

The 1148er

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

GREETINGS 1148ERS!

As we head into these waning moments of the 22/23 School Year I want to both congratulate you and thank you for doing such a great job delivering for our students and their families. This year has afforded me the opportunity to see from a broader perspective just how lucky they are to have all of you in their lives. I'm glad to call isd197 home, and I'm proud to have served as your President this year! This perspective, though, has allowed me to see something else that weighs heavily on me each and every day: that despite our district's motto of *together we thrive*, too often you are put in a position by forces beyond your control where you cannot thrive.

I have been told that a district communication will be sent out to the community in the coming weeks underscoring that, despite the historic education-centered gains made at the Legislature this year, isd197 will face budgetary challenges. Inflation and "unfunded mandates" will once again be blamed for these challenges. Certainly we understand the former. The latter is questionable.

Having closely monitored the legislative session and the evolution of the education and labor bills, as well as having the opportunity to connect with legislators these past few months, I have been both overjoyed (Paid Family Medical Leave comes to mind) and underwhelmed (hard to really call what happened with our Pensions "reform")! The pragmatist in me understands that we couldn't get everything we would have wanted in one year to make up for decades of underfunding. Nevertheless, the new legislation will give our negotiators, and our union, unprecedented power at the bargaining table in the coming months!

What will we, each and every one of us, do with this power? I said a few weeks ago at our General Membership meeting that although I haven't always seen our members thrive this year, what I have seen is compassion, perseverance, commitment, and tenacity as they work daily to overcome the obstacles set in their way to deliver for our students and their families! It is my hope that we can channel this energy to unite together to work to earn a contract that allows us to **RESTORE** cuts to our classrooms, build a better contract that **ATTRACTS** the next generation of great educators to our community, and one that also allows us to **RETAIN** our already-exceptional educators to continue to hone their craft with dignity and fidelity.

For now I wish you and your loved ones a well deserved break. I hope you can take time to reflect on all of the good you bring to your students, to your colleagues, and your fellow Local 1148 members that work with you every day throughout our school district! Thank you for being the backbone of this great community. You are the most precious resource our district can ever provide for our students. Let us not be shy about sharing that, and be unabashed about believing it!

In solidarity,

Brian McCarthy

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IMPORTANT UPDATES!

ORGANIZATION FOR SETTLEMENT

A reminder from your OFS leadership team (Lora Messer-Nilles, Matthew Beniak, & Anna Thul) that if you haven't provided a personal email to the Union during past negotiation cycles you should do so ASAP, as it will be necessary for us to communicate with you off of [isd197](#) email. Additionally, we ask that you please complete this [brief survey](#) to help us craft our messaging to support our negotiators in the coming months. Thanks!

NEGOTIATIONS

The negotiators finished another productive strategy session last week. With so many impactful changes that happened at the Legislature this past session, and the challenges we have faced with the new insurance landscape, there has been much to do and to consider before they sit down at the bargaining table. They are in discussion with the District to set up an informal meeting this summer and will look to lay out a schedule for formal negotiations to begin in late August/early September. The negotiators are grateful for all that have participated in the listening sessions and/or shared concerns and ideas with them thus far. If you have other input you would like to provide, you can continue to share it [here](#). Brian and the OFS team check this regularly to make sure your voices are heard!

JOB POSTINGS

Last month Brian signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to alter contract language around Job Postings (Art. XVII Sec. 7, p. 47). The language now reads, "the posting period will be five (5) calendar days between March 1 and October 1, and ten (10) calendar days during the remainder of the year." Originally this posting period was "from March 1 through September 30 of each year for 5 calendar days, and October 1 through March 1 positions will be posted for 10 calendar days".

This MOA was requested by the District to allow them to be more competitive with other districts in filling vacancies in a timely manner. Our Union remains committed to attracting the best candidates available to work with our students and acknowledges that the changing landscape of the labor market requires us to be more responsive to its volatility. The District must continue to inform us via email of all job postings so **be sure to keep an eye on your [isd197](#) email during the summer months** if you are interested in potential internal openings.

