this year’s MEA conference?

Melissa Mangal (@melissamangal) · Oct 25
 @seemapothini Appreciating the info shared in “DPI with Primary Sources” for connecting with my students. #mea2021



Kara Radke (@KRadke) · Oct 21
 Hey educators & ESEPs! Challenge you to come to MEA next year & improve any of your skills! #mea2021 #meaonline #mea2021 #meaonline



Melanie Smith (@MelanieSmith) · Oct 21
 @seemapothini excited to learn more about trauma and how to help my students. This is a huge reason why educators are exhausted. We need more resources to help it go away.



Ben Oyler (@BenOyler) · Oct 21
 MEA Conference 2021! MEA member of the year Natalia Benjamin giving some thoughts and ideas on physically and mentally getting through the year. #MEANews



Member honor roll

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

2021 Minnesota Rural Education Association Educators of Excellence

North Central

- Dr. Jackie Stevens, Mora

South

- Howard Van Otterloo,
Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton

North

- Kristen Schwarz, Fisher

South Central

- John VanKempen, West Central Area

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences National Teacher of the Year

- Lori Henry, Spring Lake Park

Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences 2022 Teacher of the Year

- Gretchen Lee, Badger

2021 Minnesota Council on Economic Education Educator of the Year Teaching Awards

Grades 9-12 award:

- Jared Kegler, Faribault

Art Educators of Minnesota 2021-22 awards

Art Educator of the Year and High School Art Educator of the Year:

- Alexis Zaccariello, Rochester

Elementary Art Educator of the Year:

- Kim Carroll, Robbinsdale

2020 Presidential Awards for Mathematics and Science Teaching state finalists

- Anna Edlund, Eastern Carver County
- Byron Gilliland, Winona
- Brian Hare, Saint Paul
- Abram Schwartz, Bemidji

Minnesota Association of Agriculture Educators 2021 Teachers of the Year

Outstanding Agriculture Education Teacher of the Year:

- Mary Hoffmann, Sleepy Eye

Outstanding Teacher Mentor:

- Mike Miron, Forest Lake

Teacher Turn the Key:

- Joe Ramstad, Staples-Motley

Outstanding Early Career Teacher:

- Elizabeth Johnson, Tracy

Outstanding Middle/Secondary Agriculture Education Program:

- Nathan Thompson, Edgerton

Outstanding Post-Secondary/Adult Program:

- Kyle Huneke, Jennifer Smith and Rex Quam,
Riverland Community College

Filing open for Education Minnesota officer, governing board, NEA director positions

Candidate filings for Education Minnesota officer and National Education Association director positions are now open. Candidate filings for Education Minnesota's Governing Board election district positions will open Nov. 1.

The current three-year terms for president, vice president and secretary-treasurer will expire June 30, 2022. Candidates for these offices will file by submitting a filing form below to the Education Minnesota Office of the Elections Committee by Dec. 10.

These offices are now held by President Denise Specht, Vice President Bernie Burnham and Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe.

The current terms for two NEA director positions now filled by Marty Fridgen and Heather Bakke will expire Aug. 31, 2022.

Candidates for these positions will file a form by Dec. 10. The filing form for these positions are on the next page.

Education Minnesota is governed by an elected board, made up of a member from each of the union's 26 election districts. The current three-year terms for all 26 seats will expire June 30, 2022. Candidates for the next three-year term (July 1, 2022-June 20, 2025) will file by submitting the filing form on the next page by Dec. 10.

All of these forms are also available as writable PDFs on the Education Minnesota website.

Filing Form for Officer

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for the following position:

You may only select one position:

- President** **Vice President** **Secretary-Treasurer**

Candidate information

Mailing address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on June 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 10, 2021.

Email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org. Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Dec. 20, 2021.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

Filing Form for Governing Board – Election District

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for the following position:

Governing Board – Election District: _____

(Three-year term: July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025. Election district map located at www.educationminnesota.org.)

Candidate information

Mailing address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on Nov. 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 10, 2021.

Email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org. Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Dec. 20, 2021.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

Filing Form for NEA Director

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for the following position:

You may only select one position:

NEA Director (Position 1) **NEA Director (Position 2)**

Candidate information

Mailing address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on June 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 10, 2021.

