

1148er

A Publication of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers Local 1148

Affiliated with Education Minnesota, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO

**Volume 15, March 2020
Election Edition**

From the President Phil Hayes

It has been a busy year as I have been spending time getting to know the people and the buildings in our district. In my many meetings, there have been a few issues that have come up more than anything else: construction, our sub shortages and the difficulties they are creating for us, and the continuing rising cost of health care. I don't have all the answers, but I am working with the district to try and solve these issues together.

The construction is both a blessing and a curse. While I addressed some of these issues in the last 1148er, I want you to know that I am continuing to work with the district to make this second summer better and leave all of us in good shape when we return next fall. Peter and I plan on checking in over the summer and making site visits to the most affected areas and communicating clearly with all of you how things are going and what we can expect when we return in August. My top priority with construction is to improve the communication from the district to the teachers. I am hoping for no more surprises.

Our substitute teacher situation has been an issue for many years in this district. Changes have been made over the years, including raising the sub pay rate and switching to Teachers on Call, with little to no effect on the situation. I know that giving up your prep or absorbing students to fill in for a teacher that is out can be stressful and adds to the already overwhelming workload. This is a concern not only for us as teachers, but for the district as well. We have been working together to try and come up with answers and solutions to the issues. There are many possible reasons for our sub shortage: our district's proximity to available subs, a strong economy, the wage our district pays to subs, the Teachers on-Call system, the time of day subs are requested, the number of absences for personal reasons or district events, and the amount of advanced notice to fill the job. Some of these things we as teachers can do nothing about, while others we can control.

So how do we solve this problem? There is no magic wand that can be waved to fix this issue. It will be a long process with the district and the teachers working together to try and minimize the impact when teachers have to be out of the classroom. I have been working with Human Resources to get a real look at the numbers and how many times we have to ask teachers to fill in or absorb students when subs are not available. The district is reconvening a substitute task force to explore other actions that it can be taking in the new year. They are also reducing the number of days teachers will have to be out of the classroom for district initiatives.

That is what the district is doing, what can we do? First, be welcoming and inviting to new substitute teachers in the building and enlist a partner teacher who checks on your sub when you are gone to make sure they have all that they need. Next, leave good lesson plans that make the classroom experience good for your sub, so they want to return. I know these are suggestions that many of us already do, but I believe every little thing can help. Finally, put in your absence as soon as you know you will be out. Fill rates go from 90% to 60% once inside of 24 hours, and below 50% when done the morning of the absence. Our human resource department has recommended submitting your request for a sub the night before if you feel there might be any chance you have to be out the next day. You can cancel a substitute two hours before a scheduled absence at no cost to the district.

In the end, this will not be a quick fix, as teachers have little control. Continue to use the benefits that have been negotiated for you, and do not be afraid to take your personal and sick leave according to our contract.

Another area of concern I'd like to address is our healthcare plan and costs. When it comes to the rising healthcare costs in this country, I know we are all watching with concern. Thanks to fantastic contracts secured by previous negotiators, and our move to self-insurance in 2013, our healthcare costs have stabilized. However, we had a 2% increase this past year, and as with any budget, if we spend more than we take in each year, we will have continued increases in the future. The health care meetings I attended with our healthcare administrator have been eye-opening and I feel like there is information I need to share.

While some things are out of our control, like prescription drug costs and the rising cost of hospital visits, there are things we can do to help keep our plan costs down. First and foremost, take the opportunity to attend the open enrollment meetings this spring when presented by the district, even if you are not planning to make any changes. There the district will be presenting information about new services that our healthcare plan provides for us and ways to save yourself time and money. You can attend any meeting at any building. The dates for these have typically been in May but with the construction, they are going to be April this year. Please consider attending one of these meetings, look for the dates and times in the district e-news.

