



MINNESOTA EDUCATOR

A publication for the members of Education Minnesota

February 2017



Education Minnesota

COLLECTIVE POWER

The 2017 Collective Bargaining and Organizing Conference not only served as a kickoff to the next round of bargaining for teacher and ESP contracts, but set the stage for the potential fights labor unions will face in a new political landscape. Read more about the conference on page 3.

Club brings technology into students' homes

When the Community School of Excellence started a one-to-one laptop program with its students in 2011, teachers started to realize that their school had a digital divide.

The K-8 Hmong language and culture IB World charter school located in St. Paul serves Southeast Asian refugee students, many of whom have never been properly trained on how to use computers.

"Kids would forget their computers at home or not charge them," said Stu Keroff, the school's technology coordinator. "I still wanted to get them integrated with

technology, so I got a grant from a nonprofit and bought some desktop computers."

Keroff's classroom then became a spot for students to hang out and play around on the computers. He saw their interest growing and decided to start a club.

"I started by teaching them coding," said Keroff. "Then we added projects from there."

The CSE Asian Penguins club was born. The name comes from the logo of the operating system they use on their computers, as well as the majority of their students coming from Asia.

The group learned to use

the Linux operating system and other free/open source software to recycle used computers for their school and for needy families in their community.

The school receives donated computers or fundraises to purchase some, fixes them up if necessary, installs the Linux operating system and then brings it to a family of one of the school's students for use in their home. The club members help set up the computer, as well as teach the family how to use it.

"The first family we went to had eight people living in a two-bedroom apartment," Keroff said. "They had only

been in the country a couple of months and gotten their kids enrolled at CSE. They wouldn't have had access to a home computer for a long time without us."

Keroff and the club's other adviser, Luke Burris, a social studies teacher, work with other educators on a family referral list at the beginning of each year.

"It has always been our goal to do one more than the year before," Keroff said. "The first year, we did seven computers. The next year, we did 11. The next year, we did 12 that we donated here and sent four to our sister school in Thailand. Last year, we did

46 and this year we're aiming for 50."

The Penguin's "missions" are the favorite part of many of the club members. The advisers make sure each club member goes on at least one mission a year. Students serve as translators during the missions as well.

"There's a lot of gratitude from the families, especially those that haven't been in the country long," said Keroff. "It's a good working computer and we give it a warranty. They can contact us for a year."

The donations have grown

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Read President Denise Specht's column and the article about the bargaining and organizing conference. Then answer the question, "What is one thing you would like to see bargained into your next contract to better support students?" 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, **Melissa Williams** of Richfield. See a selection of answers to last month's question on page 2.

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Make this next bargained contract your masterpiece

Ten years ago, I was the president of the Centennial Education Association and I remember going into that round of bargaining with my negotiations team incredibly nervous about how it would turn out.

Would we be able to repay the trust our colleagues put in us? We knew our goals, but I'd be telling one of those "alternative facts" if I said I knew in January exactly how to get there.

And I was negotiating contracts back in the good old days. I can only how much anxiety is being felt among Education Minnesota members going into this round of bargaining.

The November elections created a more difficult environment for organized labor. We're expecting new attacks from Congress and President Trump's Supreme Court on our freedom to come together in union, speak out about schools and negotiate collectively.

We expect those assaults to mirror what our colleagues have seen when their state governments were taken over by anti-union politicians, including limiting how and when they could communicate, forcing annual recertification votes, revoking



Denise Specht, president

due process protections and mandating unions pay the expense of bargaining for members who don't pay dues.

It's all part of the plan to transform educating students from a career to a job—preferably a job performed by young people who work cheap, stay quiet and leave before having children of their own. That's the workforce Wall Street wants for the for-profit schools favored by Betsy DeVos, Trump's pick for education secretary.

Minnesota, it's our turn for the hard times.

The uncertain but ominous future means 2017 contracts will look different than

previous years. You will hear from your field staff members about bargaining for language that locks in certain rights many of us have taken for granted for decades.

But before we all give in to despair, or least excessive carbs, there are five good reasons Education Minnesota will pass through this crucible intact.

First, we have the right people for the job. Educators know how to get things done, even when any sane person would say there's not enough time, energy or resources to possibly succeed.

Second, the members of Education Minnesota's bargaining teams are well qualified to lead and negotiate in the years ahead. They are smart, dedicated, often experienced and have just right amount of grit. If they didn't, their colleagues would not have given them the job.

Third, the staff at Education Minnesota are very good at their jobs. They present the work we're doing in Minnesota at conferences all over the country. I receive compliments about them wherever I go, and so does Vice President Paul Mueller and Secretary-Treasurer

Rodney Rowe. They will have your back.

Fourth, you are part of Education Minnesota. We're the union of 86,000 educators, from pre-service teachers to retirees and in every community in the state, and every one of us is looking out for the rest.

Fifth, our work is about doing the right things for our students and our state. The 800,000 children in Minnesota public schools depend on us to prepare them for the next stage of their lives, regardless of where they live, the color of their skin or the challenges they face at home. When we join together, we are the best champions for our students. We won't let them down.

This is the time for each team of educator-negotiators to bargain their masterpiece because we must treat this round of negotiations as if it could be our last. The worst-case scenarios really are that bad.

It is time to write contracts we will admire for years to come, contracts in which each of our members sees something of themselves. Let's ensure parents know we've transformed their wants into policies and let's use this round to make sure

the class of 2020 doesn't have the same unmet needs as the class of 2017.