Email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org. Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Dec. 20, 2021.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

Delegate selection for 2022 NEA RA

The National Education Association Representative Assembly, the major decision-making body for the NEA, is scheduled to be held July 2-6, 2022 in Dallas, Texas.

All active Education Minnesota members are eligible to run to be a state-credentialed delegate for the NEA RA. The filing period opens on Nov. 1 and closes Dec. 10. Do not submit the forms before the filing period begins. Forms are also available online in a writable PDF that can be emailed to the elections committee.

Elections will take place in local districts during the 15-day window beginning Feb. 1 and ending Feb. 19. Elections will be held on weekdays only during this period.

Ballots will be mailed the last week of January to all local presidents in districts where an election is necessary.

Nominations for state-credentialed student delegates open Nov. 1 and close Feb. 15. Elections will take place on a date to be determined in April, if necessary.

Funding information for state-credentialed delegates

To receive funding, state-credentialed delegates must be in attendance for the entire Representative Assembly, beginning with the first caucus meeting through adjournment the night of July 6. State-credentialed delegates are expected to attend all caucus meetings and to be on the convention floor for all proceedings.

Funding includes: Airfare—travel arrangements to be made through the designated travel agent and direct-billed to Education Minnesota (alternative transportation will be reimbursed up to a predetermined amount); the cost of a double-occupancy room at the delegation hotel (to be direct-billed) for an authorized number of nights; and reimbursement for meals and other convention-related expenses (with original itemized receipts). Substitute costs for state

delegates working in year-round school settings will be covered as outlined in the Education Minnesota Financial Policy for Governance and Members.

Mileage to and from the airport is reimbursable at 20 cents a mile, along with the cost of airport parking.

No funding is available for Category 2 delegates, those who are retired or inactive members.

Funding information for small locals

A funding program is available to help locals with 150 or fewer members send a delegate to the Representative Assembly or the American Federation of Teachers Convention. Local presidents will receive information. If you have any questions around the small local grant program, please contact Vice President Bernie Burnham at Bernie.Burnham@edmn.org.

Filing Form for NEA RA State-Credentialed Delegate

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I, _____, hereby submit my name for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held July 2-6, 2022, in Dallas, TX.

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____ for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held July 2-6, 2022, in Dallas, TX. I further certify that the nominee is eligible for state credentials as a delegate from:

Active Member – Election District: _____ (K-12; statewide affiliates; and school-related personnel)

Category 2 (inactive NEA life member and not an Education Minnesota Retired member)

Please complete the following information:

Name: _____ Local: _____

Home address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Work email: _____ Personal email: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on Nov. 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Dec. 10, 2021.

Email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org. Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Dec. 20, 2021.

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____. Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

Filing Form for NEA RA State-Credentialed Delegate: Student

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota. Please print clearly.

I hereby submit my name for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held July 2-6, 2022, in Dallas, TX.

I further certify that the nominee is eligible for state credentials as a delegate from:

Student

(must be an Education Minnesota Aspiring Educator member)

Please complete the following information:

Name: _____ College: _____

School address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

Work email: _____ Personal email: _____

Summer address: _____ City/State/ZIP: _____

Do not submit before filing period begins on Nov. 1. Deadline is 11:59 p.m. Feb. 15, 2022.

Email completed form to elections.committee@edmn.org, submit by mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 or by fax to: 651-767-1266. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

*Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by **Feb. 19, 2022**.*

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This filing form was received on _____ by _____, Membership was verified on _____ by _____.

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Gjerdrum retires after long career in education, unionism; Lucking steps up as executive director

November marked a big change for Education Minnesota staff leadership. After seven years as executive director and a long career in education and union advocacy, Sara Gjerdrum has retired. Carrie Lucking, a former educator who was most recently Education Minnesota's Director of Policy and Public Affairs, has moved into the role.

During her tenure as executive director, Gjerdrum oversaw the efforts around membership engagement in a post-*Janus* world and much more.

"Preparing for the *Janus* decision was a fantastic display of collaboration and commitment between leaders and staff," she said. "When we asked (our members) to join with their colleagues and show the value of belonging in union with others, they answered the call. I was so proud of our efforts and the vote of confidence our members gave us."

