

The 1148er

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

The other day I was speaking with a member who was helping me with a problem and I thanked him for his perspective to which he responded, "You're welcome. I love my strong union!" The whole exchange warmed my heart, but those last words really stuck with me, and I wanted to share with you why. Our union is strong, and getting stronger, because more and more people see the union as theirs! That is essentially how unions become strong, because people take ownership of the work that needs doing. For them, building **a stronger together** isn't just the cool slogan on the back of our VERY cool

hoodies, but the essential work we do every day, lending a hand to our fellow members to do better for each other and our students. And when we take ownership of the work, all pitching in to get it done, we get to the true spirit of unionism: our whole is simply more than the sum of our parts!



I recognize that people get frustrated that sometimes the union can't do more for them. For some, they see the union as transactional: they pay their dues, and so they should receive something in return. To an extent, I agree: the officers and negotiators that earn the stipends our dues pay for to provide services to us should be held to account. This extends to our leaders in EdMN and at the national level. However, unionism at its core is about us. The "my union" of the member I was speaking to is a union that is a force to do better for all of us and not just some, and to do that in its most authentic sense. It means that we all give, to get back for our greater, and collective, good. To quote Paul Wellstone, "**we all do better, when we all do better.**"

I can tell you that personally, I've felt both sentiments in my career, and so I understand the negativity that can come out when we feel like we are facing a challenge alone, or that our union isn't responsive to. I know we have work to do to make sure that every member of our union loves their strong union, and feels true ownership of it! More of us are feeling this every day, and I am grateful for all of our members that have recently found time to get to a School Board meeting, be on a parade float, make phone calls during election season, wear blue on negotiation days, or just simply step up and help a fellow 1148er with a problem in their workspace. It is this work that helps me in my hardest of days to remember that I love my strong union, too! I am grateful I am in this with each and every one of you building **a stronger together** for our families and our students!

In solidarity,

Brian McCarthy



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INSURANCE CONCERNS

Despite the challenges that the transition to UMR after their buyout of Preferred One has been for many of us, our health insurance remains one of the better plans on offer in Minnesota. Page thirteen of our [contract](#) stipulates that the district will cover between 80-100% of insurance premiums depending upon the plan you have chosen. Many

unions around the state were not able to negotiate such a high contribution with their districts as ours was, and in fact many only have a fixed dollar amount as the contribution. This means that as costs increase, more insurance benefits have to be paid out-of-pocket by their members, whereas District 197 has to incur those costs based on the percentages written into our contract. Our negotiators have steadfastly protected this and rejected any proposal to change it, most recently when we rejected a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to do so last Spring.

Make no mistake, UMR has made accessing our health benefits more burdensome than it was when they were provided by Preferred One. Brian has made this known publicly when he addressed the school board last month, and we continue to work with the HR Department and One Digital (the third party administrator that manages our district's self-insured plan) to eliminate the unnecessary barriers our members face when accessing their benefits. If you have questions, concerns, or experiences you would like shared at the next Labor-Management (Insurance) Committee meeting you can share them [here](#) and Margaret Citta (TRHS) will be sure to raise them on your behalf.

POLITICAL CONFERENCE

Education Minnesota will be hosting its statewide political conference on Feb. 2 and 3 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bloomington. All WSPFT members are invited to attend. Workshop topics include getting out the vote efforts, recruiting pro public-education candidates for local races, and more! Additionally, if you ever considered running for office as a pro-public education candidate, and you should, this is a great place to learn more about what it takes to run and win! Registration is \$25 per member but includes a hotel room and meals! As an added incentive, Local 1148 will cover the \$25 registration fee for up to five members via an EdMn grant we recently received! To get more information and register, click [here](#). The deadline is Jan 29th.

EDUCATION MINNESOTA 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](#).

Additionally, All Jewish Education Minnesota members are encouraged to [sign up for the email list](#) as this group grows into a more formal affinity group.