The road ahead for Education Minnesota will not be easy, but we will hold firm to our belief in the central role of public schools in Minnesota's political and economic future.

We must fulfill our responsibility to make a high-quality education widely accessible so students can go as far in life as their hard work takes them. And we must continue to resist any obstacles standing in the way of those students, including racism and poverty.

Those are lofty goals and our opponents and critics are stronger now than they've been in many years, but I still believe public schools can be a gateway to a good life for our students, and for the people who teach them. But we can only go forward if we work...

Together,

Twitter: @DeniseSpecht

What issue could Minnesota tackle at the Legislature this year that would help you most in your classroom or the profession?

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. 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!

"The most pressing issue is special education staffing/funding/training and placement for our most needy students."
Angela Oleszko, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers

"Funding of facility upgrades" *Philip Barker, Minnesota State College Faculty, Normandale Community College*

"I think the pension issue is critical. There are movements across the nation to do away with pensions. The Legislature needs to take a stand and insure active teachers that there will still be a 'defined benefit plan' in place for the future. A modest increase to the pensions should be given each year—1-1.5 percent until the funds are stable. *Marianne Olson, Education Minnesota Retired*

"I believe the number one issue is funding, because this impacts so many other issues such as attracting and retaining highly qualified staff, reducing class sizes and increasing supports and options for students."
Melissa Williams, Education Richfield

"Thanks to TRA, I am enjoying a comfortable retirement, and I would like my active colleagues to have the same when they decide to quit teaching. In the coming legislative session, we should make sure that the proposed pension reforms become law, ensuring the fund's health for decades to come."
Mark Brandt, Education Minnesota Retired



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Conference allows local unions to prepare, learn

Education Minnesota’s Collective Bargaining and Organizing Conference has always been seen as the unofficial kickoff to the next round of contract negotiations for the local teacher and ESP unions.

This year, the tone of the conference also focused on how the local, state and national unions can come together to protect our rights in the face of a new political landscape.

“We need to prepare ourselves for the worst-case scenarios, much of which we have seen happen in other states,” said President Denise Specht in her keynote address. “When unions lose members, they lose power. When a union of educators loses power, the Legislature spends less on schools. As funding falls, layoffs increase. When layoffs increase, so do class sizes.”

But even with all of the potential challenges, Specht also spoke about the power of a collective, unified voice.

“If this cycle starts, and if we don’t stay strong, it could decimate public schools in Minnesota,” she said. “We’re going to get through this. Educators know how to get things done. We do it every day in our schools.”

“We’re the union of 86,000 educators, from pre-service teachers to retirees, and every one of us has your back. Our work is about doing the right things for our students and our state. More than anything else, our moral compass will see us through the storm.”

“The 800,000 children in Minnesota public schools depend on us to prepare them for successful lives, regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, or the challenges they face at home. When we join together, we are the best champions for our students. We won’t let them down.”

Conference attendees found themselves energized after Specht’s speech and ready to learn from the sessions throughout the two-day event.

“This is real information that we need before heading into bargaining,” said Rose Simones from Belle Plaine. “It’s extremely worthwhile and you have so many staff here that can field just about any question.”

Regina Watson is about to begin her first round of bargaining as a member of the Robbinsdale Federation of Teachers negotiations team. Because of the possible changes to the union, she wanted to become more involved this year.

“We rely on other people to make it happen for us, and others need to learn too,” she said.

Watson attended classes on contract language basics, bargaining laws and rules and social media.

“I really want to use social media to organize this year, and it was a helpful class,” she said.

The classes and resources are helpful to all who attend, but many say it is the networking and learning from each other they find most fruitful.

“We get to hear so much at the sessions,” said Luke Audette of Belle Plaine. “You hear and learn from other unions. Something that happened to them might not be an issue for you yet, but it might be soon.”

The conference also provided an opportunity for local unions to meet with others in their region and network.

Split up into their intermediate organization (IO) groups, locals discussed their hopes and concerns when it came to their upcoming bargaining and how they might be able to help each other.

The Great Western North and South IOs met together and found a lot of common priorities. Locals in the area are concerned about getting changes made to 403(b) contributions, as well as recruiting and retaining educators.

The IO is having an overnight training in a few months and plan to do more of this work there.

“Being able to talk with locals in your area really helped,” said Brian Hobson from Menahga. “It’s good to hear what issues are happening nearby so you can support each other.”

“It helps a lot to make connections with people in your area,” said Ken Heitzman from Willmar. “Any time you can come to a conference and take anything away that helps you meet your goal is important.”



Three educators take their place as new legislators

This January, three educators were sworn in as first-term legislators at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Sen. Steve Cwodzinski, a retired social studies teacher from Eden Prairie; Rep. Julie Sandstede, an elementary music teacher from Virginia; and Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein, a library media specialist from Robbinsdale, all took office after being elected for the first time last November.

They each sat down with the Minnesota Educator to discuss their transition from the classroom to the Capitol.



Reps. Julie Sandstede and Mary Kunesh-Podein are both educators and now first-term members of the Minnesota House of Representatives.



Former teacher and now Sen. Steve Cwodzinski and his wife Patti, also a teacher in the Eden Prairie district, pose before he is sworn in to office at the beginning of January.

Sen. Steve Cwodzinski

As someone who taught government for 33 years, Sen. Steve Cwodzinski says it feels great to “practice what I preached.”

The new senator is taking his job very seriously, especially since it is something

so near and dear to his heart. “At the swearing in, they asked if I would faithfully uphold the Constitution and I started to tear up,” he said. “The Constitution was my textbook for weeks in my classroom. I used to teach it

and here I am now given the responsibility to uphold it.”

