



MINNESOTA EDUCATOR

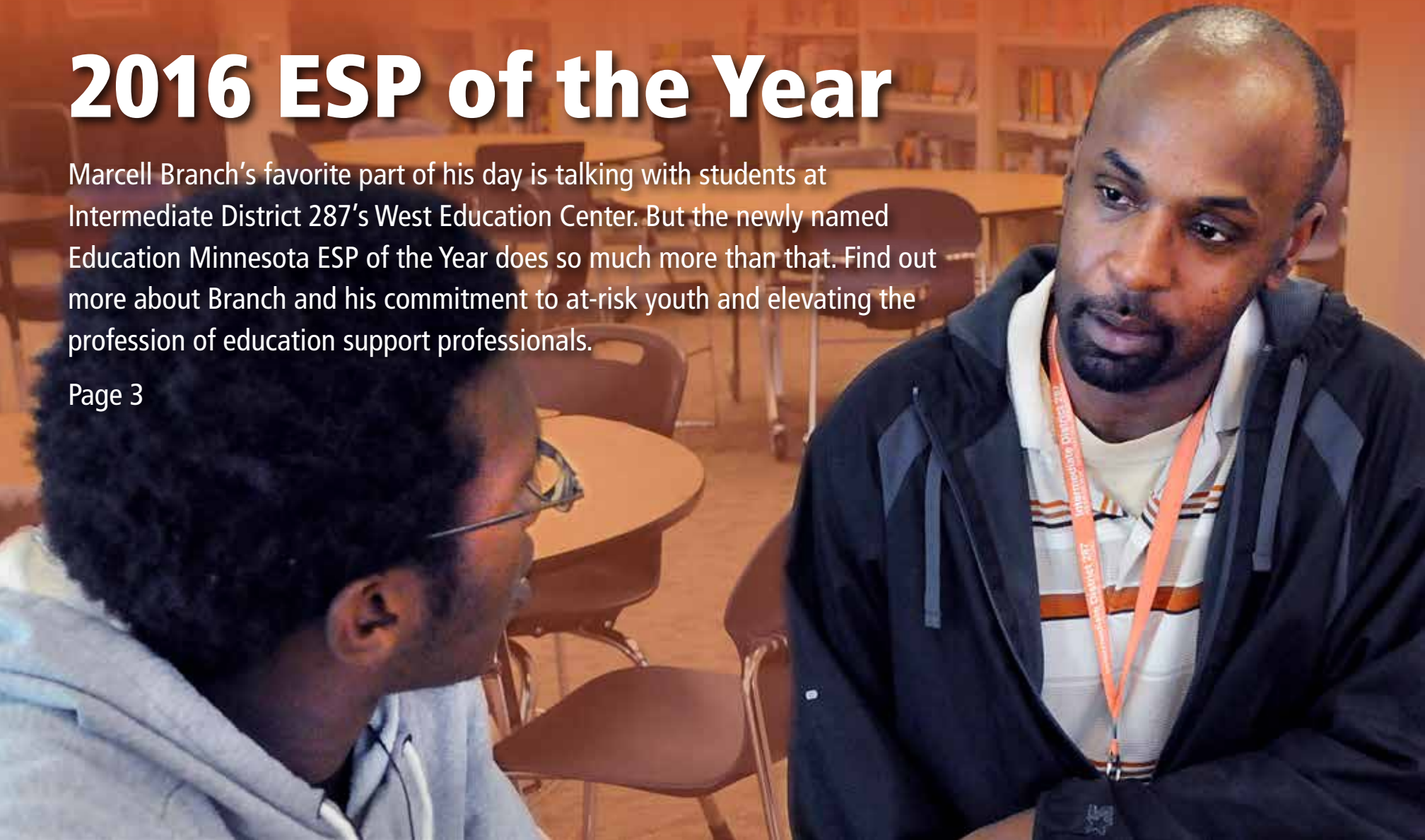
A publication for the members of Education Minnesota

December 2016

2016 ESP of the Year

Marcell Branch's favorite part of his day is talking with students at Intermediate District 287's West Education Center. But the newly named Education Minnesota ESP of the Year does so much more than that. Find out more about Branch and his commitment to at-risk youth and elevating the profession of education support professionals.

Page 3



Educators look to bridge divide after election

The results of the election last month revealed deep divides in the country and in Minnesota. Schools across the state are seeing the effects of this in forms of bullying and graffiti, but also in students stepping up to show messages of support and inclusiveness.

Public schools are safe spaces for the students who come there to learn, as well as the people who work there, and many educators are looking to be the ones to serve as bridge-builders.

"The results of the election remind us there are very few places in our deeply divided America where people from

all walks of life still mix. The public schools are one of them," Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said. "There, we educate the children of parents of all races and ethnicities: children of conservatives and progressives and children from families that are comfortable and from families that are struggling.

As educators, we feel a special duty to bridge the divides between us. It's our hope Minnesotans can join together to strengthen their public schools, not just because they strive to give all students the opportunity to succeed, but because public

schools create a safe place where the next generation of voters can learn to get along.

"The lessons we have always taught in school were not made obsolete on Election Day. For one thing, facts still matter. And educators will still insist students treat each other with respect. Fear, intimidation and bullying were not acceptable before, they're not OK today and we will be on guard against them in the future. This campaign season showed we must do the job of teaching diverse students to speak civilly with each other, and do it well, or the cycle of nastiness in our politics will never end."

Specht and 2015 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Amy Hewett-Olatunde spoke on Minnesota Public Radio a few days after the election about the acts of bullying and hate speech that were being seen in schools.

"Educators have a moral and ethical duty to stop bullying," said Hewett-Olatunde, an English language learner teacher to immigrant students at LEAP High School in St. Paul. "Educators need to stop and address it. We need to stop the bullying for the sake of those being bullied and stop and educate the ones doing the bullying."

"I don't see this as a political stance," said Specht. "I see it as a plea for common decency."

Educators win in state, local races

Eighteen current and former Minnesota educators won state legislative seats.

Kent Eken, Jerry Newton, Carolyn Laine, Jason Isaacson and Steve Cwodzinski won Senate seats. Mary Murphy, Paul Marquart, Julie Sandstede, Jennifer Schultz, Dean Urdahl, David Bly, Duane Sauke, Jeanne Poppe, Mary Kunesch-Podein,

Election, page 7

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Read the article about Teachers of the Year speaking out on successes and struggles of dealing with the achievement gap. Then answer the question, "What successes or struggles have you encountered in closing the student opportunity gap?" and send it to us via email, Twitter or Facebook to be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Target gift card.

Email us at educator@edmn.org or post on Twitter or Facebook using #MNEducator. Find us on Facebook at Education Minnesota and on Twitter @EducationMN.

Congratulations to last month's contest winner, **Rebecca Hagen** of Elk River. See a selection of answers to last month's question on page 2.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Education Minnesota President Denise Specht discusses how to support students in a time of uncertainty for some. **Page 2**

Forslund lawsuit attacking teacher due process get dismissed by judge. **Page 3**

Registration open for 2017 Collective Bargaining and Organizing Conference. **Page 4**

Pequot Lakes art teacher inspires in the classroom, heading to international chainsaw carving championship. **Page 4**

A legal analysis of the Forslund lawsuit dismissal and due process rights. **Page 5**

Have you ever wondered what being "nationally board certified" means? **Page 7**

Member honor roll. **Page 8**

Two spots opening on TRA Board. **Page 9**

Teachers look at how movies depict the profession. **Page 10**

Teachers of the Year featured on achievement gap panel, sharing successes and struggles. **Page 11**

Lesson plan jam, equity ed camp offered at the beginning of next year. Opportunities. **Page 12**

Educators owe it to students to bring state together

In the weeks after Election Day, Minnesota schools are reaping the whirlwind of the nastiest presidential campaign in years.

Vandals defaced at least two Minnesota schools with racist graffiti. Protesters are in the streets. Reports of bigoted acts at schools around the state have prompted principals to send letters home to parents telling them their neighborhood schools are still safe.

“Regardless of how students might feel about the election results, some students are hurting and fearful of the tone and rhetoric used throughout the election,” wrote one principal in the Twin Cities.

As educators, we cannot let racist bullying become the new normal in our schools. This isn’t a political statement. It’s a plea for common decency in how we treat each other and in the learning environments we create. It’s the same commitment we made to all our students two years ago when Education Minnesota pushed for the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, in part to respond to harassment of LGBT students.