Our healthcare plan also allows members to use telemedicine like Virtuwel and MD Live as the first steps in diagnosis. I have had members tell me that they have used this and were able to get prescriptions and care without ever leaving their home. Going to a Minute Clinic or even urgent care is more cost-effective than visiting an ER. Preventative care and the money spent on it is much more cost beneficial to our plan than waiting until there is something really wrong. There are other places for us to save as well, such as pharmacy choices. Cub, Sam's Club, and Costco charge our plan significantly less for prescriptions than

CVS and Walgreens. While all of these pharmacy options are in our health insurance plan, some are most cost-effective in the long run. I have had many members tell me how important our benefits are for them. I believe in our self-insured plan and our benefits. Continue to embrace those benefits in the way works best for you and your family.

As we approach the final 50 days of the year, I know we could all use the rest and relaxation that spring break affords us. Take the time to spend it with family or friends and recharge those batteries for the final push. Please take care of yourself and each other.

In Solidarity,

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Election Update

Members of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers have recently submitted their names to run for positions in our executive board. Each candidate was asked to submit a short biography with his/her name. Candidates have submitted their names for all available positions. The biographies for each of the candidates are listed below, with current office holders listed as incumbent. Since there are no contested positions, we will follow the current language of our constitution.

“In the event of an uncontested election the Executive Board shall appoint the candidate(s) in good standing to the vacant position(s) without a written ballot being distributed. In the event of an uncontested election where there are fewer candidates than the position(s) to be filled, the Executive Board shall have the option to appoint a willing member(s) in good standing to the vacant position(s). The General Membership will be notified electronically of uncontested elections.”

Please contact our Elections Committee (Kim Zellmer, Kristy Cooper, Courtney Nelson, or Shari Niemczyk) if you have questions about this process.

President :

Phil Hayes - incumbent

I am pleased to announce my candidacy for President of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers 1148. I have spent the last year as our President, taking over the role due to Diane Thompson's retirement. Before that, I was the union Vice President for three years and also a building representative for Friendly Hills. I have had many roles in representing our members

that have prepared me for this opportunity. While I believe there are areas for growth, I know my experience will continue to serve you well.

I continue to believe my role as the President is to advocate for all members of the union. I believe in representing our federation and working to build a stronger union. I am committed to serving our union in the years to come, and I hope I can count on your vote this spring.

Vice President :

Eric Friberg

Eric Friberg is a biology teacher at Henry Sibley High School. He has taught at Sibley since 2011, teaching a schedule of general biology, AP biology, and EL biology. He has been a Union Representative for Sibley for the past 4 years. Over his career is had held different leadership roles at Sibley including department chair and a member of the building leadership team. He looks forward to serving the district teacher community by taking on increased leadership roles in the union.

Treasurer :

Hope Alger - incumbent
7th Grade Math
Friendly Hills Middle School

I am pleased to announce my candidacy for Treasurer of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers. I have taught math at Friendly Hills Middle School since 2000, and I have been the WSPFT treasurer since 2008. My duties as the Treasurer have included monthly billing, payroll, completing our yearly audit and taxes, and taking care of new and existing membership and dues. If re-elected, I am committed to serving our union in the years to come.

Secretary :

Michelle Smith

My name is Michelle Smith and I have been an Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) teacher in this district for 21 years. In the past, I have worked at Somerset, Heritage, Pilot Knob, and Mendota. I am now at the Early Learning Center. I have been their building representative and a member of the Executive Board of WSP Federation of Teachers since 2017. I have completed Education Minnesota's Members Rights training in November 2019. I will be attending the Ed MN Representative Convention in April. I am running for the position of union secretary. I feel this position would allow me to further support the union's work and communicate union news to all teachers.

Negotiator :

1) Anne Bolsem - incumbent

Over the past twenty-two years, I have had the privilege of teaching at GEMS as well as serving as an Instructional Peer Coach in the ATPPS program. During this time, I have embraced a

variety of leadership positions at both the union and district level as a representative for my colleagues. These roles have provided me the opportunity to develop a global view of both the celebrations and challenges encountered by teachers in a variety of roles, sites, programs, and levels throughout our district. With this big picture in mind, I hope to continue improving our local by speaking on behalf of our members honestly and fairly as a negotiator and member of our Executive Board.

