



The 1148er

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings 1148ers!

Two Saturdays ago Education Minnesota's Legislative Action Committee (LAC) met in our last series of meetings for the school year. The role of the LAC in EdMn governance is to work with our staff to set out our [legislative goals](#) for each session, and to strategize/lobby for their implementation. Our priorities have been simple: better pay (\$60,000 starting salary), better pensions (60/30 rule), and affordable health care (via a statewide pool). As simple and as reasonable as those priorities might seem, nothing is so simple in politics, and especially in a session where upcoming revenue shortfalls shape decision making.

Sadly, revenue shortfalls have also pitted our members against one another in our fight to advance our priorities. In my role on the LAC and my role as president of WSPFT, I have been privy to conversations where members passionate about one of those priorities, have publicly advocated against one or both of the other priorities to advance the cause most dear to them. That may sound like pragmatic politics to some, but it plays into the hands of those that seek to attack public education, weaken our union, and chip away at the gains we have made for ourselves, our students, and our families.

In a union as large and diverse as ours, we can and should have our own opinions, but how and where we share those opinions can either build us up, or tear us down. On May 17 Education Minnesota will host our end of session rally. I hope to see you there! And, as we head into negotiations, let's advocate for one another! Let's avoid those whispers in the hall, and instead have hard and honest conversations. Let's be direct with decision makers because when doing so, we become the changemakers our students, our families, and our community need. That is how we build *a stronger together* for everyone!

In solidarity,



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FROM YOUR NEGOTIATORS:

Dear Union Members,

We hope this message finds you well. As we move into the next phase of our journey together, we're excited to announce that negotiations for our upcoming contract are just around the corner! This is a crucial moment for our union, and we want to ensure every member is informed and involved.

Over the past few months, we've been meeting regularly to prepare for these negotiations. We've been analyzing the results from the member surveys and feedback from our meetings to ensure that we're prioritizing the issues that matter most to you. Your input has been invaluable, and it is shaping the approach we will take as we move forward.

During the upcoming weeks, we will be working tirelessly to advocate for your rights, improvements in working conditions, and fair compensation. Your voice is more important than ever, and we encourage you to stay engaged, share your thoughts, and stand strong as we approach the negotiating table.

Stay tuned for updates, and thank you for your continued solidarity.

In unity,

WSPFT 1148 Negotiation Team

Matt Beniak, Phil Hayes, Anne Bolsem, Kristy Otte, and Brian McCarthy

NEGOTIATION SURVEY REPORTS

A General Membership Survey was conducted in February and March with a total of 178 member responses.

Top 3 salary concerns:

- Bottom Right (Step 15, MA+60)
 - Teachers don't feel like the subsequent raises adequately meet the rising insurance premiums and general cost of living increases
- Longevity
 - Many members want to see a longevity pay similar to neighboring districts
- Cost of Living Increases
 - Members want to see raises increase to match cost of living increases

Top language concerns:

- Issues with family and sick leave
- Clarifications around teacher contract day and extracurriculars
- Note: negotiators are drafting language proposals around these issues

A Special Education Survey was conducted this spring with a total of 64 member responses.

Primary issues:

- Paperwork days
 - Currently, 2 days are written into the contract (1/semester), with 2 more possible if approved by Sara Lein
 - This has been in the last 3 contracts, but not everyone is aware
 - Case managers want more equitable caseloads based on student needs

IMPORTANT DATES FOR NEGOTIATIONS

- April/May: Negotiator team meetings focused on priorities and strategies
- May 14th: First meeting with the district
- May 19th: Minnesota Legislative Session adjourns
- June: District budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 finalized
- Summer: Negotiation meetings, dates TBD

FROM TOM RAYMOND

PENSION ACTION LEADER (PAL) & HEALTHCARE ACTION LEADER (HAL)

Please participate with your colleagues in completing Action Items in the Pension and Health Care emails from your Building Representatives. These actions will make a difference in attracting and retaining teachers, and help school district budgets now.

WSPFT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

In March, the Executive Board was pleased to award 19 scholarships to graduating Seniors that are the children of WSPFT Members.

We offer our congratulations and best wishes to the following recipients:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Garrit Birr (son of Carolyn Stremmer-Birr, FH) | • Finn Elliot (son of Jennica, S & grandson of Leanne Heinz, ELC) |
| • John Bradford, Jr (son of John, TR) | • Amelia Filo (daughter of Amy, ELC) |
| • Keifer Campbell (son of Carrie, ELC/PK) | • Cullen Fitzgerald (son of Julie, PK) |
| • Zachary Churchill (son of Molly, FH) | • Elsie Jacobs (daughter of Kristine, FH) |
| • Autumn Clem (daughter of Jen, TR) | • Landon Jasper (son of Lisa, G) |
| • Bryce Cook (son of Melissa, PK) | • Elia Kavic Vernon (daughter of Eric, TR) |
| • Ozbourn Cooper (son of Kristi, H) | • Peter Parker (son of Vicky, FH) |
| • Hannah Corbett (daughter of Angela, TR) | • Lucy Penttila (daughter of Angie, H) |
| • JaeLynn Dodson (daughter of Shannon, S) | • Wyatt Sisk (son of Doug, TR) |
| • Naomi Dietsch (daughter of Suzie, TR) | |

As we are with all our students, we are SO proud of them and look forward to the great things they will accomplish!

MINNESOTA AFL-CIO SCHOLARSHIP

DEADLINE MAY 1ST!

The Minnesota AFL-CIO is now taking scholarship applications for high school seniors graduating this year. Applicants must be a union member or dependent of a union member, have a straight "B" average, and planning to attend a post-secondary institution within the State of Minnesota.