Healing won’t be easy. The campaign exposed the real pain and fear felt by our neighbors. The political process exploited the divisions between us. Many of us fell into the comfortable trap of listening only to people with whom we agreed, and were surprised by the results on Election Day.

So unity feels a long way off right now, but I believe it’s up to us, the educators, to lead the way back. Public



Denise Specht, president

schools and campuses are among the few places left where people from all walks of life still mix.

We educate the children of parents of all races and ethnicities; children of conservatives and progressives and children from families that are comfortable and from families that are struggling. They all depend on us to prepare their kids for successful lives, however that’s defined.

All our students need us, regardless of where they come from. They need us to figure out how to teach in the new atmosphere in our schools and in the new norms of public discourse. Fortunately, there are many resources available.

Education Minnesota began work months ago on a program called F.I.R.E., Facing Inequities and Racism in Education, which includes best practices for responding to racism in our schools. Our union will soon be making those resources, and others, available to its members. The Safe and Supportive

Schools Act calls for more professional development. We should all take advantage of the opportunity. More immediately, I’ve included with this column some materials from the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and other reputable education sources.

For example, there are three tips from the AFT’s “Share My Lesson” page:

- Provide examples of positive images of groups that have been stereotyped during this campaign. If your school is more homogenous, use “virtual contact” through film, stories and narratives from another’s point of view.
- Teach media literacy, so students know the difference between entertainment television and political news coverage. Also teach them political news shows are different from academic discussions.
- Teach and model how to use civil discourse in the classroom. If your school has a code of conduct or ethics, use that as a way to ground your lesson on teaching tolerance. It can also serve as a rubric for evaluating debates about politics in your classroom.

As educators, we owe it to our students to bring our state together as best we can while providing a safe space for everyone. This is an old responsibility for us, although the nationwide focus on chasing test scores has obscured it in

recent years.

Back in 1952, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter said it well when he called educators “priests of our democracy” and noted, “It is the special task of teachers to foster those habits of open-mindedness and critical inquiry which alone make for responsible citizens, who, in turn, make possible an enlightened and

effective public opinion.”

I know we have a tough job ahead, but I also know the educators of the Minnesota. We can do it, if we work...

Together,

Twitter: @DeniseSpecht

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP EDUCATORS TALK THROUGH STUDENT CONCERNS POST-ELECTION

Teaching Tolerance

Blog post: What to Say to Kids on November 10 and the Days After

- www.tolerance.org/blog/what-say-kids-november-10-and-days-after

Colorín Colorado

Lesson plans, resources and talking points for ELL teachers and education support professionals.

- www.colorincolorado.org/after-election-ideas-and-guidance-teachers-ells

AFT Share My Lesson

Post-Election Collection

- <https://sharemylesson.com/post-election>

NEA Today blog

Blog post: ‘I’m Going to Reassure Them That They Are Safe’: Talking to Students After the Election

- <http://neatoday.org/2016/11/09/talking-to-students-about-election>

Education Week

Blog post: The Election Is Over, But for Teachers, Hard Conversations Are Just Beginning

- http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2016/11/post_election_teaching.html

Article: After Election, Students Express a Mix of Emotions

- http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/11/16/after-election-students-express-a-mix-of.htmlnow/2016/11/post_election_teaching.html

What professional development would you like to see offered?

In last month’s Minnesota Educator, we continued the “we want to hear from you” contest and received responses from all over the state via email and Twitter. Here is a selection of the answers. Look on page 1 for this month’s question and how to submit an answer. Your answer enters you into a drawing for a \$25 Target gift card!

“What professional development opportunities would I like to have as an educator? Two words: Mental

Health.” Rebecca Hagen, Elk River Education Association

“I would like to see our union offer more opportunities for teachers to be comfortable teaching STEM. So many avoid it because it can be messy, loud and confusing to some. We owe it to our future engineers and scientists to expose all students to high standards in not only reading and math but SCIENCE as well!” Jodi Prchal, New Prague Education Association

“I would just like to be able to attend some of the professional development or training that is available for teachers.” Pam Thake, Education Minnesota-Red Lake

“I think our district does a good job of offering a variety of training opportunities for teachers, but as a non-classroom staff member, I would like to see more options relevant to support staff such as counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.” Melissa Williams, Education Richfield

MINNESOTA EDUCATOR

To reach the newspaper for queries, story or commentary ideas

Email: educator@edmn.org

Mail: Minnesota Educator
41 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55103

To report a change of address or end duplicate mailings, contact the Education Minnesota membership department.

Email: susan.lynskey@edmn.org

Phone: 651-292-4805

By web: www.educationminnesota.org and choose the Contact Us link to send a change of address.

December 2016 – Volume 19, No. 4

The Minnesota Educator publishes each month. It is one of the union’s print and digital publications to educate, inform and organize the community of members. The Educator is reported, edited and designed by union staff members. The paper is printed in RR Donnelley Co.’s union shop in Long Prairie, Minn. Find copies of the Educator online at www.educationminnesota.org. Go to the News menu, then Minnesota Educator.

To inquire about advertising in the Educator or on the website

Email: kieren.steinhoff@edmn.org

Phone: 651-292-4865

For general inquiries and business at the state headquarters

Phone: 800-652-9073 or 651-227-9541

For information about union activities, work and resources, go to www.educationminnesota.org.

Follow Education Minnesota on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.



www.facebook.com/EducationMinnesota



www.twitter.com/EducationMN



www.pinterest.com/EducationMN

Minnesota Educator (ISSN 1521-9062) is a monthly publication. Periodicals are postage-paid at St. Paul, Minn., and additional offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Minnesota Educator, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103-2196.

Minnesota Educator. All rights reserved, but readers are welcome to reproduce any article in whole or in part on the condition that they give credit to Education Minnesota.

The Minnesota Educator is published for members to share news about education issues and training opportunities for educators as well as union and political news that affects public education in Minnesota.



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Denise Specht
President

Paul Mueller
Vice President

Rodney Rowe
Secretary-Treasurer

Sara Gjerdrum
Executive Director

Brandon Rettke
Director of Public Affairs

Kieren Steinhoff
Editor

Eric Widi
Art Director



ESP of the Year builds up students, colleagues

When Marcell Branch started working at West Education Center in Intermediate District 287 four years ago, he knew he could do the job, but it wasn't always going to be easy.

As a behavior intervention specialist at the level-four behavior school, he works with students who don't always see themselves fitting into a school setting. But his prior years of working with at-risk youth make Branch the perfect person to reach out and help guide them to success.

"I always say we have to work on the students from the outside in," he said. "We need to work on their issues outside of school and help them realize that all of this work is going to benefit them in the end."

And that mentality is a big reason why Branch was chosen as Education Minnesota's 2016 Education Support Professional of the Year.

"I'm not used to getting awards," said Branch. "It does feel good to feel like your work is being valued."

And the work is so very important to Branch.

"I understand these students and where they are coming from. I was them at one point in time," he said. "I want to give them a positive African-American male role model."

Branch's daily life includes keeping the school building safe and building a connection with students.

"I want to help them be more successful," he said. "These kids need someone to be there when they do good and when they do bad. I hold them accountable when I need to and celebrate their

accomplishments too."

Each day, 10 to 15 students come into Branch's office just to talk. He listens, shares his thoughts and knowledge and talk through what's going on in their lives. He spends time in the hallways, library and entryway to be able to connect with students.

"Educators are faced with a dramatic increase in the number of students with emotional, social and behavioral challenges," Branch said in his award submission letter. "ESPs are responsible for facilitating an atmosphere that makes learning possible in the classrooms. Engaging our students in an authentic way will positively impact their behavior and make it possible for everyone to benefit in the opportunities that a good education brings to them."

His motto is to keep it positive and show up.

"We need to focus on the positive. The students will take that out into the communities," Branch said. "People can have things go on in their lives, but don't give up on them. Every day that you show up, that child is going to show up. Show them what you want to do and keep positivity in your work."

He shares that motto in his work with other staff as well.

"When asked what advice he would give someone entering the profession, he stated 'to always stay positive and to ask questions,'" said Becky Kleive, a language arts instructor at West Education Center, in her nomination letter. "He encourages people to 'learn to use the skills you're taught' and, most importantly, 'focus on one student at a time.'"