Gjerdrum spent seven years with the National Education Association as a national field staff, working in the Midwest. Before that, Gjerdrum was at the Minnesota Federation of Teachers and then Education Minnesota for 11 years as a field manager, four years as a field staff and four years as a local leader.

Gjerdrum was on staff during the 1998 merger of two educator unions which formed Education Minnesota.

"In the summer of 1998, I stood with many other staff and listened to Sandy Peterson and Judy Schaubach share the highlights of the long-awaited, final chapter of our merger story," she said. "These two smart and savvy women had listened to and led members to envision one union that combined the strengths of both and took away the power of outside forces to drive a wedge between us any longer."

Gjerdrum, a third-generation teacher, gained organizing and advocacy experience during her years of teaching at Hill-Murray High School, where she and her colleagues fought to organize the first union in a Catholic school in Minnesota. Their efforts took more than four years and landed before the Minnesota Supreme Court, where an historic decision gave all teachers in private schools in Minnesota the right to organize and collectively bargain.

Lucking comes to this role after her own long career in education, union advocacy and campaign work.

From 2014 to 2020, Lucking led the Education Minnesota policy department, which focuses on the union's professional development, racial equity, EPIC research papers and negotiations work.

Since 2020, Lucking has been the director of policy and public affairs for the union. Her responsibilities include advancing Education Minnesota's policy, electoral and legislative goals.

Lucking took a leave of absence to manage the Walz/Flanagan gubernatorial campaign in 2018. Before coming to Education Minnesota, Lucking was the executive director of the Alliance for a Better Minnesota, where she was the chief strategist for campaigns and communications research for progressive organizations throughout the state.

Lucking spent the first 10 years of her career as a social studies teacher, where she was active in the Hopkins Education Association and sat on the governing board of Education Minnesota.

"I really believe we are on the brink of something big in unionism and education," said Lucking, when asked why she was excited to take on her new leadership position. "We're at the point of breaking, but that comes with a whole bunch of working people saying we don't do this anymore. This is the tip of the iceberg if we work powerfully together."



Sara Gjerdrum



Carrie Lucking

Professional development

NEA webinars

The National Education Association is regularly hosting webinars to help educators navigate this new, stressful environment and connect with students. To see the full list of resources, go to www.nea.org/professional-excellence/professional-learning/resources. There is also a section specific to training for education support professionals. Those offerings can be found at www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/esp-webinar-recordings.

AFT online resources

AFT's Share My Lesson website has dozens of professional development webinars, lesson plan collections and more to help educators navigate the current learning landscape. Find links to these webinars and more at <https://sharemylesson.com/partner/share-my-lesson-webinars>.

Classroom resources

STARBASE Minnesota STEM kits

STARBASE Minnesota, a nonprofit that focuses on STEM education, is offering free STEM kits for all fifth-grade students. STARBASE Minnesota has already distributed over 18,000 STEM kits to over 185 schools and they hope to provide these kits and curriculum to an additional 26,000 students this year in the state. The Destination Mars kits include supplies for each student and a teacher guide and website resources. Go to starbasemn.org/stemkits to learn more and to register for your free kits.

C-SPAN educator podcast

C-SPAN has launched a new bi-weekly podcast for educators, "C-SPAN in the Classroom." Each 15- to 20-minute episode features C-SPAN clips and C-SPAN Classroom resources that highlight current events, topical discussions or key historical moments. The C-SPAN Education Relations team features occasional appearances from guests in the education community, and discusses strategies for incorporating C-SPAN resources into class discussions, as well as activities to use with students. Listen at c-span.org/

podcasts, on the free C-SPAN Now video app or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Grants

Financial literacy grants available

United Educators Foundation will provide up to a \$500 grant to teachers, departments or schools to support financial literacy efforts with their students. Submitted applications should support instruction of content related to budgeting, credit, money management, economics, saving and investing, or other personal finance topics. Applications for grants must be postmarked by Dec. 17. Go to www.expeditioncu.com/about/united-educators-foundation.html for more information on the grants and how to apply.