And while he is retired from teaching, being a freshman lawmaker feels like being back in school to Cwodzinski.

“It’s like going to new

classes each day,” he said. “But now I get to be the student. It’s never felt like work. There’s nothing I’d rather be doing right now.”

While his schedule as a legislator is pretty full, Cwodzinski says the biggest

change is the flexibility. “I can use the restroom whenever I feel like it,” he said. “This is a bit of a different world.”

Cwodzinski said in his

Legislators, page 6

Members testify, speak out on bills as session begins

The Minnesota Legislature has been in session for a month and Education Minnesota members are taking an active part in the legislative process.

Four Education Minnesota members shared their thoughts and expertise on how the state can address our dire teacher shortage and the growing needs of our students in front of the Senate E-12 Policy Committee Jan. 12.

Shawn Beaudette, a fifth-grade teacher and president of the Prior Lake-Savage Education Association; Penny Dupris, a fourth-grade teacher at Peter Hobart Elementary in St. Louis Park; Deanna Hron, a kindergarten teacher and president of the Deer River Education Association; and Sylvia Grismer, a special education teacher in Wayzata Public Schools, all spoke to the committee.

Grismer said to keep educators in the profession, Minnesota needs to create more collaborative environments with administrators, give teachers more autonomy to react to student needs, reduce job stress and provide mentoring to new educators.

If we want equal outcomes for our students, we need equal opportunities for students, Dupris told senators. She said that includes creating more full-service community schools, expanding access to high-quality, school-based preschool and more access to mental health services for our students.

On Jan. 24, education committees in both the House and Senate were hearing bills that would give people tax credits for private school tuition and corporations tax breaks for donating to private school scholarship funds.

Kristi Weidlein, a teacher at Regional High School, an alternative learning center in the Anoka-Hennepin district, spoke against the bill in front of the House education policy committee.

Weidlein shared a story about a student named Carlos, whose family struggled financially but was able to thrive in a public school with adequate resources.

“The bill you see in front of you has the power to hurt Carlos and his future. It has the power to hurt many of my students,” she said. “Without protecting funding for public education, we risk losing the Carloses of our state, and without their energy and diversity, we risk stagnating our collective futures, too.”

Members of Education Minnesota also stood with our allies, ISAIAH, Neighborhoods Organizing for Change and Service Employees International Union Local 284 (SEIU), against the bill at a press conference Jan. 24.

“This bill claims to be about equity and opportunity, but will actually remove \$35 million from public schools,” said Nick Faber, an elementary science teacher in St. Paul and vice president of the St. Paul Federation of Teachers. “At times, we struggle to meet the needs of our students. It’s not because of a lack of caring, it’s because of a lack of funding, support and resources.”

Delene Sanders, a middle school history teacher in North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale, also spoke at the press conference against the tax break bills.

“These types of tax breaks are just another name for vouchers,” she said. “They increase inequity by draining critical funding away from public schools, hurting lower-



Educators Delene Sanders (far left) and Nick Faber (center) spoke about the negative effects tax breaks for private school tuition could have on Minnesota’s public schools and their students at a joint press conference with Education Minnesota and other community partners Jan. 24.

income families and greater Minnesota schools that need the funding the most. They benefit the wealthiest Minnesotans at the expense of our students.”

The bill was also heard in the House education finance and Senate E-12 policy committees Jan. 24.

Tucker Quetone, president of the Rochester Education Association, spoke to the House committee about the choices parents have within public schools, such as full-service community schools.

“Rochester is investing in community ideas that bring us together, not divide us,” he said.

Weidlein, Quetone and Tiffany Dittrich, a language arts teacher from White Bear Lake, all testified before the Senate committee.

“This country is unique in that we supply our students with public schools,” said Dittrich. “Bills like this might eradicate that option.”

More information on the bills’ status will be on Education Minnesota’s Policy Action Center, www.educationminnesota.org/policyactioncenter.



Rochester teacher and local president Tucker Quetone told the House education finance committee that public schools have options for all students.



Anoka-Hennepin teacher Kristi Weidlein testified against a bill giving tax credits for private school tuition in the House education policy committee.



(From left) Teachers Deanna Hron, Sylvia Grismer, Shawn Beaudette and Penny Dupris testified in front of the Senate E-12 Policy Committee Jan. 12. They shared personal stories about the growing needs of students and the teacher shortage being felt across the state.

Events held to support students, parents, communities

Events such as walk-ins, rallies and welcome activities were held around the state and the county Jan. 19, as part of a National Day of Action to stand up for public schools.

“We want to show the president-elect, his education secretary nominee and all policymakers that we are committed to protecting ALL our students, our schools and our communities, and that we stand together for the values of public education in our democracy,” said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht, in advance of the events.

Before school, educators in St. Paul and Minneapolis held signs outside schools which read messages, such as “all are welcome” and “we love our students.”

Educators in St. Cloud and Dover-Eyota both wore blue and held signs in support of public schools and schools that all our children deserve.

At Palmer Lake Elementary in the Osseo district, educators welcomed students with doughnut holes and passed out doughnuts and coffee to parents dropping off their children as a way to say “you are welcome here.”

The event in Palmer Lake was pushed for by the staff. “Rather than being



Educators at multiple St. Cloud schools wore blue and held signs in support of all students being welcome and deserving of strong public schools.

negative about what’s going on in the world right now, we want to show our families they belong here,” said Tom Greve, a special education teacher.