Marcell Branch talks with student Deshawn Bass about her schedule, classes and successes.

Branch's background in working with youth and crisis management helps him to be successful and show up for his students.

Prior to working in public education, he worked as a case manager, counselor and advocate at youth-based organizations. He also became a certified gang specialist in 2003 and won the Frederic Thrasher Award for Gang Prevention.

Branch also works hard to mentor staff and be a strong advocate for his union.

"He elevates the image of ESPs in the association and the community through his involvement in professional development and community activities that show a continued commitment to learning and growing, as well as a continued commitment to working alongside people with disabilities," said Kleive.

Branch actively participates in the work of Intermediate District Local 2209, served on the negotiations team and has attended Education Minnesota's Summer Seminar. He was named the local's ESP of the Year before being nominated for the state award.

Branch is also trained in restorative chats and works with staff dealing with conflicts.

"I mentor them on how to deal and work through their own conflicts," he said. "I take it all very seriously."

Branch works two other jobs outside the education field, and colleagues have been quick to recognize his dedication. He wants to make sure others feel the same way.

"People know that I mean business and am trying to make changes in the education system," he said. "If we do things to better help and recognize staff, we can change education. We can make meaningful change."

For winning the award, Branch receives a \$1,000 honorarium and an iPad, plus an expense-paid trip to the National Education Association Education Support Professional National Conference.

Focus shifts after due process lawsuit dismissed

Minnesota educators can give their attention to more pressing issues facing public education now that a Ramsey County District judge has dismissed a lawsuit challenging the state's statutes for due process and layoffs.

"One of the biggest threats to the quality of education in Minnesota schools is the shortage of experienced, fully licensed teachers," said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. "We hope this ruling will let Minnesota move beyond these insinuations about the quality of its teachers toward developing new strategies for recruiting and retaining great educators."

In late October, Ramsey County District Court Judge Margaret Marrinan dismissed the lawsuit which sought to strip teachers of their rights to due process and deny local districts the ability to determine their own layoff policies. The plaintiffs claimed the statutes violated

the education clause of the state constitution.

In her ruling, Marrinan said the plaintiffs could draw no connections between low academic achievement and Minnesota's due process laws for teachers. She also wrote the state Supreme Court had repeatedly recognized the legitimacy of the state's tenure laws, in one case calling them, "wise legislation, promotive of the best interests, not only of teachers affected, but of the schools as well."

Specht said educators were not surprised the case was dismissed. The California Court of Appeals gave unionized educators a victory earlier this year when it overturned a very similar case, called Vergara.

"Students benefit when their teachers have the freedom to speak out about conditions in their schools without the fear of arbitrary firing, so it's no surprise this lawsuit was dismissed,"

Specht said of Minnesota's Forslund case.

The Forslund plaintiffs were four mothers of children who had attended Minnesota public schools. They sued the state of Minnesota, the governor, the education commissioner and four individual districts—Anoka-Hennepin, St. Paul, Duluth and West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan. Neither Education Minnesota nor any of its local unions were named as defendants.

The lawsuit was paid for by a group of nationally affiliated education reform groups, including Students for Education Reform Minnesota and the Partnership for Educational Justice, which receives its primary funding from the Walton Family Foundation and Eli Broad.

"The due process protections attacked by this lawsuit are what allow teachers to fearlessly advocate for our schools,

Minnesota's laws on due process for teachers are often described incorrectly. Here are three facts:

- Minnesota statutes already say teachers may be fired for "failure to teach" and "inefficiency in teaching."
- State law already prohibits students from being repeatedly assigned to an "ineffective" teacher. In 2015, the Legislature passed an amendment barring administrators from assigning a student to a teacher on an improvement plan two years in a row. Education Minnesota supported the change.
- Minnesota statutes for due process and layoffs do not dictate where teachers are assigned. Concentrations of inexperienced or experienced teachers are the products of administrative decisions, teacher preferences and some rules that are collectively bargained.

honestly inform parents about their children's education and maintain high academic standards without fear of being fired. Without these protections, I doubt good teachers could do their best work," said Duluth Federation of Teachers President Bernadette Burnham, in a newspaper commentary after the lawsuit was filed.

After the Minnesota case was dismissed, the Partnership for Educational Justice filed another lawsuit, this time in New Jersey, on behalf of six parents. That lawsuit challenged the state's last-in-first-out rule for teacher layoffs and asked a court to declare the statute unconstitutional.

Collective bargaining, organizing conference, Jan 20-21

All local unions able to send one member for free, opportunities for additional reimbursed attendance.

For more information or to register for the conference, go to www.educationminnesota.org/events.aspx#collective-bargaining-and-organizing-conference.

Registration is now open for Education Minnesota’s 2017 Collective Bargaining and Organizing Conference. The conference will take place Jan 20-21 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington-Minneapolis South in Bloomington, Minnesota. The conference kicks off the 2017-19 contract negotiations for teachers and provides information for ESP locals that are either negotiating or preparing to negotiate. The conference offers core negotiations classes, while expanding its focus to new member engagement and equity issues like school climate and the teacher shortage. “Within the classes offered, there is a balance among strong skills for the bargaining table, skills that will translate across all levels of organizing and member engagement and skills to focus on student-centered issues,” said Andrea Cecconi, Education Minnesota negotiations and research specialist and the

conference coordinator. The conference will feature three strands of sessions: Negotiations fundamentals, organizing for power and student-centered advocacy. Sessions that fall into the category of negotiations fundamentals will focus on skills related to preparation for bargaining and are targeted to local bargaining team members. Some of the sessions featured in this strand include health care fundamentals, costing settlements, effective bargaining team practices, using mediation and how to communicate with members during bargaining. The organizing for power strand will provide content and teach skills critical to member engagement and mobilization efforts. Included in this strand are sessions that look at creating school climate teams, community and parent engagement, developing a communications plan, bringing out member voice, how to bargain for full-service community schools

and organizing around workload issues. Student-centered advocacy sessions will look at ideas and strategies to support bargaining and advocacy that addresses the needs of students, families and communities. Sessions in this strand focus on topics like advocating for members and students of color, ESSA implementation, including special education issues in bargaining, organizing for safe and healthy schools, as well as recruitment and retention of new educators and educators of color. “As a union, we are trying to use the lever of negotiations to problem-solve for student, parent and community issues. There is a way to use our bargaining power for the greater good,” said Cecconi. “People are grappling with the teacher shortage, but also the increase of poverty and immigrant students in their schools. We want this conference to address all of that.” Many of the classes offered

are for both ESP and teacher members, but some are broken out for each specific membership category. The student-centered advocacy track includes two sessions specific to ESP members—“Bargaining for ESP Professional Development and Collaboration,” which will identify ways to bring professional development for ESPs to the forefront at the bargaining table; and “Student-Centered Advocacy for ESPs,” which will highlight the work of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers Educational Assistants in developing student-centered proposals that engage members in the bargaining process. ESP members will also have an opportunity to attend “Costing ESP Settlements,” and “ESP Costing Spreadsheet: A Hands-On Workshop”—both of which are designed to address the specific considerations for ESP costing, as compensation

schedules can be complicated and difficult to understand. The conference fee is \$70 per person. Each local receives one complimentary registration, and the opportunity for a second complimentary registration when that person is designated by the local president. Locals may send a second person at no charge who:

- Is a member of color, or
- Is a member serving on his or her first negotiating or organizing team, or
- Is a member within his or her first 10 years of teaching or working, who has committed to serve as a local organizer or negotiator.

ESP locals that did not send a member to the 2015 conference may have registration fees for up to four people reimbursed, with hotel, lost-wage coverage and mileage paid. Reimbursements will be made to locals after the conference.