LEGISLATIVE GAINS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD & FAMILY EDUCATORS AND ADULT BASIC EDUCATORS

There has been exciting news for ECFE in the Legislature! Gov Walz signed a bill guaranteeing the same contractual rights for licensed ECFE and ABE teachers that K-12 teachers currently have! District 197 ECFE teachers have been fortunate to be a part of WSPFT and, as a result, are on our salary schedule. However, many districts around the state do not have their licensed ECFE teachers on their teacher's schedules. Now ECFE teachers will have the same rights as all other licensed teachers!

ECFE has not had full-time state level leadership at MDE for 20 years! Gov Walz signed off on new funding for two full-time staff at MDE dedicated to supporting ECFE. There is also a much needed increase in ECFE funding due to the general education formula, it is \$5.5 MILLION IN FY24-25 and \$10.7 million in FY 26-27.

Our very own Michelle Smith was also invited to be on the MNAFEE Advocacy Committee. The MN Association for Family and Early Education works to advocate and promote for ECFE programs in public schools and is active in legislative efforts to support funding for ECFE programming state-wide. We are proud of the work she has done on behalf of ECFE/ABE students and families, and are grateful for all of our members that work with these learners!

SAVE THE DATE!

2ND ANNUAL FALL FEST SEPTEMBER 30TH

Join us after the Warrior 5k on September 30th at Thompson Park beginning at 11:00 where we will R AR into negotiations at our second annual Fall Festival! This fun, family friendly event was a big hit last year, and we're looking forward to an even bigger turnout as we come together in union to rally for a great contract! Keep an eye out for more information during back to school week. Want to get involved in planning or volunteering at the Fall Festival or future events? Reach out to Lora, Anna, and Matt!



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING RECAP

We had over fifty people gather at FoodSmith to honor this year's retirees (Grace Callhoon - Me, Jean Bannick - ELC, and Kristie Cummings - G), hear from our negotiators, and celebrate the end of the year together. A special thanks goes to former Sibley teacher John Kelly, and his colleague Brian Atwood, who provided the drinks and shared a bit about the Homes for Heroes Program which helps veterans, first responders, and educators buy homes. It was a great time for all and we are grateful for the service provided by the FoodSmith staff, many of whom are graduates of our schools!



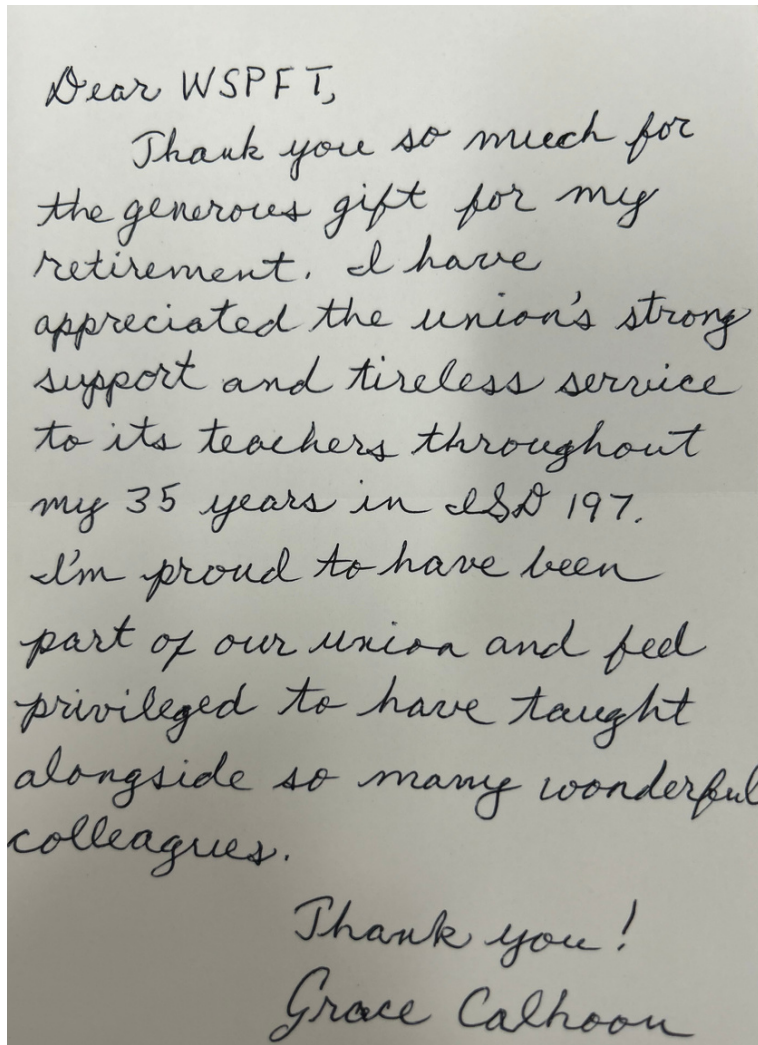
UPLIFTING VOICES A RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENT

