14 October, 2026

The 1148er

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

FROM THE PRESIDENT:



Greetings 1148ers!

I hope you all have enjoyed the unseasonably warm weather and are looking forward to a great MEA Weekend. Whether you are headed down to the conference (believe it or not I am), having a mini-vacation, or even a staycation, I hope you enjoy yourselves and recharge your batteries!

I also hope that your school year is off to a good start and you and your students have been up to some great things. I have been enjoying working with my new batch of ninth graders and all of their energy…for the most part! What remains in front of my mind though is November 3rd. Election Day.

Hopefully you have made a plan to vote or better yet, you already have! The decisions we make at the polls will be some that have incredible impacts in the lives our families, our students, and our profession writ large. This is not hyperbole. Not this election. The path forward to more affordable insurance, a pension plan made whole, improved teacher salaries, fully funded schools with manageable class sizes, and even the right to continue to have a union are all at stake. We must make our voices heard at the ballot box on or before election day!

You may not want politics in your classroom, but politics have a way of finding its way into our learning spaces all the same! So it is our responsibility as Americans, and as union members that are committed to our profession and to one another to make sure we step up at this critical time. On p. 2 we have put together a voter guide that provides resources to help you make educated decisions, know how/where to vote, and what to do if there are irregularities at your polling place. Please have a look and reach out to an officer or a building rep if you need support or have questions.

As always thank you for taking the time to read the *1148er* and for your involvement and engagement in our union. Building *A Stronger Together* is dependent upon all of us staying informed, stepping up, and being active in the work we do in solidarity with one another. Whether you have a big role or a small one, the work we do is important and none of us can afford to just go along for the ride. Thank you and have a great long weekend. It is well earned.

In solidarity,

Brian McCarthy

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2026 VOTERS GUIDE

ELECTION DAY IS NOVEMBER 3RD! HAVE YOU MADE A PLAN TO VOTE?

In 2026, Minnesota educators can come together to elect local, state and federal leaders who will respect the promise of public education for all with schools where every student and educator can thrive. Below are a number of resources to help you make an informed decision on or before Election Day:

- **Vote Yes**: Find information on the ISD 197 Levy Referendum here.
- **ISD 197 School Board Election**: The West St. Paul Reader highlights information on the school board candidates leading up to the election.
- **Vote Yes: MN Permanent School Fund Constitutional Amendment**: Find information on the payout and what the difference in distribution is for schools here! *Note: LEAVING THIS BLANK ON YOUR BALLOT IS A NO VOTE*
- **EdMN Voter Guide**: Enter your information to find out what's on your ballot, where and how you can vote, update or check your registration, see EdMN endorsed candidates, and more!
- **Election Protections**: Check up on the protections provided to Minnesotans, including information on required paid time off to vote!
- **Minnesota Secretary of State**: Ensures our elections are free, fair, secure, and accurate. Minnesota's elections are administered locally by our neighbors, friends, and family members.

If you witness intimidating behavior outside of polling places by anyone, including federal monitors or officers, you may safely and anonymously report the incident to a nonpartisan voter protection hotline at 1-800-OUR-VOTE.

MEMBER BENEFITS:

UNION PLUS:

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!

EDUCATION MINNESOTA:

Education Minnesota also provides numerous benefits that can be found here. Whether it is free relicensure courses via the online MEA platform, or discounted ride tickets at Nickelodeon Universe there is something for everyone!

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION:

NEA Member Benefits also have great ways to get even more bang from your membership buck!

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!

AT THE GOVERNING BOARD

The **Education Minnesota Governing Board** met October 2-3. The following are highlights of the board's discussions and/or actions:

- **Committee work:** Board members received their board-level committee assignments to help guide our work, support members, and advance our priorities.
- **Elections and new members:** The Board certified the special election results for Election District O and seated two new members: Carrie Kyong, representing Election District O, and Vince Wagner, NEA Director. The Board also approved the Election Committee's recommended timeline for NEA Representative Assembly state-credential and Aspiring Educator delegate elections.
- **Presentations and discussions:** The Board received presentations on the upcoming midterm elections; the Organizing for Settlement Fund (OFS); background on our Local Option agreements with the St. Paul Federation of Educators, Minneapolis Federation of Educators, and Robbinsdale Federation of Teachers; and the service agreement with Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF).
- **Union updates:** Members received updates on our national unions, the Minnesota AFL-CIO state convention, the Minnesota constitutional amendment, Education Minnesota's October financial overview, and preparations for MEA.

The Governing Board next meets December 11-12. If you would like to know more about Education Minnesota's Governing Board, and/or Brian's role on it, please reach out to him.

SOLIDARITY AT THE SAINTS

Over forty members of the WSPFT family gathered for the 2nd Annual Solidarity with the Saints outing on Friday! Members had an amazing time connecting with new and veteran members as we continue to build A Stronger Together! Time together outside of our classrooms/buildings creates a community that stands together against adversity and challenges, which is something that Local 1148 holds dear! On the the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on our country, we also want to recognize those that we lost that day and thank those (including 1148ers) that answered the call to protect our country at such a perilous time in our history.