Pequot art teacher builds community, shares passion

When Molly Wiste talks through the creative process with her art students at Pequot Lakes High School, she knows what they are going through. That’s because not only is Wiste a teacher of art, she is an artist herself—and with a bit of a unique medium. “I got into chainsaw carving kind of by accident,” Wiste said. “I was buying wood from someone for another project and he offered to give me a lesson. I had only done oil paintings and small wood sculptures up until then.” But once Wiste tried it, she was hooked. And this January, she will be flying to Australia to compete with nine other carvers from around the world in the Chainsaw Carving Championship. “I had been in the U.S. Open in Wisconsin, got noticed and was invited to compete,” she said. Wiste brings her own experiences of creating art into her classroom, and she gets a lot from her students’ creations too. “I love being with students in the art room. I learn a lot about art from them,” she said. “I get a lot of joy from seeing what they create. I should tell them more that they fuel my creativity. Just today I was pumped up that I was brainstorming with students about their work and that made me think of something for my work.” She shows students her sketch books and talks

through frustrations, revisions and successes with them. “They respect me a lot more when I can show them what I’ve been working on. This stuff I’m making you do, I do it too,” she said. Wiste also brings her love of unique artist mediums into her classroom. “When I taught at the middle school-level, there weren’t a lot of boys taking art,” she said. “So I asked around and they said, ‘You’re just painting water lilies.’ So we started doing wood sculpting, wire carving, wood burning.” Wiste also does air brushing, clay and the more traditional mediums too. “I try to find a student’s interests and passions as a way to get them interested in art,” she said. “I really get to know students on an individual level. I love working in all of the mediums, but there are some days it would be easier to just do ceramics.” Her passion for art and connection to the process is what led Wiste into teaching. She credits her high school art teacher Ann Wistrill from Winona with encouraging her to go into the profession, as well as her dad, a speech and theater teacher. “I spent most of my time in the art room in high school, but I didn’t see it as a career choice,” she said. “(Wistrill) really encouraged me that I could have a career.” Wiste brings that same sense of encouragement into her classroom, even after



(Top row) Molly Wiste’s class has worked on community-building projects, like Patriot Rocks and tape murals. (Bottom row) In her spare time, Molly Wiste is an international chainsaw carving competitor.

11 years. “I let them know that they all are artists, they just don’t know what their medium is,” she said. Wiste also focuses on artist behaviors, which are part of national and local art standards. “One of the behaviors we look at is ‘artists help their communities,’” she said. “Students have to use their art to help or benefit the community, whether it’s our school, town or bigger. They have to get their art out of the classroom.” This year, Wiste gave students a few examples of other artists’ projects reflecting this behavior. “We found this thing that started in Port Angeles,

Washington, called ‘Port Angeles Rocks,’” she said. “They put hopeful messages on rocks and hid them around town. It got really big and the community started participating too.” A group of Wiste’s students decided to put their own spin on project and create “Patriot Rocks.” Students have been decorating rocks and hiding them around the school and out in the community. If you find a rock, you are supposed to hide it again for someone else to find. “The students were just interviewed by the local newspaper and encouraged the community to start taking part in the project too,” Wiste said. Another group of students

worked on tape murals around the school. “It’s not as permanent,” Wiste said. “So they will just be up for the year. They did it around the hallways to show off their art, but they also included inspirational quotes.” Wiste’s after-school art club is also looking at participating in a community-building project. “They are working on a proposal to the principal if they could glue giant pictures to the wall,” he said. “They decided that the elderly aren’t as respected as they should be in the community. Their pictures will be celebrating them.”

Lawsuit brings new focus to importance of due process

Recently, a district court judge dismissed the lawsuit intended to strip teachers of due process rights, eliminate teacher development and evaluation and create a system of discretionary power for district administrators and school boards. In dismissing all claims and all parties from the Forslund v. Minnesota lawsuit, the judge said the plaintiffs could not draw any connection between low academic achievement and Minnesota's due process laws.

The lawsuit was paid for by a group of nationally-affiliated education reform groups, including Students for Education Reform Minnesota (SFERMinn) and the Partnership for Education Justice, a group with primary funding from the Walton Family Foundation and billionaire Eli Broad. Forslund is just one of several lawsuits across the country brought to strip teacher rights and dismantle unions by asserting unsubstantiated connections between the due process laws and student achievement.

In 2004, Christine Ver Ploeg, professor of law at William Mitchell, conducted exhaustive analysis of Minnesota's arbitration and court decisions involving termination of tenured



Jess Anna Glover

teachers, as well as the history of the laws governing public teacher termination. She published her analysis in a law review article which was cited by the judge dismissing the Forslund lawsuit.

Recently, while part of a panel discussion at the School Law Conference in Minneapolis, Ver Ploeg reminded the audience of the history of the laws, not just the dates, but the motivations. There was a time when women were fired for being women or for becoming pregnant; when teachers of color were fired because of their race; and when teachers were fired because they stood up against the bullying of students seen as having an unpopular view held in a community. These

attitudes persist today.

Without these laws, teachers would again risk arbitrary and unfair termination decisions based on cronyism, nepotism, personal vendettas or because one teacher was more expensive than another.

Job security is essential for educators who are working to advance educational equity on behalf of students. If anyone believes that such days are behind us in Minnesota, consider the necessity of speech rights for teachers to speak out on behalf of students. Our state is not beyond issues of fairness and equality.

Job protections help attract educators to the profession. Like higher wages, job security and protections against arbitrary firings are terms and conditions of employment that attract good people into teaching and keep them there for a career. Due process and job protections are important for teachers who hold students to high standards, protect students from abuse, challenge their school district, teach controversial subjects and could be wrongly accused of misconduct.

Due process protections do not guarantee a result; they guarantee a process. Teachers can and are fired. Teachers

also regularly resign. Non-probationary teachers who face allegations that they should be terminated have a fair and equitable opportunity to respond to any charges against them and have their case decided by a neutral, mutually-selected decision maker. This is the same protection held by most public employees in Minnesota.

In addition, the state's layoff laws do not force school districts to layoff young teachers and retain less effective teachers. Layoff systems are locally bargained between administrators and teachers. They can be changed every two years.

Although it is incredibly hard to be a plaintiff in a lawsuit and to bring attention to important issues, like the persistent achievement gap in Minnesota and equity for students, the plaintiffs and their attorneys in Forslund were wrong in their choice of forum. This is a broader discussion that needs to include the voices of educators.

Regardless of whether the plaintiffs appeal the decision in Forslund, educators across the state will be talking about the shared values they have with parents, administrators, and communities—which is guided by and rooted in a

LEGAL BRIEFS

focus on students.

The future of that work will include increased educator and parent voice through comprehensive needs assessments required by some schools under Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal education law that replaced No Child Left Behind. The future of that work will include fighting for access to preschool so all students come to kindergarten ready. The future of that work will also include considering school climate issues; the capacity to provide trauma-influenced education environments and restorative practices; and the fight for funding resources all schools need, such as counselors.

Education Minnesota members do not stand in the way of addressing the achievement gap for students of color; they lead and fight for their students and schools. They believe that much needs to be done. Those are shared values.

♦ Jess Anna Glover

Glover is an Education Minnesota staff attorney.





Hurry, offer ends January 31, 2017!

Conveniently apply online at www.uecu.coop or visit a branch.

Apple Valley | Coon Rapids | Eden Prairie | Woodbury

**YEAR-END
AUTO LOAN
EVENT!**

**1%
CASH
BACK***

*Offer good through 1/31/2017 on new and used auto, snowmobile, boat, and recreational vehicles. May not be combined with any other offer. Minimum loan amount is \$10,000 and maximum cash back is \$300. Cash back will be paid at loan closing and if loan is paid off within three (3) months the cash back bonus must be repaid to UECU. Refinanced loans must be from another institution. All loans subject to approval. Federally Insured by NCUA.

Education Minnesota election material

FILING FORM FOR GOVERNING BOARD AT-LARGE

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:
OR
I, _____, wish to nominate _____,
for the following position:
_____ **Governing Board – Election Zone:** _____
(three-year term: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020)
All election zone positions to be filled: 1 through 8.
Election zone map located at www.educationminnesota.org.

Candidate Information

Mailing Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
Local: _____ School Phone: _____
Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
.....

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____
Membership was verified on _____ by _____

DEADLINE: 11:59 P.M. DEC. 9, 2016

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be received by Dec. 20, 2016.

FILING FORM FOR GOVERNING BOARD AT-LARGE VACANCY

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:
OR
I, _____, wish to nominate _____,
for the following position:
_____ **Governing Board At-Large**
(two positions to be filled; remainder of three-year term: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2019)

Candidate Information

Mailing Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
Local: _____ School Phone: _____
Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
.....

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____
Membership was verified on _____ by _____

DEADLINE: 11:59 P.M. DEC. 9, 2016

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be received by Dec. 20, 2016.

FILING FORM FOR GOVERNING BOARD ESP

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:
OR
I, _____, wish to nominate _____,
for the following position:
_____ **Governing Board ESP**
(two positions to be filled; three-year term: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020)

Candidate Information

Mailing Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
Local: _____ School Phone: _____
Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
.....