Fourth-grade teacher Ana Leanos brought the idea back to the staff after attending a National Education Association leadership training.

“I came here undocumented at age 5 and through the charity of family, we got on our feet,” she said. “I want our students to know we

care, even if they aren’t so lucky. I feel it’s my duty to give back and make them feel as welcome here as I felt.”

St. Paul educators also came back together after school for another rally at LEAP High School, a school made up primarily of immigrant students.

“We’re showing up for our students,” said St. Paul Federation of Teachers President Denise Rodriguez. “The world is changing and we want our students to know we are here for them.”



Educators in Dover-Eyota all wore blue as a sign of support of students and public schools.



The educators at Palmer Lake Elementary in the Osseo district held signs welcoming students and parents to school as buses arrived and parents dropped off students. They also gave out coffee to parents and doughnuts to students.



Schools all across St. Paul held walk-ins and greeted students as they entered school with signs reading “all are welcome.”



Educators gathered outside of Green Central Park School in Minneapolis and welcomed students as they entered school for the day.





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Higher education, high school educators work together on concurrent enrollment plan

Over the past several years, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the accrediting body for colleges in Minnesota, has placed significant emphasis on the credentials of faculty, including those high school teachers who deliver concurrent enrollment coursework. The HLC's credentialing standards have changed only slightly over the years. What is different about recent efforts is that they signal an intent to enforce the established credentialing standards.

In Minnesota, enforcement of those standards has varied considerably with many high school instructors having been led to believe that they were fully credentialed when they were not. These inconsistencies have led to a situation where approximately 75 percent of high school teachers delivering concurrent enrollment coursework do not meet the established credentialing standard. This has created a dilemma for colleges, school districts, teachers and students.

To complicate matters, there were shifting timelines for when the standard would be enforced and some mixed messages from the HLC about ways that instructors could meet the credentialing standards. In this environment of uncertainty, a union-led movement to find an effective way to move forward emerged.

Faculty and administrators within Minnesota State, along with representatives of Education Minnesota, met to discuss how to ensure that concurrent enrollment remained a strong and viable option for students across the entire state by respecting, not compromising, established standards. The group's intent is to meet the HLC expectations for credentialing



Kevin Lindstrom



Rich Rosavich

quality, not seek a way around them.

In order to address the disconnect between where we are and where we need to be, the group identified several needs. The first was to seek a five-year extension on the enforcement of the HLC standards. The extension, which was recently granted, will provide time for the implementation of plans to get concurrent enrollment instructors to the established standard.

The second need was related to credentialing review. The Minnesota State system is currently developing a process for evaluating relevant graduate level experiences that concurrent enrollment instructors have had. Through existing credit for

WHAT IS CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT?

Concurrent enrollment offers high school students the opportunity to earn college credit on their high school campus from teachers who work closely with college faculty.

Sometimes called "dual credit," "dual enrollment" or "college in the high school," concurrent enrollment partnerships differ from other models of dual enrollment because high school instructors teach the college courses.

More than 25,000 high school students take concurrent enrollment classes in Minnesota, for which they get both high school and college credit. An estimated 1,400 educators teach those courses.

What is new?

The Higher Learning Commission, which accredits colleges and universities in Minnesota and 18 other states, announced in 2015 that it would begin enforcing existing rules for the academic qualifications of teachers of concurrent enrollment courses by September 2017. About 75 percent of Minnesota's current

concurrent enrollment teachers would need additional graduate-level credits to continue teaching the courses after that date. In some cases, the credits may be awarded based on a teacher's professional experience rather than completion of a formal graduate-level course.

Minnesota State has been granted a deadline extension until 2022.

What are the Minnesota State College Faculty and Education Minnesota doing to help those effected by the change?

Representatives from Education Minnesota and the Minnesota State College Faculty have been meeting regularly as a group, and with administrators within Minnesota State to make sure this credential change does not have a negative effect on the colleges or the K-12 educators who teach these programs. The group wants to ensure that concurrent enrollment remain a strong and viable option for students across the entire state by respecting, not compromising, established standards.

prior learning mechanisms, the graduate programs will issue transcripted credit to instructors, removing any questions about whether relevant experience meets the established credentialing standards.

The third need, also in development, is a process for determining if graduate level coursework completed as part of a master's degree meets the credentialing requirements for in-field coursework.

The final and most important identified need addresses what concurrent enrollment instructors will do to get to the standard in the five years under the extension. That effort will begin with the creation of a professional development plan by existing concurrent enrollment instructors who do not meet the established standard. The professional development plan will need to outline how the instructor will meet the credentialing

standard by the conclusion of the five-year extension.

It's worth noting that this approach mirrors what has been done in other similar situations with college credentialing. In general, the notion is that affected individuals are given a window in which to meet newly enforced standards. The standards, however, are not compromised.

To support completion of professional development plans, the group advocates for financial support from the Legislature to cover the associated costs for concurrent enrollment instructors who are working on a plan. This step is vital so that the burden of sustaining concurrent enrollment is not laid entirely on the teachers. The group also advocates for modification to school district compensation mechanisms, where necessary, to recognize completion of the professional development plans. Finally, the group calls on system

universities to create offerings designed to facilitate access to coursework for those working on a professional development plan.

While there is still a long way to go to ensure that concurrent enrollment remains a high-quality option for students across Minnesota, much progress has been made.