Join educators from around the state on Friday, Aug. 4 for this FREE event for Education Minnesota members that centers on interrupting systems of whiteness and white supremacy. This new event at the Wellstone Center in St. Paul includes an opening ceremony featuring Education Minnesota officers and member speakers, as well as a variety of sessions that include opportunities to learn, engage and connect. After lunch, attendees will continue their learning, followed by a keynote address by local author Sun Yung Shin, and a closing, cleansing ceremony by Randy Gresczyk. The exhibit hall will be showcasing BIPOC and other underrepresented-owned businesses from across the state.

For more information, or to register, click [here](#).

RETIREMENT SEMINARS

This summer is also a great time to attend one of EdMn's *When Can I Afford to Retire?* seminars. Space is limited at these in-person events so **register today!**



2023 Sessions:

- June 12: Pier B Resort Hotel - Duluth
- June 13: International Events Center - Rochester - Teachers
- June 15: MN Landscape Arboretum - Chaska - Teachers
- June 20: Best Western Kelly Inn - St. Cloud
- June 27: Education Minnesota Mankato office
- June 28: Virtual - ESPs 9 -10 a.m.
- June 28: Virtual - Teachers 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
- July 11: Hampton Inn and Suites - Bemidji
- July 13: Holiday Inn Detroit Lakes - Lakefront
- July 18: Education Minnesota Brooklyn Park office
- July 20: Education Minnesota Woodbury office
- July 25: Minnesota North College - Eveleth campus
- July 26: Virtual - Teachers 9 -10 a.m.

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 & 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.



LIVING GREEN

For Mrs. Skemp



HELP US CREATE A SPACE TO HONOR MRS. SKEMP

1 The Idea

Mary Jo Skemp loved nature and was the LiveGreen leader at our school. We believe she would love to have a space for students to enjoy the outdoors at Mendota. A pergola would be a space where students could eat, relax, and enjoy nature. Located outside the lunchroom door, students could easily access this space daily.

2 Fundraising

We will do a coins & bills fundraiser from Monday, May 15-Friday, May 19 at school that students can contribute to. We also ask that you consider donating any amount to make this dream a reality. Scan the code below to donate via Venmo or send cash or checks written out to Mendota Elementary PTA to Mendota Elementary's front office.

3 Want to help?

If you know anyone who has experience or expertise with pergolas or woodworking, and you think they might be willing to help, please email Anna Thul so we can connect with that person! If you'd like to help in other ways, please let us know!

SCAN TO
DONATE

@MendotaPTA



venmo



651-403-8005



anna.thul@isd197.org

PEOPLE TO KNOW

OFFICERS:

- 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, ATPPS

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

FUTURE ISSUES

Have ideas for future issues or what to help in the production?

We'd love to hear from you!