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____
Membership was verified on _____ by _____

DEADLINE: 11:59 P.M. DEC. 9, 2016

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be received by Dec. 20, 2016.

FILING FORM FOR GOVERNING BOARD HIGHER ED/STATEWIDE AFFILIATE

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:
OR
I, _____, wish to nominate _____,
for the following position:
_____ **Governing Board Higher Ed/Statewide Affiliate**
(one position to be filled; three-year term: July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2020)

Candidate Information

Mailing Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
Local: _____ School Phone: _____
Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Email: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
.....

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____
Membership was verified on _____ by _____

DEADLINE: 11:59 P.M. DEC. 9, 2016

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be received by Dec. 20, 2016.

What does being nationally board certified mean?

Many teachers may hear the words “National Board Certification” but don’t understand what it means, how to go about getting it or if they even want to pursue it.

National Board Certification is a voluntary, advanced teaching credential that goes beyond state licensure. NBC has national standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certifies teachers who successfully complete the process.

“What it means for teachers is that they have taken responsibility for their own professional development and have put their accomplishments to the test, literally,” said Kathryn Gardner, a high school teacher from Rochester and the Minnesota National Board Certified Teacher Network leader.

Board certification is available in 25 certificate areas, from pre-K through 12th grade, which include content areas like art, science and career and technical education, as well as generalists.

“Before you get started, look closely at what standards fit your skills and career the best,” said Lacey Smith, an elementary teacher in Cook County and member of the

Minnesota NBCT Network. “Read through all of the standards and rubrics to see what they are looking for. You can access everything you need online before you start the process.”

“It’s not difficult to get started,” said Gardner. “You register, pay and then choose which component(s) you want to work on. You can complete this over multiple years or all in one year.”

Certification consists of four components: assessment of content knowledge, reflection on student work samples, video and analysis of teaching practice and documentation of the impact of assessment and collaboration on student learning.

“It was a lot of work to write papers and analyze what you’re doing,” said Angela McCormack, a high school math teacher in Big Lake and member of the state network. “But a lot of it is what you are already doing. There’s a lot of self-reflection, looking at what is really helping students learn.”

The state of Minnesota recognizes National Board Certification in place of the 120 clock-hour requirement for five-year license renewal. In addition, some local unions have negotiated language in their contracts to support and/or reward National Board Certification.

Grants are also available for those looking to pursue certification. The Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has grants available each year with an application deadline in November.

“It’s a valid form of professional development,” said McCormack. “It’s more directly focused on your work in your classroom than a master’s program is.”

“We always want to know if what we’re doing is the right thing for our kids,” said Smith. “It absolutely changed me as a teacher.”

Smith, Gardner and McCormack agree that receiving the certification takes a lot of work, but that is why the Minnesota network was created. It serves as a support system for people working toward certification, as well a networking opportunity for those who have already received it.

“There are moments when you think you can’t do it. You have to take a step back and look at a specific question and work forward from there,” said Smith. “You have to rely on your peers, talk through the process and have your peers read your work.”

“It’s hard. You’re talking about yourself, your practice, your students and how it all comes together. It’s not

NATIONAL BOARD

Network™

Minnesota National Board Certified Teacher Network

Find an informational tool kit, video and information on support sessions at www.educationminnesota.org/resources.aspx#national-board-certification.

something you’re reading out of a book or taking from somewhere else.”

The network hosts free support sessions once a month on Saturdays in Mounds View, where members will read through papers or just be there to talk.

“We have created a slide presentation and other materials that any NBCT can use to promote the program at the local level and at regional and state meetings. This includes print materials, a video and a number of resources on the Education Minnesota website,” said Gardner.

Over the years, about 500 Minnesota teachers have been certified and Gardner said she would like to see the

number grow.

“If you are interested, the best thing you can do is talk to a NBCT and hear from them why the process is worth it,” she said. “You can attend support sessions or contact NBCTs directly to hear from them. There may not ever be the exact right time to start this process, so it might as well be now.”

“As long as you have been teaching three years, it’s never too late or early to seek National Board Certification,” said Smith.

“I would consider it especially if you already have your master’s,” said McCormack. “It’s the next step in professional development. You get to examine your own teaching.”

FILING FORM FOR NEA DIRECTOR

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, wish to file for the following position:

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____, for the following position:

____ NEA Director
Candidate Information

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/ZIP: _____

Local: _____ School Phone: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(For official use only)

This filing form was received on _____ by _____

Membership was verified on _____ by _____

DEADLINE: 11:59 P.M. DEC. 9, 2016

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election in April and in a Voter Guide distributed at the Representative Convention. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in these publications and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be received by Dec. 20, 2016.



Stay informed on what is going on at the Capitol and how to get involved at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy.aspx#at-the-legislature.

Election from page 1

Lyndon Carlson, Linda Slocum, JoAnn Ward and Jim Davnie all won state House seats.

Many school districts passed operating levies and bond referendums, and many locally endorsed school board candidates won their races.

In the state Legislature, Republicans strengthened their control of the House and narrowly took control of the Minnesota Senate, holding a one-seat majority.

The last time the Legislature looked like this, we had a government shutdown in 2011.

With a budget bill looming and partisanship between the governor and Legislature, Education Minnesota expects the 2017 legislative session to be contentious.

Education Minnesota is currently forming its legislative agenda and will be looking for members to be active in the upcoming session.

To stay updated and to find out how to get involved, go to www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy.aspx#at-the-legislature.

Rural educator award program

The Minnesota Rural Education Association has created an Educators of Excellence award program to recognize the work of its members in 220 school districts in greater Minnesota.

“The idea for the program was prompted by many comments from educators in greater Minnesota about avenues for elevating the state of teachers outside the metro,” said Lee Carlson, a teacher in St. James, who serves on the MREA board and Education Minnesota Governing Board.

Four awards will be given each year, one to each of MREA’s membership zones—north, south, north central and south central.

The first four honorees were selected earlier this year and honored at a banquet in mid-November.

Brenda Whitehead, math teacher at Murray County Central High School, appreciated the opportunity to reflect on her work.

“It made me take the time to stop and think about why I am an educator,” she said. “I hope this helps all those in education to remember the reason we are in the profession—the students.”

Chris Dobis, a third-grade reading teacher at



Jamie Madson, Brenda Whitehead, Chris Dobis and Jackie Chwialkowski were honored at an MREA banquet Nov. 14.

Pioneer Elementary in Pierz, said the award is more about his students than his achievements.

“My hope is that this award helps create a learning environment for students throughout their schools, districts and communities,” he said. “Students should always be the driving force in education.”

Jackie Chwialkowski, a third-grade teacher at Stephen-Argyle Central Schools, said most teachers don’t take credit for the achievements of their students and schools, so being honored is very humbling.

“I hope this award will bring awareness to other teachers within our surrounding districts that all of us are important,” she said. “We need to help each

other, inspire each other and lift each other up with new techniques, ideas and methods. Every teacher has special gifts, talents and strengths, which make him or her a crucial part of any school district.”

Jamie Madson, a Project Lead the Way teacher and curriculum integration specialist at Rockford Middle School, said he hopes this award will reinforce the idea that diversity in the subjects and opportunities teachers bring to their students can help them be educated as a whole student.

“This award validates that our work is making a difference in student’s lives,” he said. “We are blessed with dedicated teachers who truly understand the needs of middle-level learners.”

ADDITIONAL MEMBER HONOR ROLL

Ron Hustvedt Jr., a social studies teacher at Salk Middle School in Elk River, was named the National Council for the Social Studies Middle School Teacher of the Year. Hustvedt will receive his award at the President’s Breakfast during the national conference in Washington, D.C., this month. Hustvedt has also been named the 2015 Minnesota Council of Social Studies Middle School Teacher of the Year, the 2014 National Magnet School Teacher of the Year and was a 2013 Minnesota Teacher of the Year finalist.

Bryana Cook, a school social worker with Walker-Hackensack-Akeley schools, is the 2016 Minnesota School Social Worker of the Year. During her tenure at Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School District, she has been instrumental in launching the district’s Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) Program, according to the press release announcing her recognition.