More information regarding the group's work can be found at www.educationminnesota.org/resources.aspx#Concurrent-enrollment

♦ Commentary by Rich Rosivach and Kevin Lindstrom

Rosivach is a high school social studies teacher at Irondale High School and a member of the Education Minnesota Governing Board.

Lindstrom is the president of the Minnesota State College Faculty union.

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new role he will always be an advocate for his former profession.

"My door is always open for teachers," he said. "I have always just wanted to educate kids. Whatever I can do here to do that is important. I want our kids to have the best education in order to be the best citizens."

Rep. Julie Sandstede

An open House seat in her district got Rep. Julie Sandstede into the political world, but it was her passions that truly motivated her.

"I'm passionate about people and about education," she said. "I know someone else could run, but if I really wanted to see and make change, I had to try."

As an elementary music teacher in Virginia, Sandstede

says the skills she needed in the classroom definitely help in this new role.

"Being able to think on your feet is definitely an asset," she said. "This job requires communication and organization, just like being a teacher."

Sandstede also served in many leadership roles within her local and Education Minnesota, including local president, which she said also has helped her make the transition to legislator.

She hopes that by working across the aisle and establishing relationships, she can do her best to provide additional support for classrooms across the state.

"We need more paras. We need to support kids," she said.

Sandstede also encourages

her fellow educators to get involved this session.

"Know that you have a voice and you have something to say when it comes to education and kids," she said. "Don't think you don't matter. There is a big potential for things to change in education this session. We need everyone to come together and make a united lift."

Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein

For Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein, serving as a state legislator feels like repaying a debt to the state of Minnesota.

Kunesh-Podein was a single mom, working multiple jobs and going to school for her teaching degree. After graduating, she was going to get her license, but there was

a government shutdown and she was unable to apply.

"I had saved and budgeted to get myself through student teaching, but I had hoped to be working after that," she said. "Minnesota was there for me with financial and medical state assistance."

And as she started teaching Kunesh-Podein quickly realized how many others were in her same position.

"There are so many burdens our kids come to school with," she said. "If I can help relieve any of those anxieties, I want to do that."

Changing roles from a library media specialist in Robbinsdale to a state legislator has been a challenge, but a good one, said Kunesh-Podein.

"I'm a lifelong learner," she said. "So this is testing

my potential."

Kunesh-Podein said that leaning on the support of colleagues in a school setting is the same as being at the Legislature.

And the support of colleagues and the education profession is something that is needed right now, she said.

"The power is in us as a collective, supportive coalition," she said, referring to making changes to or defending public education at the Legislature. "When things get tough, we pull together. We know what we're doing is good and our students are the priority. We have to keep our eye on that prize."

Technology *from page 1*

each year, and so have the students interested in being a member of the club.

The club now has a sixth-grade club, as well as a junior varsity and varsity middle school clubs.

The club meetings are incorporated during the school day, either during homeroom or lunch, so everyone who wants to can participate.

The club's meetings range from talking about introductory programming to the history of Linux to giving students the opportunity to play around on the computers.

"Kids are good at consuming technology, but in terms of producing, creating and navigating on computers, we see some weaknesses," Keroff said.

Keroff started working with his club on not only watching a video on the computer, but how to install the video card. All of the students also learn how to install the Linux operating system on a computer.

The computers that are donated to the school are sometimes in need of work and it is the students who get them in working order—installing new batteries, Wi-Fi cards and even hard drives.

The club does its own fundraising and intake of the donated hardware,

trying to work independently from the school in terms of financial resources.

"We sell snacks at special events," said Keroff. "We did a crowdfunding campaign. The computers come from a variety of sources. Companies or nonprofits sometimes donate them or we've purchased them."

The club was awarded the 2016 Sustainable Saint Paul Youth Leadership Award by the city of Saint Paul. Keroff, Burris and students have also been invited to speak at various conferences about the club and their success.

Keroff and Burris would encourage other educators or schools to look into starting a similar club.

"What we're doing, any school could do," Keroff said. "No school has every student with a computer at home. It's fixable."

Using the Linux system and other open-source software keeps costs down for schools.

"If you're using open-sourced software, used hardware and excited kids, it's not that complicated," he said.

Keroff and Burris are working on a guide for educators and schools on how to start their own Linux club and hope to post it on the club's website, <https://sites.google.com/a/cseminn.org/asian-penguins>.



Photos submitted by Stu Keroff

The CSE Asian Penguins with St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman after receiving the 2016 Sustainable Saint Paul Youth Leadership Award.



Students work on updating software on laptops which will then be donated to families in their community.



Students pack up a computer to bring to a family.



Teachers Stu Keroff and Luke Burris and students presented about their club at the 2016 MEA conference.

Educator Institute

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Foundation awards first grants, scholarships of the year

Education Minnesota’s Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Board of Trustees awarded grants and scholarships this fall for those grants that had deadlines in November. Other grants will be awarded later this year. A second application period will be open for higher education faculty professional development, education support professionals professional development and affinity grants this spring, with applications due April 3. Second-year classroom and classroom technology grant applications are also due April 3. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources/grants/foundation.

Education Support Professionals Professional Development Grant

Professional Development Grants are intended to provide education support professionals (ESPs) with opportunities to take the lead in acquiring and sharing new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, working with parents, etc. ESPs may request up to \$1,500.

