

The 1148er

The official newsletter for the West St. Paul Federation of Teachers

GREETINGS 1148ERS!

I had the opportunity in January to speak to Linda Zurn's (TR) Aspiring Educators class about the importance of our Union in delivering a quality education for our students! It probably should go without saying that providing that class for our students in a time when it has become increasingly difficult to do right by our kids is more important than ever! I couldn't be prouder to have an educator like Linda in our Union! Afterwards, she provided me with some feedback from her students and I was moved by two things: one, that the students really appreciated how passionate all of us are as educators and as union members, and two, they were surprised and a little confused that not all of their educators were members of Local 1148!

If you're reading this right now, you are certainly passionate about the work we do, in union with one another, to provide an excellent education for our students! You know how instrumental our Union was in delivering the pro-education "trifecta" that is now deliberating on how to fully fund education, and that the best agent to compel our State, local, and District leaders to direct that funding towards **restoring** cuts, **attracting** quality people to our profession, and **retaining** the great educators we have is our Union! As we look ahead to our upcoming negotiations we should find an opportunity to remind our non-union colleagues how powerful we can be when we work together, and invite them back to join us.

I don't need to tell you how hard the work has been for us these past few years, but I'm energized about the possibilities the future will hold. With over 70% of Americans saying they approve of unions, and an unprecedented budget surplus available to **restore** cuts, **attract** quality people, and **retain** our great educators, the time is NOW! Let's not hope for a better future, let's make a better future! Let's do it with each other, and let's do it for each other! Let's all take time to think about how we all can do our part, in union with one another, to make sure we win a great contract that allows us to provide the exceptional education each and every one of our students deserve!

In solidarity,

Brian McCarthy

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SEIU SUPPORT: WEAR PURPLE ON WEDNESDAYS!

In January, Brian attended the Service Workers International Union Local #284 meeting. The SEIU represents the District's Child Nutrition Workers, Transportation Workers, and Paraprofessionals. Brian learned about what was important to our siblings, sisters, and brothers that attended the meeting as they approach their next round of negotiations. He shared some of his initial thoughts on our own upcoming negotiation season, and expressed to them how valued they were by Local 1148 members! All bargaining units agreed that they would like to do what they can to support one another as they ramp up to win contracts that better support our students in every facet of their school day!

On Wednesday's SEIU members wear **purple** to show their solidarity with one another and they have invited us to do the same until they get the contracts they deserve!

SWEATSHIRTS

By now you should have received your new WSPFT hoodie/backpack combo if you ordered one. If you didn't, we had the foresight to order enough for all of our members. And "we" really means Hayley DeMers (FH) our tireless Treasurer! She, along with Athena Gause (TR), are responsible for the wonderful design!

We are hearing rave reviews from our members about them and have even had other Locals inquiring as to where they can get something similar! We will be looking to wear them for unity events as we enter the negotiating season, but if your site wants to start wearing them together, please do! Also, share the pic with [Brian](#) so we can post them on our social media sites!

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you didn't know, WSPFT has a social media presence on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Be sure to follow your Local there as we share announcements and highlight the great work being done by our members!

Not on social media? We do the same and more at our [website](#)! If you haven't read your [Contract](#) or our [Constitution](#) lately it might be a good time to have a visit.





NEGOTIATIONS AND ORGANIZING FOR SETTLEMENT

We are thrilled to announce that in January, our Executive Board unanimously confirmed the nomination of Anna Thul (ME) to join Matthew Beniak (PK) and Vice President Lora Messer-Nilles (FH) to lead our OFS team! These members, along with Brian and the negotiators, joined around 650 of their peers the weekend of Jan. 29th at Education Minnesota's Collective Bargaining and Organizing Convention. Both teams were energized hearing from their union siblings, sisters, and brothers from around the state, and left with some great ideas they will use to win a great contract for all of us! If you have issues that are important that you would like to share with your elected negotiators, or want to volunteer to work with the OFS team to organize and mobilize our members during the upcoming negotiation season, reach out to them [here](#). You can also expect to see members of both teams at your sites this Spring to share more about our plan, solicit your feedback, and ask for your help in winning a great contract!