Josh Leonard from St. Paul and **Anna Dutke** from Prior Lake-Savage were named the 2016 Educators of the Year by the Minnesota Association for Environmental Education. According to the organization’s website, Leonard was chosen because he has worked to provide students will quality environmental education and teachers with professional development to help them strengthen their environmental education instruction. Dutke was selected because she has developed a completely nature-based outdoor curriculum and outdoor classroom for our preschoolers and has mentored teachers new to the program.

The Minnesota Council on Economic Education honored six educators through their 3M- and Thrivent Financial-sponsored awards. The following educators were honored:

- 3M Economic Educator of the Year Award: **Kellie Friend**, Mounds View
- 3M Rising Star in Economics Award: **Kristina Nelson**, Byron
- 3M Innovative Economic Educator Award: **See Vang**, St. Paul
- Thrivent Financial Personal Finance Leadership Award: **James Redelsheimer**, Robbinsdale
- Thrivent Financial Personal Finance Educator Awards: **Paul Nelson**, St. Paul, and **Lisa Wiener**, New Prague

TEAM UP WITH CALIFORNIA CASUALTY

Give your athletes a sporting chance with a Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant. Apply to receive **\$1,000 to \$3,000** for your middle or high school’s team.

The California Casualty Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant was established to provide support to public middle and high school sports programs impacted by reduced budgets.

As an employee of the school and a member of the National Education Association (NEA), you can apply for a grant award for your school’s sports program.

Applications received through January 13, 2017 will qualify for 2017 consideration. Recipients will be announced in April 2017.

To apply for a grant, go to:
CalCasAthleticsGrant.com

Grants not available in AK, HI, MA, MI, NY and WA. Please visit CalCasAthleticsGrant.com for full program rules.
©2015 California Casualty CA Lic: 0041343 AH261216



California Casualty

Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant



NEA's Auto and Home Insurance Program

nea Member Benefits

In partnership with

California Casualty

FILING FORM FOR
NEA RA STATE-CREDENTIALLED DELEGATE

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I, _____, hereby submit my name for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held June 30-July 5, 2017, in Boston, MA.

OR

I, _____, wish to nominate _____, for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held June 30-July 5, 2017, in Boston, MA.

I further certify that the nominee is eligible for state credentials as a delegate from:

Active Member _____ Election District _____
(K-12; statewide affiliates; and school related personnel)

Category 2 _____
(inactive NEA life member and not an Education Minnesota Retired member)

Please complete the following information:

Name: _____
Local: _____
Home Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
Home/Cell Phone: _____
School Phone: _____
School Email: _____
Personal Email: _____

(Optional information for internal use)

American Indian/Alaskan Native _____ Caucasian (not Spanish origin) _____
Black _____ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander _____
Hispanic _____ Other _____
Asian _____

First Time Delegate? Yes _____ No _____
PreK-12 _____ Higher Ed _____ ESP _____

DEADLINE: DEC. 9, 2016 (11:59 P.M.)

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Education Minnesota includes an insert of all candidates for each election district in the Minnesota Educator published prior to the election. Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion in this publication and on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Dec. 20, 2016.

FILING FORM FOR
NEA RA STATE-CREDENTIALLED DELEGATE-STUDENT

This form must be filed with the Office of the Elections Committee of Education Minnesota.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

I hereby submit my name as a candidate for state credentials to the NEA RA to be held June 30-July 5, 2017, in Boston, MA. I further certify that I am eligible for state credentials as a delegate from:

Student _____
(must be an Education Minnesota Student Program member)

Please complete the following information:

Name: _____
College: _____
School Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____
School Phone: _____
Home/Cell Phone: _____
School Email: _____
Personal Email: _____
Summer Address: _____
City/State/ZIP: _____

(Optional information for internal use)

American Indian/Alaskan Native _____ Caucasian (not Spanish origin) _____
Black _____ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander _____
Hispanic _____ Other _____
Asian _____

First Time Delegate? Yes _____ No _____

DEADLINE: FEB. 15, 2017 (11:59 P.M.)

Return completed form by fax to: 651-767-1266, or mail to: Office of the Elections Committee, Education Minnesota, 41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103, or scan and email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within seven days after submitting, inquire by email to elections.committee@edmn.org.

Note: Candidates may submit a photo and statement for inclusion on the Education Minnesota website. The photo and statement must be submitted using the online submission form at www.educationminnesota.org. Statement and photo must be submitted by Mar. 3, 2017.

Delegate selection
for 2017 NEA RA

The National Education Association Representative Assembly, the major decision-making body for the NEA, will take place June 30-July 5 in Boston.

“Delegates bring their voices to the representative assembly and shape the actions and policies of the NEA,” Education Minnesota President Denise Specht said.

“The convention celebrates excellence in our profession and provides an opportunity to connect with educators from across the country.”

All active Education Minnesota members are eligible to run to be a state-credentialed delegate for the NEA RA. Filings open Nov. 7 and close Dec. 9.

Elections will take place in local districts during the 15-day window beginning Feb. 6 and ending Feb. 24. Elections will be held on weekdays only during this period.

Ballots will be mailed the last week of January to all local presidents in districts where an election is necessary.

Nominations for state-credentialed student delegates open Nov. 3 and close Feb. 15. Elections will take place on a date to be determined in April, if necessary.

Funding information for
state-credentialed delegates

To receive funding, state-credentialed delegates must be in attendance for the entire Representative Assembly, beginning with the first caucus meeting on June 30 through adjournment the night of July 5. State-credentialed

delegates are expected to attend all caucus meetings and to be on the convention floor for all proceedings.

Funding includes: Airfare—travel arrangements to be made through the designated travel agent and direct-billed to Education Minnesota (alternative transportation will be reimbursed up to a predetermined amount); the cost of a double-occupancy room at the delegation hotel (to be direct-billed) for an authorized number of nights; and reimbursement for meals and other convention-related expenses up to \$560 (with original itemized receipts). Substitute costs for state delegates working in year-round school settings will be covered as outlined in the Education Minnesota Financial Policy for Governance and Members.

Mileage to and from the airport is reimbursable at 20 cents a mile, along with the cost of airport parking.

No funding is available for Category 2 delegates, those who are retired or inactive members.

Filing forms for state-credentialed and student delegates are printed on this page.

Funding for small locals

This is a funding program designed to help send a delegate from locals with 150 or fewer members to the NEA Representative Assembly or the American Federation of Teachers TEACH Conference. Local presidents will receive information and details about how to apply.

Two TRA seats
up for election

The Teachers Retirement Association Board of Trustees is seeking candidates to fill two active-member seats on the board.

The terms of Rob Gardner, high school English teacher on leave in the Edina school district and current field manager with Education Minnesota, and Mary Supple, a sixth-grade math teacher at Richfield Middle School, expire June 30, 2017. There are no term limits for board members. The new four-year terms for these positions will begin July 1.

Trustees meet about seven times a year to oversee the administration of the pension fund. Special meetings might be held at the call of the board president or of any three members. Board members act as fiduciaries of the TRA plan in accordance with Minnesota statute and are also subject to state economic

interest disclosures.

To request an election application, call TRA at 651-296-2409 or 800-657-3669. The application is also available at www.minnesotatra.org. Applications must be received at TRA by Dec. 23.

Education Minnesota members who want to screen for the union’s endorsement can contact Jodee Buhr at jodee.buhr@edmn.org or 651-292-4830.

In February, eligible active members will receive election information, including a biographical overview of each candidate. Only active members are eligible to vote for active-member board positions. Election results will be reviewed and certified by the TRA Board of Trustees on April 12 and published immediately thereafter on www.minnesotatra.org.

Podcast breaks down teacher portrayals in movies

Teachers, school staff and higher education faculty are often depicted in movies, but are the portrayals accurate?

Jake Scott, a fifth-grade teacher at Anishinabe Academy in Minneapolis, and Kathryn Oberg, a fifth-grade teacher at Peter Hobart Elementary in St. Louis Park, decided to find out and then share it with the world.

The two educators have created the podcast “Teacher Features,” which is available to download on NoisePicnic.com and iTunes.

“I started working at my school, which is a high-poverty school, and someone asked me if it was like ‘Dangerous Minds,’” Scott said. “I hadn’t ever seen it, so I watched it and had a lot of ideas what was right and wrong.”

Scott is a podcast fan and was considering doing one when this idea came about. He wanted someone to join him and thought of Oberg, whom he had worked with at Otsego Elementary in the Elk River district.