Patricia Benhart
Lakeville Educational Assistants Federation
Orton-Gillingham Training 1
\$1,300

Carly Fischbeck
St. Paul Federation of Teachers
ASL Interpreter Professional Development-Multiculturalism
\$1,500

Joan Roberson
Education Minnesota Osseo ESP
Associate Science Degree in Education
\$1,341.93

Sue Snyder
St. Paul Federation of Teachers
Cultural Conversation with Students and Families
\$1,000

Kimberly Wolking
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers/ Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel
Boost Conference
\$1,500

Classroom Professional Development Grants

Classroom Professional Development Grants are intended to provide teachers with opportunities to take the lead in acquiring and sharing new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, working with parents, etc. Up to \$1,500 may be requested.

Lisa Anderson
Education Minnesota-Monticello
MKA Spring Conference
\$550

MaryKate Haake
Shakopee Education Association
ENVOY in All Classrooms
\$1,500

Chris Halvorson
Education Minnesota-Aitkin
Jazz Education Network National Convention 2017
\$1,200

Maureen Kieger
Education Minnesota-Roseville
Swivl Robotic Base and Markers
\$1,087

Alice Kos
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
Mindfulness in Education
\$1,500

Amanda Lambert
Rochester Education Association
Mindful Thinking Professional Development
\$1,450

Lynne (Cheryl) Patterson
Chaska Education Association
Nurtured Heart Cohort Training
\$1,500

Higher Education Faculty Professional Development Grant

Professional Development Grants are intended to provide higher education faculty of colleges and universities with opportunities to take the lead in acquiring and sharing new skills and knowledge. These skills might include new instructional ideas, technology, conference attendance, etc. Faculty may request up to \$3,000.

Deb Allen
MSCF-Anoka Technical College
eLearning Conference
\$2,500

Christy Cook
MSCF-Northwest Technical College
2017 Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses Convention
\$2,700

Shannon Dahms
MSCF-Minnesota State Community & Technical College - Moorhead
National Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses Convention 2017
\$2,995.32

Jill Holmes
MSCF-Riverland Community College - Austin
The Community College Conference on Learning Assessment
\$3,000

Rahul Kane
MSCF-Century College
Innovations Conference
\$3,000

Paul Richgruber
MSCF-Lake Superior College
Conference - Paper and Sessions
\$750

Tamara Thell
MSCF-Anoka Technical College
Attend Nursing Conference
\$1,611.20

M. Jane Young
MSCF-Century College
Association of College & Research Libraries Biennial Conference
\$1,000

National Board Certified Teacher Scholarship

If you are an Education Minnesota member, licensed to teach and have three years of teaching/counseling experience, you are eligible to apply for a scholarship to help offset the costs to become a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT).

Laura Noll
Education Minnesota- Lewiston-Altura
Communication Arts & Literature
\$500

Gwen Anderson
Education Minnesota - Rocori
Early and Middle Childhood - English as a New Language
\$1,000

Ian Burk
South St. Paul Teachers’ Association
Early Adolescent Science
\$1,000

Kate Fullmer
Eden Prairie Education Association
Adolescence & Young Adulthood
\$1,000

Lisa Haider
Robbinsdale Federation of Teachers
Early Adolescent Science
\$1,000

Jodi Hansen
Education Minnesota - Worthington
Adolescent & Young Adult - Chemistry
\$1,000

Janet Jans
Education Minnesota/Edina
Music, Ages 11-18+
\$1,000

Kari Johnson (Gilbertson)
Education Minnesota Alexandria
Literacy/Reading/Language Arts
\$1,000

Annie Katorosz
Big Lake Education Minnesota
Early Childhood
\$1,000

Robert Kohnert
Minneapolis Federation of Teachers
5-12 Social Studies
\$1,000

Elizabeth Lilja
White Bear Lake Teachers Association
Middle Level Generalist
\$1,000

Jessica Seefeldt
Rochester Education Association
Elementary K-5 (Communication, Arts and Literature - Special Ed/Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
\$1,000

Marta Stoeckel-Rogers
North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale
Education Association
Science (Adolescence and Young Adult)
\$1,000

Anna Trandem
Big Lake Education Minnesota
Generalist 3-8
\$1,000

Affinity Grants

Affinity Grants are intended for organizations that work closely with Minnesota educators and students, with a mission aligned with the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, in order to eliminate disparities so that all students can learn. Projects must be run by nonprofit organizations.

BestPrep
www.bestprep.org
\$3,000

Green Card Voices
www.greencardvoices.com
\$5,000

Science Museum of Minnesota
www.smm.org
\$5,000

Saint Paul Civic Symphony
www.spcsmusic.org
\$5,000

Viva Musica
www.vivamusica.org
\$5,000

Young Dance
www.youngdance.org
\$3,572

Changes to teacher licensure in play at the Capitol

Dramatic changes to the ways in which Minnesota’s teachers are licensed are being debated at the Capitol. A legislative audit of the state’s teacher licensing system that was released in March 2016 pointed to a number of problems and offered several recommendations for solutions. Since then, a legislative study group has met six times to examine the problem and has made a recommendation that the state move all licensing duties under one body and that the state move from its current system to a tiered licensure system. Current debates are taking place at the Capitol concerning what both of these changes will look like.

Governance

The first issue of critical importance to the teaching profession is the recommendation to move all licensing duties under one body. Currently, a teacher-led standards board, the Minnesota Board of Teaching (BOT), creates the standards for teacher licensure, while the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) administers the actual licensing process. When districts request specific rules be waived, they make those appeals to the BOT. The

BOT also hears and makes binding decisions regarding disciplinary matters related to licensure.