SAVE THE DATE:

**PENSION RALLY
FEBRUARY 29TH
AT THE CAPITOL!**

Join your EdMN siblings, sisters, and brothers from around the state to rally for a "respectable retirement for all our educators!" The rally will be from 3:45 - 4:45 in the capitol rotunda on Feb. 29th. We hope to lend a sizable WSPFT voice to help fill the halls of the capitol, with logistical information coming in the new year from VP Lora Messer-Nilles, and Tom Raymond (FH), our unofficial pension point person! For more information, and other ways to get involved, check out the [EdMn Pension Page](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA



@wspft1148



@wspft1148



@wspft



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

MEMBER RECOGNITION

Know of a member who is doing extraordinary things that deserves a shout out? **Email Brian** and we will look to get them into the next e1148er and on our social media feeds!

Join the fight for fair educator pensions

Education Minnesota is committed to ensuring a stable and fair retirement for every educator in our state. Pension reform cannot be achieved without legislative action. Help us fight for improvements by:

Showing up

Education Minnesota will host events during legislative session focused on improving educator pensions. Show up and bring your colleagues!

Speaking out

Contact your legislators. Ask for a meeting, or give a quick call or email. Your legislators are there to represent you, and they'll appreciate hearing your thoughts on educator pensions.

Leaning in

Activate your colleagues and engage with your local and state union. We're stronger together, and we can't achieve reform without everyone's voice.

Resources

Learn more on Education Minnesota's pension web page!



Join the Education Minnesota Pension Advocacy Network on Facebook!




Sign up for pension email updates!



Questions?
Email: pensions@edmn.org

www.educationminnesota.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO. 



NEGOTIATIONS AND ORGANIZATION FOR SETTLEMENT

Both the negotiation and OFS teams are grateful for your continued support and participation in Wear Blue days and more recently, your presence at school board meetings! We are being seen! As our negotiations continue into the new year, the teams would like to remind members that the OFS have been providing weekly updates about our progress, and our action steps, via non-197 email accounts. If you have not been receiving them, and/or would like previous updates, please reach out to our OFS leadership team, VP Lora Messer-Nilles, Matthew Beniak (PK), and Anna Thul (Me) via [this email address](#), and they will get you the assistance you need.



As of 12/12, 104 settlements have been reached in Minnesota thus far, seven of which are in the Metro Area. Only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the approximately 330 Minnesota districts have settled contracts. Two years ago that was closer to $\frac{1}{2}$, and four years ago, that number was around $\frac{2}{3}$. You can follow the statewide progress [here](#), but you will need to use your EdMn login to access the data.

DECEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We had a great turnout at [BLVD](#) for our December Membership meeting last week. It was great to connect with members, new and experienced, in a fun environment with some very delicious apps! Brian and the negotiators gave a negotiations update and fielded questions, and later Lora Messer-Nilles coordinated a raffle with donated gift cards from BLVD and others! The BLVD staff did a great job making our event a success and we hope to partner with them again in the future. Looking ahead, our Spring general membership meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 23. Obviously that is a long way off, but pencil it in for some fun and solidarity building!



LOOKING AHEAD TO APRIL ELECTIONS

SERVE YOUR UNION IN WAYS BIG AND SMALL

April of 2024 is election season for Local 1148! Per [Article IV of our constitution](#), our officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) and negotiators serve two year terms and new elections are held in even numbered years. Our building reps also serve two year terms, so most, but not all, will be up for re-election in April as well. An election timeline and procedures, consistent with the constitution, will be planned by the Executive Board, and shared with members, in February. For democracies like ours to be vibrant, it is essential we participate! Please consider running for any of the open positions that are of interest to you! Looking for less of a commitment? We need a minimum of four (and a maximum of nine) members that are not running for an open position to serve on the Election Committee. This committee is charged with ensuring the April election runs fairly and in accordance with the relevant stipulations in our constitution. If you are interested in serving on this essential committee, please reach out to [Brian](#) or one of your building reps.

FREE RELICENSURE CREDITS... AND MORE!

A reminder that you can get your relicensure credits free at [MEAonline](#). The link will also take you through steps to register, if you haven't already done so, or misplaced your login credentials. This is another great benefit to union membership!

On January 31st at 3:45 [Kristy Otte](#) (H) and [Jodie Darwitz](#) (FH) will be leading a relicensure session for those that need help with that process. For more information, email them by clicking on either of their names. A location for the meeting has yet to be determined but will be shared with members when it is finalized.

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)*
- *Angela Penttila (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)*