[Apply Now](#)

SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Be sure to save the date for our Spring meeting on 5/21/25, hosted by [FoodSmith](#).

We will be honoring our retirees! See flyer on next page!

SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MAY 21ST 2025
STARTING AT 4PM

Please join us as we recognize our
lovely retirees and celebrate the
end of another school year!

Apps & pop will be
provided by the union

FOODSMITH BISTRO PUB

973 Smith Ave S. West St. Paul

OPEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS MAY 19TH!

As we move to Health Partners as our insurance provider, those taking the district insurance the Open Enrollment period will begin May 19. This is an update from the information Brian provided in the insurance video shared with members two weeks ago. Keep an eye out from the district about more specific details.

403(B) ENROLLMENT PERIOD

The enrollment period for 403(b) is approaching! District 197 partners with six different vendors to provide 403(b) plans to staff. There is no requirement to use any specific vendor! A complete list can be found [here](#).

For those that are interested, Josh Nokes from Corebridge, one vendor providing 403(b) plans, will again be offering phone and virtual appointments. Meetings will be made available for you to ask questions about the plan, to enroll in the plan or to review your existing accounts. An email will be sent out later this month with links to schedule a time to [talk with Josh](#). Please make sure to monitor your emails in the coming weeks.

Important information to know for all 403(b) plans:

1. To start your contributions in September, you must complete a Salary Reduction Agreement by 5/15/25 per our contract. This form is available [here](#).
2. If you are eligible for the match for the 1st time, you must complete a Salary Reduction Agreement by 5/15/25 per our contract to indicate you are eligible for the match for 2025-2026.
3. If you are eligible for an increase in your match, please confirm you are contributing enough to ensure you will see your increased match for 2025-2026. This may require you to complete a new Salary Reduction Agreement.

UNION MEMBERSHIP AFTER RETIREMENT

Thinking of retiring in the next few years? Education Minnesota offers membership for retirees.

You may be eligible for a membership at no cost to you!

Have a [look here](#) to see if you are eligible and the benefits of staying an EdMn member.

MORE MORTGAGE HELP: HOME FOR HEROES!

In our previous issues we have shared some great options for our members who are looking to purchase their first home. We are also thrilled to share a great program by former Sibley teacher and current realtor

John Kelly called [Homes for Heroes](#). John is more than happy to help 1148ers navigate this process!

DUES UPDATE

Because of HR's delay in starting taking our dues this fall dues will continue to be taken from paychecks until 07/04/2025. This ensures we have dues taken out 18 times during the year.

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT!

You can find our contract on both [our website](#) and on the [197 website](#). Be sure to keep it readily accessible but above all, know your rights! If you ever need any help understanding them, your building reps stand ready to help!

RALLY TO FUND OUR FUTURE



Education Minnesota members from around the state rallied at the capitol on Tuesday February 18th. We had a committed contingent of WSPFT members who stood with our union siblings, sisters, and brothers from around the state driving home the importance of better pay, pensions, and healthcare for all Minnesota educators!

END OF SESSION RALLY SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 17TH

Gov. Tim Walz and legislative leaders will be in final negotiations on the state budget before the Legislature must adjourn on Monday, May 19. The weekend before adjournment is a critical time to make our voices heard loudly on investments in strong pensions and strong public schools!



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!

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](#).

UNION PLUS: EVEN MORE BENEFITS!

If you haven't already, check out [Union Plus](#) for myriad types of fringe benefits that come with our membership in the AFL-CIO. They offer [scholarships](#), mortgage assistance, credit and medical bill assistance, shopping/travel discounts and more!

FUTURE 1148ER ISSUES



Have ideas for future issues or want to help in the production of the e1148er? We'd love to [hear](#) from you!



PEOPLE TO KNOW

OFFICERS:

- *Brian McCarthy (TR), President*
- *Lora Messer-Nilles (FHMS), VP*
- *Laura Scott (TR), Treasurer*
- *Beth Rabe (MO), Secretary*
- *Phil Hayes (FHMS), Past President*
- *Kim Zellmer, ATPPS Coordinator*

BUILDING REPS:

- *Margaret Citta (TR)*
- *Matt Malmberg-Merthan (TR)*
- *Janelle Christensen (TR)*
- *Jodie Darwitz (FH)*
- *Patrick McCormick (FH)*
- *Angela Penttila (H)*
- *Kristi Cooper (H)*
- *Hayley DeMers (H)*
- *Lea Beniek (ELC)*
- *Michelle Smith (ELC)*
- *Lisa Jasper (GEMS)*
- *Julia Linehan (GEMS)*
- *Samantha Schiltz (ME)*
- *Anna Thul (ME)*
- *Anna Banti (MO)*
- *Shari Niemczyk (MO)*
- *Joann Cudo (PK)*
- *Julie Fitzgerald (PK)*
- *Mary Nelson (S)*
- *Lori Thomas (S)*

NEGOTIATORS:

- *Anne Bolsem (PK)*
- *Phil Hayes (FH)*
- *Kristy Otte (H)*
- *Matt Beniak (PK)*



A STRONGER

TOGETHER

Since 1951

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Just a reminder that Executive Board meetings are open to all Local 1148 members. For a complete list of meeting times/dates, you can always refer to our [website](#). If you would like to attend you can reach out to any EB member who can provide more information. All are welcome!

CONTACT INFO UPDATES

Do you have a NEW address? Do you have a NEW last name? Do you have a NEW building assignment/FTE? Please contact Laura Scott, our Treasurer, at wspft1148treasurer@gmail.com with any and all changes to keep our records up to date, and our lines of communication with you uninterrupted.