The two watch movies featuring teachers separately, then come together in Scott’s makeshift recording studio, otherwise known as his laundry room.

“We watch them separately and take notes, then come together,” Scott said.

They talk about the plot first, then go into what the character did well as a teacher. After that they dive into what they didn’t do well and how they could do better. They ask, “What could we apply into our classrooms?” and talk about what works and doesn’t in their classrooms already.

“Usually we can find one thing they do right,” Scott said. “Except in ‘Bad Teacher’ with Cameron Diaz. It’s a terrible depiction of teachers and just a bad movie.”

The podcasts are released every other Tuesday, and they are trying to alternate between comedies and dramas. Scott edits the content and a local podcast network, NoisePicnic, hosts the episodes and gets them uploaded to iTunes.

They have released episodes on “Kindergarten Cop,” “Freedom Writers,” “Mean Girls,” “School of Rock” and “Mona Lisa Smile.”

“When we watched ‘Freedom Writers,’ it was hard because they depict her as flawless,” said Oberg. “We asked ‘Do we meet that standard?’ and ‘Is that realistic?’”

When watching “Kindergarten Cop,” they did find the main character doing a few good things.

“He did provide some good things for kinesthetic learners,” Oberg said. “They were exhibiting proper behavior for kindergarteners.”

Oberg said she still wouldn’t have let Arnold Schwarzenegger’s character teach her children. Scott said he maybe would.

Watching some older movies has been a look into what has changed in education over the years.

“When we did ‘Freedom Writers,’ we talked about the portrayal of a white teacher coming to help a diverse student population, which is something talked about now,” said Oberg.

“In ‘Kindergarten Cop,’ there is a school shooting, but no one really flinches,” said Scott. “It’s a different world than today when we practice lockdowns.”

And in “Mona Lisa Smile,” the amount the professor gets involved with her students’ lives and shares her own personal opinions with them was a discussion point.

Scott and Oberg hope that other educators will join in on their conversations and add their thoughts.

“We hope that this can provide a space for teachers to talk about what’s going on in their classroom,” said Oberg.



Teachers Jake Scott and Kathryn Oberg have created a podcast reviewing teacher roles in movies called “Teacher Features.”

Listen to all of the Teacher Features podcasts at <http://noisepicnic.com/category/our-lovely-podcasts/teacherfeatures>, www.stitcher.com/podcast/teacher-features or by searching for Teacher Features on iTunes.

Find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/teacherfeatures and on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/podcastplc>

They hope to have guests come on the podcast, as well as have a conversation on the podcast’s social media platforms after each episode. “We would love if people would listen to it and then bring in their different perspectives,” said Scott. “We’re both elementary teachers, so we’d love to hear from high school, middle school, ECFE.”

They would also like to hear suggestions for other movies to review. They hope to release episodes throughout the school year and take a break during the

summer.

While some of the movies and content they are discussing is labeled as comedy, Oberg and Scott are taking this seriously. “We’re not trying to be a comedy podcast. We want to be a legitimate educator voice,” said Scott.

“There are so many podcasts that are movie reviews, but there are not many education podcasts. Because most people know these movies, it’s accessible and it talks about education in a real way.”



NEA members are entitled to **Complimentary life insurance.** Have you named your beneficiary?



If you’re an eligible NEA member,* you’re covered. You have NEA Complimentary Life Insurance issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America (Prudential). It’s active right now and you don’t have to take a nickel out of your pocket to keep it active.

But you will want to take a minute or so to name your beneficiary. Or reconfirm the choice you already made. Making your choice can speed up benefit payments to loved ones who need them.

*Visit us online or call for eligibility requirements.
NEA Members Insurance Trust is a registered trademark of the NEA Members Insurance Trust.
NEA Complimentary Life Insurance coverage is issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ.

0289584-00001-00

Don’t wait!
Name your beneficiary today and get this **FREE** tote bag from NEA Members Insurance Trust.

Go to neamb.com/free-tote or call 1-855-NEA-LIFE and mention offer

code: TOTEBAG

DT261216

Panel weighs in on achievement gap struggles, successes

The Minnesota Achievement Gap Committee invited former Minnesota Teachers of the Year to speak on a panel about what is working in schools and what needs improvement, in order to close the achievement gap.

The featured speakers were 2012 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Katy Smith, an early-childhood family education teacher from Winona; 2015 Teacher of the Year Amy Hewett-Olatunde, an English language learner teacher from St. Paul; and 2016 Teacher of the Year finalist Koua Yang, a social studies teacher from St. Paul.

All of the panelists spoke about building relationships with students, families and communities as vitally important to closing the achievement gap.

Yang spoke of his own experience as an immigrant student going to school.

“When people mention the achievement gap, we usually think about it being ‘other people,’” he said. “I am one of the others. I am the achievement gap.”

“People ask me, ‘How did you overcome it,’ and I say ‘I didn’t. I’m still catching up.’”

Yang said the constant catching up those labeled as low-performing students have to do is the biggest reason for more focus on

catching them early.

Smith, as an early childhood and parent educator, couldn’t agree more.

“The earlier we can get a family into a school, hopefully from birth, the better,” she said. “The number of words a child hears in their first five years, especially the first year, will predict their reading level in third grade.”

Smith also cautioned that focusing on achievements early in school might frustrate some kids.

“When a 5-year-old thinks they are unsuccessful, you are doing something wrong,” she said. “Our youngest learners’ achievements should be based on their own milestones.”

Hewett-Olatunde works at a school with all immigrant students, so closing gaps is at the heart of what she does every day. She is quick to say there are multiple gaps happening in our schools.

“The achievement gap is the last piece. That’s test scores,” she said. “We also have an opportunity gap in Minnesota that doesn’t allow people to have the same chances. You can’t just go buy a textbook on lessons that are best for Karen students.”

“It’s not just about minority kids,” said Yang. “It’s about poor white kids too.”

All three panel members also said a big piece of the

change needs to happen with educators, because they are the ones already making the difference but have more room to grow.

“We need to make sure we have culturally relevant pedagogy,” said Hewett-Olatunde. “We as educators need to be uncomfortable so our kids are comfortable.”

“We need more teachers to be aware of the cultural and socioeconomic issues out there,” Yang said. “If kids can have someone guide them that has been there and looks like them, it’s huge. I am an ELL kid and I am an exception because I had great teachers and a mom who knew how important education was.”

“I don’t know if there is ever enough preparation a teacher can have coming into the classroom for the first time,” Smith said. “We need to invest more in mentorship. If half our teachers are leaving in the first five years, we need to do better.”

The panelists were asked about their thoughts on the different ways of funding preschool, including scholarship for low-income families or statewide all-day pre-K.

Smith said that anytime we spend more money it’s good, but she isn’t sure on which might be the best course of



Katy Smith, Koua Yang and Amy Hewett-Olatunde speak to the Minnesota Achievement Gap Committee forum about what they see as successes and struggles in Minnesota schools.

action yet.

“I would like to see things pulled under the umbrella of public schools, because of benefits like professional development opportunities for staff,” she said. “But I think it can look different in each community.”

Yang said he did his master’s degree thesis on parent involvement and he found that a lot of communities don’t know what ECFE is or what it offers.

“That is the essence of the opportunity gap,” he said.

The group was also asked their feelings on the current trend to eliminate homework.

“It’s definitely time to rethink homework in our

very frantic and hurried world,” said Smith. “I think it gives families some of the balance they are needing.”

“I have students who are working, going to school and helping take care of their younger siblings because their parents are working,” Yang said. “These are the daily lives of a lot of students.”

When it comes to a student struggling with the achievement gap, there will always be a what’s next, said Yang.

“There’s not just a finish line at the end of college,” he said. “These students are climbing a mountain, not a hill.”

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

Shopping with PayCheck Direct

BEST. HOLIDAY. EVER!

- Pay no interest • No credit checks
- Low, convenient payments over 12 months
- Thousands of name-brand products

For all your holiday shopping

mypaycheckdirect.com/edmn

*The price per payment shown is based on 26 payments and doesn't include shipping and taxes. Your payment may vary based on the number of payments you make a year. To see your payment amount, visit your website or see details on your installment agreement generated during the checkout process. PayCheck Direct® is operated by Bluestem Enterprises, Inc.