I have served WSPFT teachers as a building representative for over ten years and as a negotiator for the past ten years. During that time, I have participated five times in the biannual Education Minnesota Collective Bargaining Conference to become more knowledgeable in the current issue's locals are facing at the bargaining table and to develop my skills as a negotiator. The opportunity to attend the School Law and Liability Conference twice heightened my awareness of recent legal topics and laws relating to teacher rights. Additionally, I have been a member of both the Educational Policies Committee and the Meet and Confer Committee, engaging in conversations with the school district representatives regarding specific topics relating to processes and procedures. I served on the Teacher Development and Evaluation Writing Committee to create a plan that met the MN State Statute requirements. I have also participated in the District Staff Development Advisory Committee and the Strategic Redesign Advisory Committee. I currently serve on the TDE/ATPPS Oversight Committee and the Garlough Focus Team, and I also work with new staff at GEMS as the Site Mentor.

My philosophy has always been to speak up, take action, and be a part of changes, rather than to sit back and watch change occur. I believe I can be a voice for my colleagues, be a representative for individuals as a part of a whole, and be an advocate for all teachers, regardless of the site, level, position, or program. I desire the opportunity to continue serving our membership with integrity and authenticity in the role of negotiator in order to work toward an even stronger body of united educators.

2) Jodie Darwitz – incumbent

My name is Jodie Darwitz, and I would like to continue to be a member of the WSPFT negotiating team. In August 2000, I began my career in the district as a fourth-grade teacher at Mendota Elementary. I moved to Moreland in 2001 where I taught third and fourth grade for nine years. After spending ten years at the elementary level, I was ready for a change, which brought me to Heritage where I taught fifth and sixth-grade math for two years. From 2012-2016, I was a teacher on special assignment working as an Instructional Peer Coach at various sites and at all levels. Currently, I am a 6th-grade math teacher at Friendly Hills Middle School. Through my teaching experience and role as an IPC, I have had the opportunity to hear the diverse perspectives and unique needs of various programs, teachers, and systems across the district. I am committed to representing all of the exceptional educators in the district, and I will listen and speak out about what educators need in order to provide the best learning environment for their students.

This summer I attended the Certified Negotiator training to further develop my skills and enhance the knowledge I have gained through the last three rounds of negotiations. I have the ability to consider multiple viewpoints and find value in differing opinions. I have a strong desire to ensure a positive work environment that supports each individual teacher and, ultimately, provides a dynamic educational experience for students. Finally, I understand the importance of finding a balance between our work lives and personal lives.

3) Ryan Pagenkopf

Ryan Pagenkopf Business Ed Teacher Henry Sibley I am excited to announce my candidacy for negotiator of the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers. The first 15 years of my teaching career were in Wisconsin. I experienced nine years serving as a teacher with the support of a union and six years without. I can say from experience that, “you don’t know what you have until you lose it.” With that said, I believe now more than ever in our union. I want to do everything I can to unite, support and negotiate a fair contract for all District 197 members.

I have served as a negotiator for eight years with two different districts. These negotiations were hard. Times were tough. There was very little new money funded to public education. This meant negotiators had to dig in, in order to save our health insurance, get a lane advancement or a per cell increase. As a negotiator, I had to spend countless days and numerous hours in order to settle a fair contract. I can bring that passion, commitment and experience to the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers negotiating team.

If elected, I will get right to work laying out creative ways to improve our members’ benefits package with little or no cost to the district and creating a cash in lieu option that puts more money in the pockets of our members while saving the district money in order to fund an increase in retirement benefits and/or to put more money in the salary schedule.

I am asking for your vote to negotiate on your behalf for our next contract. Thank you!

4) Dr. Kristy Otte – incumbent

I plan to continue my commitment to our union by running for negotiator a second time for the 2020-2022 contract window. I feel prepared to fill this officer role as I completed the Certified Negotiator Program offered by Education Minnesota during Summer Seminar 2017. This program taught me the skills, protocols, online tools, and inside information needed to be a well informed, educated negotiator. Furthermore, I am completing a Conflict Resolution Certificate with Hamline Mitchell Law School in June, which included courses in Negotiation, Mediation, and Arbitration.