United Educators scholarships

United Educators Foundation will grant one \$2,000 Educator Award for educators who wish to attend an accredited institution for professional development, one \$1,500 Education Major Award for current college students studying education and three \$1,000 Student Awards to high school students who are members or dependents of United Educators Credit Union members and plan on attending college in the fall of 2021. The deadline for these awards is Feb. 4. Application requirements and instructions on how to apply are available at www.expeditioncu.com/about/united-educators-foundation.html.

DNR No Child Left Inside Grant Program mini grants

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is offering mini grants through the No Child Left Inside Grant Program. These grants help more children cast a line, study animal tracks, hike or bike or simply learn more about nature. Public entities and non-profit organizations serving youth under age 18 are able to apply for mini grants. A total of \$200,000 is available for programs all around Minnesota. The minimum request is \$500 and the maximum is \$5,000. Applications can be submitted starting on Dec. 2, and awards will be made on a first-come, first-served basis. The application period will close once all the money is awarded. All the reimbursable grant project work must be completed by June 30, 2023.

Educators in first five years: Applications now open for Early Career Teacher Seminar spring session

Education Minnesota and Metropolitan State University are pleased to offer a grant-funded professional development opportunity for educators in their first five years of teaching during the 2021-22 school year.

This course (EDU 612: three graduate credits) will provide early career teachers who are within their first five years of teaching support in creating work/life balance, instructional strategies, classroom management, building relationships with students, families and colleagues, cultural awareness and understanding the roles of building professionals. Participants will discover many ways to cultivate their resiliency. Through panel discussions, collegial support and coaching, participants will learn strategies to refuel, reenergize and reframe their passion for teaching and student success.

Participants will:

1. Examine and discover the resilience within by exploring habits, emotions, dispositions and context.
2. Examine and practice techniques for effective instructional strategies that improve student outcomes.
3. Examine and practice techniques for student engagement, addressing mental health and restorative practices.
4. Examine and practice techniques for building relationships.
5. Examine and practice techniques to develop cultural awareness and equity.
6. Discuss and collaborate with other adults working in an educational setting (admin, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, volunteers).

This seminar is available through Metropolitan State University School of Urban Education for current Education Minnesota union members. Participants will be required to register with Metropolitan State University upon acceptance into the course. Participants are required to purchase two textbooks. Tuition is free, but please note that participants who choose to drop out and/or not complete the course upon acceptance may be liable to cover the cost of tuition. Upon completion of the seminar, participants will receive three graduate credits and 12 continuing education units (CEU).

The class meets on Jan. 29, Feb. 19, March 26, April 30 and May 21 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. All meetings except for the May 21 session will be held on Zoom. Attendance is mandatory.

Apply for the Early Career Teacher Seminar: EDU 612 at edmn.me/2ZyIPyx. The application deadline is Dec. 13.



School of Urban Education



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

Benefits and services for members

To Do List

- Register for your complimentary ID Theft Recovery plan
www.educationminnesota.securusid.com
- Create a NEA Member Benefits account at
www.neamb.com/connect
- Explore an ESI, NEA or AFT member benefit of interest
 - Travel
 - Shopping discounts
 - Financial planning
 - Insurance
 - Other

Member Benefit websites

www.educationminnesota.org/membership-benefits

www.neamb.com/connect

www.aft.org/member-benefits

41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 651-292-4856 800-642-4624

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ESI



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Don't forget – there's an app for that!

Stay up to date, find events, get a digital membership card and more with Education Minnesota's mobile app. The free app is available for all iOS and Android devices – including tablets.

App features:

- *Stay up to date on union news and events.*
- *View member benefits and discounts.*
- *Obtain a digital membership card with scannable QR code.*
- *Join Education Minnesota.*
- *Get COVID-19 information and resources.*
- *Read the Minnesota Educator magazine on your device.*
- *Connect with Education Minnesota's website and social media accounts.*

Download

- *Search for "EdMN" or "Education Minnesota" in the app store on your device.*

Get your digital membership card

- *Tap on the "Membership Card" icon.*
- *Tap "List of Locals" to find the official name of your local. Some of them are long and complicated!*
- *Tap "My Membership Card," then enter your first name, last name and the official name of your local.*

Problems?

Contact us at 800-652-9073 or webmaster@edmn.org.