26 payments of \$12.69*

26 payments of \$26.92*

LG

EDUCATION MINNESOTA

ESI Member Benefits

Powered by PAYCHECK DIRECT

61914

41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 651-292-4856 800-642-4624 esi.educationminnesota.org esi@edmn.org

Paid for by ESI, not by dues. ESI is self-supporting; revenues provide benefits, service and consumer education for members. What do YOU want to know? Send questions to esi@edmn.org.

ESI

EDUCATION MINNESOTA OPPORTUNITIES

Lesson plan jam, equity ed camp among new professional development opportunities

Education Minnesota will host two new professional development sessions at the beginning of next year—a lesson plan jam and an EdCamp focused on equity in education.

Lesson Plan Jam: Developing Curriculum for Equity and Engagement will be an event where teachers will have an opportunity to choose how to engage with their colleagues throughout the day—by grade level, content areas or across grade and content areas.

The event will take place Saturday, Jan. 7 at a school in the Twin Cities metro area. The event location and time will be shared on Education Minnesota’s website as soon as it has been confirmed.

All E-12 teachers are invited to gather together to share curriculum, instructional strategies and tools for student engagement with an equity frame. Teachers will be able to share ideas, materials and strategies with colleagues from across the metro area.

EdCamp Equity Minnesota will take place Saturday, Feb. 11 at a location to be determined. The event location and time will be shared on Education Minnesota’s website as soon as it has been confirmed.

EdCamps are organic, participant-driven professional development experiences, sometimes referred to as

“unconferences.” Organizers set the schedule for the day, but all sessions are determined by participants on the day of the event. Everyone is welcome to propose and lead a session where conversation and collaboration are paramount.

Both events will be free and open to the public and are a part of Education Minnesota’s Minnesota Educator Academy (MEA) offerings.

More information on the events and registration will be available at www.educationminnesota.org as soon as they are available.

ABOUT THIS PAGE

The Minnesota Educator provides opportunities listings on this page as a member service, highlighting the free and low-cost professional development the union provides. The page also lists conferences, training and resources of possible interest. Readers interested in pursuing an opportunity should check it out carefully. The Educator tries to include only legitimate, useful opportunities that support education practice.

To submit an opportunity:

- Send a complete description of your opportunity to educator@edmn.org.
- Send your item by the first Friday of the month to be considered for the next month’s Opportunities page. Include daytime contact information.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Southwest Minnesota ‘Grow Our Own’ summit

The Southwest Initiative Foundation is hosting the Grow Our Own Summit at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall Dec. 15. Harvard professor Robert Putnam will speak about growing inequality in America. Other discussions will focus on the opportunity gap in southwest Minnesota and how best to support local students from cradle to career. Register by Nov. 15 and receive a free copy of Putnam’s book “Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis.” Seating is limited. The \$20 cost includes lunch and refreshments.

For more information or to register, go to <https://swifoundation.org/summit>.

Workshop focuses on poverty support

Approximately 32 percent of Minnesota children live in poverty. Learn how to better meet the needs of those students, develop positive relationships with their families and more in a one-day workshop sponsored by the CLASSroom Project Jan. 27 at the University of Minnesota. “The Other Side of Poverty in Schools” runs from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Room 325 of the Education Sciences Building. Registration costs \$125. CEUs available. Coffee and continental breakfast provided.

For more information or to register, go to www.eventbrite.com/o/the-classroom-project-college-of-education-and-human-development-4203273385.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Mill City Museum field trip scholarships available

The Mill City Museum offers a wide range of educational opportunities for Minnesota’s K-12 students. Thanks to the gracious support of the McKnight Foundation, with additional support from the Cowles Fund, Mill City Museum is able to offer free museum admission and partially subsidized busing for students from qualified public schools. To qualify, schools must be from the Twin Cities metro area, have 50 percent or more of students enrolled in the federal free or reduced lunch program and visit the museum in January, February or March.

For more information visit <http://millcitymuseum.org/mill-city-mcknight-foundation-scholarship>. Call 612-341-7556 or email mcmschedulingoffice@mnhs.org for details or to register.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

United Educators Foundation grants available for professional development, student opportunities

The United Educators Foundation is now accepting applications for its annual educator, education major, trade/technical/vocation student and high school student awards.

Educator award: One \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded to a United Educators Credit Union member for the purpose of professional development in the education field. Applicants must have worked a minimum of six months in the field, and must plan to attend an accredited institution within one year of receiving the award.

Education major award: One \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded to a student majoring in education and entering their junior or senior year in the fall of 2017. Applicants must be attending an accredited college or university in the state of Minnesota or be a United Educators Credit Union member or the child or grandchild of a member. This award is available to non-UECU members.

Trade/technical/vocation student awards: Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded for students attending a trade, technical or vocational school. You must be a member of United Educators Credit Union, or the child, grandchild or dependent of a member to be eligible for the award. You must be planning to attend a trade, technical or vocational college in the fall of 2017.

Student awards: The foundation provides three \$1,000 college scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are United Educators Credit Union members or the children, grandchildren or other dependents of members. Applicants must be planning to attend a university, college, community college or technical college in the fall of 2017.

Applications are available on United Educators Credit Union’s website at www.uecu.coop/scholarship, and are due Feb. 3.

Bruce Vento Science Educator grant deadline approaching

The Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Bruce Vento Science Educator Professional Development grant supports educators who teach science as part of their day and want to acquire and share new skills and knowledge. The grant is a gift from The Bruce F. Vento Science Educator Scholarship Fund. Bruce’s wife Sue wanted her husband’s memory and legacy as a science educator to be passed on to others throughout the state. The gift will be \$5,000 a year, for five years. Educators may request up to \$1,500. Bruce Vento Science Educator Professional Development Grants will be awarded once per school year. The application deadline is Dec. 9.

For more information on the grant or how to apply, go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources/grants/foundation.

Minnesota State Arts Board grants

Minnesota State Arts Board’s Arts Learning grant program offers schools between \$5,000 and \$150,000 in funding to support arts learning experiences for their students. Projects must provide participatory learning and engage learners with skilled teaching artists and high-quality artistic experiences. Last year, 57 Arts Learning grants were awarded, totaling nearly \$3 million. The grant deadline for the next round is Feb. 24. Proposed projects must take place between Sept. 1, 2017, and Aug. 31, 2018.

Those considering a first-time application are encouraged to review the program’s eligibility

requirements and to speak with program officer Natalie Kennedy-Schuck prior to beginning an application. She can be reached at 651-215-1617, toll-free at 800-866-2787, or via email at natalie.kennedy@arts.state.mn.us.

For more information or to apply, go to www.arts.state.mn.us/grants.

Classroom project grant deadline approaching

The Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning classroom project grants are intended for licensed personnel who work with students and wish to improve their practice and student achievement. Applicants may request up to \$3,000 for a project you design now and implement in the 2016-17 school year. The application deadline is Dec. 9.

For more information on the grant or how to apply, go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources/grants/foundation.

NEA Foundation grants available

The NEA Foundation has two categories of grants available for it members. Both application deadlines are Feb. 1. The leadership and learning grant is for teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty who are interested in taking part in professional development experiences or to fund collegial study. The student achievement grant is to help educators improve the academic achievement of students in public schools or public higher education institutions.

For more information or to apply, go to www.neafoundation.org/pages/grants-to-educators.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Colorín Colorado provides resources for ELL students, families, educators

Colorín Colorado is a national website serving educators and families of English language learners in grades pre-K-12. Colorín Colorado provides free research-based information, activities and advice to parents, schools and communities. The site features booklists, program planning, college readiness plans, tips for parent-teacher conferences and resources by grade level and state standards.

For more information or to view all of the offerings, go to www.colorincolorado.org.

iCivics features government, democracy resources

The website, www.iCivics.org, features lesson plans, digital tools and interactive games designed to help students learn how government works. Also included are teacher guides with pre- and post-discussion questions, and activities for students. Through the games, the players step into any role—a judge, a member of Congress, a community activist fighting for local change, even the president of the United States—and do the job.

Teacher Tube houses videos on variety of subjects

The website www.teachertube.com allows educators access to videos on a variety of classroom subjects, as well upload videos and PowerPoint lessons themselves. Video categories include math, career and technical education, middle school, physical education and reading. The site also includes audio files, images, groups, documents, playlists and on-demand access to other similar sites. Educators are encouraged to create an account not only to upload educationally relevant videos, but also to make constructive comments and use the rating system to show appreciation for videos of value to one as an educator or learner.