PENSION ADVOCACY

[Work continues](#) to bolster educator pensions. We know that competitive pensions are a crucial tool to attract quality educators to our profession, and that ALL educators deserve the right to retire with financial security. If you want to receive updates and information about the fight for stronger educator pensions click [here](#). It is an easy way to get involved and do right by each other!

EDUCATOR OF COLOR AFFINITY GROUPS

You may not be aware, but EdMn has established affinity groups for BIPOC educators. If you are interested in finding out more information on racial justice resources, or how to get involved, click [here](#), and/or reach out to [Brian](#).

BUILDING VISITS

Interested in having Brian visit your site, or meeting with you and other members of our Local? You can reach out to one of your Building Reps, or contact him directly. He would love to come out to see all of the great work going on at your site, listen to ways the Union can better support our members, or just simply say hello! He's available before 8 a.m. and after 11:30 a.m. on most days. He looks forward to being in your building (in some cases, again) very soon!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Critical for us to win a great contract this negotiating season is the work that is being done at the capitol in St. Paul! We are proud that we have had a Local 1148 presence at all of the virtual [Lobby Days](#) that have been conducted thus far. Additionally we are extremely grateful and proud of Margaret Citta (TR) who publicly testified in front of the House State and Local Government Finance and Policy Committee to speak for the importance of Paid Family Leave. Additionally, we thank Michelle Smith (ELC) for her continued work to get contract parity with K-12 educators for our Early Childhood and Adult Educators. This bill will be presented soon so keep an eye out for information on ways to support our siblings, sisters, and brothers that teach our youngest and oldest learners! It is important for our legislators to hear our stories to help them better understand the challenges we face to provide an excellent education for all of our learners, and to see and feel our passion for the work we do! Without this collective action we can only hope to get the resources we need. Let's be proactive instead! If you are interested in getting involved in this important work, have a look at EdMn's [legislative priorities](#) and reach out to [Brian](#) to find out how you can contribute. All efforts, big and small, help us move forward!

MEET AND CONFER

A pillar of our contract, and embodied in state statute, is our right to [Meet and Confer](#) with District leadership. They are obligated by law to " discuss policies and other matters relating to their employment which are not terms and conditions of employment." This essentially means issues/concerns that are not contractual, but need resolution all the same. Our team is led by Vice President Lora Messer-Nilles (FH), and includes Katie Carter (TR), Michele Link-Vallenstein (PK), and Ruth Underdahl (PK). If you feel there might be district-wide issues that fit the description above and need addressing by our Meet and Confer team, please share them with [Lora](#).

EB MEETINGS

Just a reminder that Executive Board Members are open to all Local 1148 members. Our next meeting is March 6. It is virtual and starts at 4:00. If you would like to attend you can reach out to any EB member (see last page for a complete list) who can provide the join code information. All are welcome! For a complete list of meeting times/dates, you can always refer to our [website](#)!

FUTURE ISSUES

Have ideas for future issues or what to help in the production? We'd love to [hear](#) from you!

PEOPLE TO KNOW

EXECUTIVE BOARD:

- Brian McCarthy (TR), President
- Lora Messer-Nilles (FHMS), VP
- Hayley DeMers (FH/H/TR), Treasurer
- Michelle Smith (ELC), Secretary
- Phil Hayes (FHMS), Past President
- Kim Zellmer, ATTPS

NEGOTIATORS:

- Anne Bolsem (PK)
- Jodie Darwitz (FH)
- Kristy Otte (H)
- Ryan Pagenkopf (TR)

BUILDING REPS:

- Anna Banti (MO)
- Matthew Beniak (PK)
- Katie Carter (TR)
- Margaret Citta (TR)
- Kristina Cooper (H)
- JoAnn Cudo (PK)
- Erik Kluznik (TR)
- Julia Linehan (GEMS)
- Patrick McCormick (FH)
- Mary Nelson (S)
- Shari Niemczyk (MO)
- Samantha Schiltz (ME)
- Michelle Smith (ELC)
- Anna Thul (ME)
- Lori Thomas (S)



A STRONGER

TOGETHER

Since 1951