I believe that my experience as the Local 1148 Secretary for over 15 years has served me well to transition my focus onto bargaining. Having been a conflict resolution facilitator with Education Minnesota will also be an asset to my role as negotiator. Knowing mediative strategies to navigate and resolve disputes will hopefully bring a positive work flow to the table. That said, my convictions around our profession will move towards the improvement of our working conditions.

As a negotiator, you can expect me to attend ongoing professional development in negotiation and bargaining at Summer Seminar, Organizing for Settlement conferences, and the annual Educational Law conference that improves my skill set and updates me on current negotiator practices and issues. You can expect me to ask questions, bring your issues to the table, and do investigative work to ensure the best possible outcome in our teacher contract. You can also expect to see me advocate for our profession, our union rights, and the quality of education for all of our students.

2019-2020 Local 1148 Executive Board Members

President	Phil Hayes
Vice President	Don Nelson
Secretary	Kristy Otte
Treasurer	Hope Alger
Negotiators	Anne Bolsem
	Jodie Darwitz
	Jeff Nisbet
	Kristy Otte
	Phil Hayes

Building Representatives

Sibley	Katie Carter, Eric Friberg, Glenn Skov
Friendly Hills	Don Nelson, Pat McCormick
Heritage	Eileen Gilligan, Stephen Meuer
Garlough	Anne Bolsem
Mendota	Kathy Cardinal, Julie Poppitz
Moreland	Shari Niemczyk
Pilot Knob	Ikhlas Abdelkhalig, JoAnne Cudo
Somerset	Liz Eul
Early Learning	Michelle Smith

Grievance Committee	Don Nelson, Phil Hayes
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Announcements

Technology

Please use the district's technology appropriately. Make sure you have a personal email account for your personal email – don't use your district email address for personal use. If you receive an inappropriate email, delete it immediately. Report all SPAM to our tech department. Remember, the district owns the computer you use and can take it and search the contents at any time.

Executive Board Meetings

Executive Board meetings are usually held the first Monday of each month. All members are welcome to attend. The schedule is also on the WSPFT website. All meetings are in Friendly Hills Room 122. Our last meeting of the year is on May 26th, 2020.

April 6, 2020

May 4, 2020

May 26, 2020

May 21, 2020 – General Membership Meeting

Federation Emails

If you are not receiving Federation emails, contact Phil Hayes.

Paycheck

Make sure to check Skyward carefully to see that you are getting paid the correct amount. Contact Jessica Cervantez with any questions. Keep track of your sick leave days and personal days. Check your deductions to make sure they are correct.

EM Web Site

The Education Minnesota website is a good place to get information about your union. Please register at <http://www.educationminnesota.org>

WSPFT Web Site

<http://wspft.mn.aft.org>

Please check our website and familiarize yourself with the information contained on our site. Our Secretary, Kristy Otte, works hard to upload important information and keep our website updated and current.

Read Your Contract/Know Your Rights

Please take the time to read your contract and know your rights. If there are concerns about your teaching, supervision, prep time, schedule, or any other issues, contact Phil Hayes or your building rep. If you are doing curriculum work or supervision assignments, you should get paid according to the contract. Also, watch carefully for any changes in working conditions. It is easier to resolve these issues when they first occur.

Use Negotiated Benefits Wisely

Please do not abuse or misuse benefits the Federation has worked hard to obtain.

- Participate fully in Professional Development days.
- Honor the intentions of End of Quarter days by working on grades and other teaching tasks.
- Use your sick leave/personal days wisely. Teachers will be disciplined for misuse of sick days.

Meeting with Administrators

Federation members always have the right to have union representation when meeting with administrators regarding discipline issues. Please call your building rep if you need assistance with any issue.

Resolving Issues

We encourage members to resolve issues at the building level first. If unsuccessful, try to resolve issues with the help of the Federation and district level administrators.

1148er Contributions

Members are encouraged to contribute articles and other items of interest to the 1148er. Send items to Phil Hayes at Friendly Hills Middle School or by email.