While the legislative auditor report’s first recommendation was to move all aspects of licensing under the BOT, many proposals currently being debated at the Capitol propose eliminating a teacher-led standards board and moving all licensing, including establishing standards, over to MDE. Should these proposals prevail, the professional licenses of teachers in Minnesota will no longer be governed by people in the teaching profession.

In Minnesota, chiropractors, nurses, optometrists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, law examiners, physicians, dentists, marriage and family therapists, behavioral health therapists, school administrators, pharmacists, podiatrists, veterinarians, accountants, architects and others all have their own, member-led standards boards. Education Minnesota feels the current proposals by Minnesota legislators to eliminate the BOT are proposals to treat the profession of teaching as

somehow less professional than any of the other professions listed above, even while the legislative audit that gave rise to these proposals itself offered moving all of licensing to the BOT as its top recommendation.

Including Minnesota, there are currently 13 states with teacher-led standards boards, and that number is shrinking.

Tiered Licensure

The second issue of critical importance to current and future Minnesota teachers involves moving from our current, single-certification system to a tiered licensing system. This means that all licensed educators would have a license designated by a tier, with each tier being defined by specific eligibility requirements.

The specific tiered licensure proposals being debated at the Capitol right now vary widely, and so we cannot predict what kind of model Minnesota will adopt. But we do know that some of the proposals seek to overtly de-professionalize teaching. Some proposals, for example, include administrator approval before an educator can move to the next tier of licensure. Some proposals include administrator ability to move a licensed

educator to a lower tier. Some proposals include using teacher evaluation results as requirements for advancing to higher tiers.

Education Minnesota believes tying evaluation to licensure is problematic for a number of reasons. First, our educator evaluation system is relatively new and inadequately funded. There are wide discrepancies in the quality of district evaluation systems, and not all evaluation plans include an appeal procedure. In addition, basing a statewide credential such as a teaching license on the opinion of one administrator in one district would undermine the ability of our licensing system to hold all educators to the same standards.

The insertion of district or school-based administration into the educator licensing system is extremely troubling to educators. If an attorney or a marriage and family therapist takes a job with a new practice and the relationship is not a good fit, that professional might resign or even be terminated. Absent the ability of a supervisor to report misconduct to a licensing agency—something school administrators already have an obligation

to do under the current law—a single employer should not be the gatekeeper between an employee and a statewide license.

While some tiered licensure proposals are promising, Education Minnesota opposes changes that would allow an educator’s supervisor to determine which license an educator holds.

Add Your Voice

Education Minnesota is closely monitoring these proposals as they advance through the committee structure at the Capitol. We will be providing ongoing updates and calls to action, but consider contacting your legislators today and asking them to support an independent, educator-led standards board in Minnesota. Explain what having a board led by educators still working in the classroom means to you as a professional, and ask your representatives to oppose changes that would reduce educator voice in our licensing system. If you are interested in testifying on this topic, contact Kathi Micheletti at kathi.micheletti@edmn.org.

♦ Sara Ford

2017 February Financial Planning Workshops

To meet the needs of Education Minnesota members, free workshops designed just for you, are planned for February. REGISTER TODAY!

Financial/Retirement Planning Essentials

METRO (weekday):

Feb. 9
Education Minnesota, St. Paul

Feb. 16
Normandale Community College, Bloomington

4:15-4:45 p.m. – Registration/Exhibits
4:45-7 p.m. – Workshop/Dinner/Prizes

GREATER MN (Saturday):

Feb. 18
Grand Casino, Hinckley

Feb. 18
Torey’s, Owatonna

9:30-10 a.m. – Registration/Rolls-Juice-Coffee
10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. – Workshop/Boxed Lunch/Prizes

Topics Include:

Pension

- Understanding your pension TRA/PERA
- Pension fund performance

Presented by: Chuck Elliott, Education Minnesota ESI Retirement Consultant
Lyle Nelson, Education Minnesota ESI Retirement Consultant

Planning

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

Presented by: EFS Advisors

Protection

- What is your financial vulnerability with long-term illness?
- How can you protect your assets and savings?

Presented by: Educators Lifetime Solutions

Financial Planning for Beginners and NextGen

Feb. 16
Normandale Community College, Bloomington

4:15-4:45 p.m. – Registration/Exhibits
4:45-6:15 p.m. – Workshop/Dinner/Prizes

Topics include:

How can you manage your paycheck to have the money you need today and plan for a secure future?

- Managing your paycheck
- Learn the importance of budgeting and smart debt management techniques
- How much will a \$50 per check contribution amount to in 30 years?
- What is a 403(b) and why should you contribute to one? What is a Roth IRA?
- How does a Roth work, and is it the best for you?
- Learn the value of your defined benefit pension and how much of your income it can replace when you retire

LIMITED SEATING, RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

RSVP to Deborah Skog at 651-292-4856 or deborah.skog@edmn.org. Please leave your name(s), phone number and which session you would like to attend. Spouses/Guests Welcome.

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EDUCATOR

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Nominations open for Human Rights Award

Two endorsed for TRA board

Nominations are now open for the 2017 Education Minnesota Human Rights Award.

Members are encouraged to nominate a fellow educator who has worked to protect the human and civil rights of educators or students, a local union that has worked to build partnerships with communities of color or member who has promoted educational opportunity for physically and/or mentally challenged students.

Nominees may be an Education Minnesota member, a local union or intermediate organization. Nominators must be Education Minnesota members, local affiliates or intermediate organizations.