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!

NOTE: our 25-27 contract has not yet been added to either site, as we are currently editing the ratified agreement for publication

MEET AND CONFER WORK

An important and often unsung part of the work WSPFT does for our members is through the Meet and Confer Committee. This committee is a joint District-Federation body composed of the Superintendent and a group of administrators, our president Brian McCarthy and a team of WSPFT members. Our team is led by Vice President Kristi Cooper (H) and this year includes Elizabeth Howatt (TR), Michelle Link-Valenstein (PK), and Stacy Lufkin (TR), and Sarah Walburg (FH). State statute obligates the district to "meet and confer" with us on non-contractual matters of mutual importance that can improve the learning conditions of our students, which of course are the working conditions of our members! The first meeting took place on October 6th, where the committee reviewed and discussed the 2027-2028 and 2028-29 school calendars. Both calendars have been recommended to the School Board for their approval.

If you would like to share your thoughts on the calendars, or have ideas for future topics that might fit into the parameters of the work of this committee, please contact one of your Building Reps or Kristi. She will also provide a report of the committee's work to our Executive Board in November, minutes of which can always be found on our website.

WHEN CAN I AFFORD TO RETIRE?

Education Minnesota offers seminars on retirement. Topics to be discussed include:

Pension education

- Learn how benefits are calculated
- Understand defined benefit pension plans

Financial planning

- What can you expect from Social Security?
- Tax-deferred and tax-free savings
- Asset allocation and asset management / diversification / performance and fees
- 403(b) match and severance payment options

Presented by: EFS Advisors

Wednesday, Nov. 11 (Teacher)
EdMN Brooklyn Park office
9210 Wyoming Ave. N., Suite 200
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445-1854
4-4:15 p.m., registration | 4:15-5:30 p.m., seminar
Register now

Thursday, Nov. 12 (Teacher)
6 - 7 p.m., virtual seminar
A Zoom link will be emailed to you the day before the seminar.
Register now

Thursday, Nov. 19 (Teacher)
EdMN Woodbury office
2042 Wooddale Drive, Suite 100
Woodbury, MN 55125-2981
4-4:15 p.m., registration | 4:15-5:30 p.m., seminar
Register now

Tuesday, Dec. 1 (Teacher)
EdMN Apple Valley office
6950 W. 146th St., Suite 114
Apple Valley, MN 55124-8520
4-4:15 p.m., registration | 4:15-5:30 p.m., seminar
Register now

Thursday, Dec. 3 (Teacher)
Whitewater Business Center, Lower Level Conference Room
12301 Whitewater Drive
Minnetonka, MN 55343
4-4:15 p.m., registration | 4:15-5:30 p.m., seminar
Register now

IT'S YOUR HARD EARNED MONEY!

CHECK YOUR PAYCHECK!!!

A reminder to always review your paycheck on **Skyward**. If you see any discrepancies, contact **Payroll** immediately! If you receive an overpayment, you will have to pay it back. If it is an underpayment, the district owes you! Need help navigating Skyward? Ask one of your Building Reps for support.

SAVE THE DATE:

WSPFT WINTER WARM-UP AT BLVD, THURS. DECEMBER 16TH!

Please plan to join your union siblings at BLVD Tavern on Thursday, Dec. 16 after school. We look forward to some fun and some food with appetizers provided by WSPFT. This event has become a member favorite over the years so bring a friend and join in the revelry!
All members are welcome!



PEOPLE TO KNOW:

OFFICERS:

- *Brian McCarthy (TR), President*
- *Kristi Cooper (H), VP*
- *Laura Scott (TR), Treasurer*
- *Athena Gause (TR), Secretary*
- *Phil Hayes (FHMS), Past President*
- *Kim Zellmer, ATPPS Coordinator*

NEGOTIATORS:

- *Matt Beniak (ME)*
- *Margaret Citta (TR)*
- *Kristy Otte (H)*
- *Anne Bolsem (PK)*

A STRONGER TOGETHER
Since 1951

BUILDING REPS:

- *Matt Malmberg-Merthan (TR)*
- *Janelle Christensen(TR)*
- *Karen Erickson (TR)*
- *Amanda Mahlstedt (FH)*
- *Patrick McCormick (FH)*
- *Angela Penttila (H)*
- *Hayley DeMers (H)*
- *Lea Beniek (ELC)*
- *Michelle Smith (ELC)*
- *Lisa Jasper (GEMS)*
- *Matt Olson (GEMS)*
- *Samantha Schiltz (ME)*
- *Anna Flies (ME)*
- *Anna Banti (MO)*
- *Samantha Eisenbraun (MO)*
- *JoAnn Cudo (PK)*
- *Julie Fitzgerald (PK)*
- *Mary Nelson (S)*
- *Lori Thomas (S)*

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!

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.