Your Union Dues for 2019-2020

The money you pay in dues each month is divided among four organizations. Full time teachers pay \$910. The dues breakdown is:

Education Minnesota - \$480
AFT and NEA - \$250
WSPFT - \$168
Trades and Labor - \$12

As you can see, our local uses \$168 of your yearly dues. This money goes to pay for officer salaries, office supplies, food for meetings, etc.

If you have any questions about your dues, please contact Hope Alger at Friendly Hills.

The 2020 – 2021 Budget has been approved at the March meeting. To keep up with increase by state and national groups the individual annual union dues will be increasing from \$910 to \$925. It is an increase of .84 cents per check for 18 paychecks. The union dues have not increased since the 2017-2018 budget.

West St. Paul Local 1148

BUDGET for 2020-2021

Adopted: March 2nd 2020

INDIVIDUAL ANNUAL DUES		
A.	Local 1148 Members	
	400 Full-time	925.00
	(\$500-EM, \$255-National, \$12-Regional Labor, \$158-Local 1148) (Dues would be \$51.39/paycheck for 18 paychecks)	
INCOME FROM MEMBERSHIP DUES		
A.	Local 1148 Members	374,000.00
B.	Draw from Reserve Funds	0
	TOTAL INCOME	374,000.00
DISBURSEMENT OF INCOME (EXPENSES)		
A.	Education Minnesota Dues	303,450.00
B.	St. Paul Trades and Labor	4,800.00
C.	West St. Paul Local 1148	61,750.00
	TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	370,000.00
ITEMIZED EXPENSES – LOCAL 1148		
A.	Office Supplies	1,000.00
B.	Delegates to Convention	2,500.00
C.	Scholarships	3,750.00
D.	Retirement Gifts	1,500.00
E.	Negotiator's Salary (4 @ 3000)	12,000.00
F.	President's Salary	8,500.00
G.	Vice-President's Salary	3,000.00
H.	Treasurer's Salary	3,000.00
I.	Secretary's Salary	3,000.00
J.	Building Reps, EPC Stipends, Government Relations, CERO, \$40/meeting	8,500.00
K.	FICA taxes, Federal taxes, MN taxes	4,500.00
L.	ADP Payroll	2,000.00
M.	Social/ Meeting Expenses	4,500.00
N.	Publications/Postage	1,000.00
O.	Technology updates	3,000.00
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR LOCAL 1148	61,750.00

WSP Insurance Rates for 2019-2020

Current Insurance: Self Insured (Preferred One)

Insurance type	Total Monthly Premium Cost	Total Yearly Cost	Current District contribution per month	Current Teacher contribution per month
Custom- Single	\$684.47	\$8213.64	\$684.47 (100%)	\$0 (0%)
Custom- Two Party	\$1415.73	\$16988.76	\$1203.37 (85%)	\$212.36 (15%)
Custom- Family	\$1893.11	\$22717.32	\$1609.14 (85%)	\$283.97 (15%)
Open Access - Single	\$760.69	\$9128.28	\$705.04 (95%)	\$38.03 (5%)
Open Access - Two Party	\$1573.24	\$18878.88	\$1258.59 (80%)	\$314.65 (20%)
Open Access - Family	\$2103.65	\$25243.80	\$1682.92 (80%)	\$420.73 (20%)

To calculate the amount taken out of each paycheck (insurance is taken out of 20 paychecks), multiply the teacher contribution per month of your plan by 12, and then divide the result by 20. This should be the amount taken out of each paycheck for 20 paychecks.

Thank You Notes

Dear WSPFT,

Thank you so much for awarding me a college scholarship! As I get closer to making a decision for next year, I truly owe my experience and success to every educator that has challenged, inspired and supported me. The money will certainly be helpful next year towards textbooks or may some spirit wear.

With Gratitude,

Maddie Schlehuber

Dear West St. Paul Federation of Teachers,

Thank you for the West St. Paul Teachers Union scholarship. I appreciate it a lot and I will be using it towards a computer for college.

Thank you,
Julia Carter

Dear WSPFT,

I want to thank you for your generous scholarship. I am very excited to use this scholarship to pursue my degree in Education at Iowa State University.

Thank you!

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Kally Dreelan