Education Minnesota accepts nominations without regard to race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation or national origin. The Education Minnesota Human Rights Committee will select the honoree, who is approved by the Education Minnesota Executive Committee. The honoree



Virginia Mancini from Mahtomedi was named the 2016 Education Minnesota Human Rights Award recipient for her work on her school's gay-straight alliance and her advocacy for all students.

will become Education Minnesota's nomination for one of the National Education Association's human and civil rights awards.

For more information about the award and how to apply, go to www.educationminnesota.org/news/awards/human-rights-award.

Education Minnesota has endorsed Mary Supple, a middle school social studies teacher in Richfield, and Will Baumann, a mathematics instructor at Ridgewater College in Willmar, for the active teacher seats up for election now on the Teachers Retirement Association Board of Trustees.

Supple is an incumbent seeking re-election to the TRA board. She is a sixth-grade math teacher at Richfield Middle School, has served as local president and lead negotiator, served on the Education Minnesota Governing Board and on the National Education Association Board of Directors. She has been on the Board of Trustees for two terms.

"I would like to continue putting my experience to work for the teachers of Minnesota. I would appreciate your vote," she said.

Baumann has been an active member of his local and state faculty union, participating in leadership training programs and working with legislators to influence and shape policy. He also serves



Will Baumann

as president of the Minnesota Mathematics Association of Two-Year Colleges. He has a bachelor's degree in mathematics with minors in history and economics, a master's degree in statistics and is working on a master's degree in economics.

"I will use my knowledge of forecasting and modeling to help keep the teacher pension strong and viable for future retirees, while balancing the needs of current retirees," Baumann said.

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



Mary Supple

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.

This month, eligible active members will receive election information, including a biographical overview of each candidate. Votes need to be submitted by March 24. Only active members are eligible to vote for active member board positions. Election results will be published on www.minnesotatra.org April 12.

Selection of delegates underway for 2017 Education Minnesota Representative Convention

"The Power of We!" is the theme for the 2017 Education Minnesota Representative Convention (RC) on April 21-22 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington Minneapolis South. The theme was chosen to demonstrate and celebrate our collective strength and wisdom as Education Minnesota and its members plan our work going forward. Make plans to represent your colleagues on issues that affect all educators by seeking a post as a delegate or alternate.

AFT President Randi Weingarten and NEA Vice President Becky Pringle have accepted invitations to speak at the convention

Major business for

delegates includes acting on changes to the union's constitution or bylaws and considering any proposed amendments to the legislative positions, action items and the Education Minnesota Statements of Principles.

Delegate selection process has begun at the local union level. March 17 is the deadline for local presidents to inform Education Minnesota of who will be delegates and alternates to the RC. The number of delegates allocated to each local and statewide affiliate is determined by the number of members. Delegates are chosen by open nominations and secret ballot in the local or state affiliate of Education Minnesota. Interested members

should contact their local president for details on how to participate.

Education Minnesota provides one standard hotel room for one night for each local sending at least one delegate and one round-trip mileage reimbursement per delegate. Local presidents have details on the financial arrangements and making hotel reservations.

In addition to the formal business of the RC, delegates will be able to meet other educators involved in union work and take part in social activities.

Last year, nearly 600 delegates attended the RC, the union's highest governing body.

ABOUT THE RC

- **What:** The Education Minnesota Representative Convention, commonly called the RC, is the statewide union's highest governing entity.
- **When:** The RC takes place annually to set policy for Education Minnesota. The 2017 RC will be April 21-22.
- **Where:** DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington Minneapolis South
- **How to participate:** Delegate selection is underway through local unions. Locals and state affiliates choose delegates by open nomination and secret ballot. Local presidents have details about logistics for delegates. For information about the RC, go to www.educationminnesota.org and log in as a member. Choose Representative Convention from the Events menu.

ESP regional meetings focus on safe school environments

On the bus, in the cafeteria, on the playground and in the classroom—the safety of students and staff is imperative to fostering learning and overall student success. Education support professionals and the students they serve often disproportionately feel the impact of school safety policies, or lack thereof, and thus have a particular interest in ensuring these policies reflect the needs of

both members and students.

Education Minnesota will conduct 11 regional meetings across the state that will include a full 90-minute training on school safety and ensuring a safe environment for students and staff. The session will provide members with a basic understanding of trauma-informed instruction, preventive strategies for ensuring staff safety and options for dealing with staff injuries. This training is free

to full members of Education Minnesota and is designed specifically for ESPs.

All meetings start at 5 p.m., except for the Apple Valley location, which starts at 6 p.m. Meetings will begin with dinner. ESPs can register online at Bit.ly/espmeetings. Registration will close one week prior to each meeting.

Contact Shirley Roeber at sroeber@edmn.org or 651-292-4884 with questions.

ESP REGIONAL MEETING SCHEDULE

All meetings start at 5 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

- Feb. 2: Brooklyn Park, Education Minnesota-Brooklyn Park office
- Feb. 9: Apple Valley, Old Chicago (starts at 6 p.m.)
- Feb. 16: Princeton, AmericInn
- Feb. 23: Minneapolis, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers office
- Feb. 28: St. Cloud, The Tuscan Center
- March 2: St. Paul, Education Minnesota-St. Paul office
- March 7: Winona, Green Mill
- March 9: Detroit Lakes, Speak Easy Restaurant
- March 16: Owatonna, Holiday Inn
- March 23: Grand Rapids, Sawmill Inn
- April 13: Fairmont, Green Mill Fairmont/Holiday Inn

Student data: What is private, what is not

Throughout the school day, educators in all positions receive and create private student data. Amid the stresses and challenges of educating students, it is important to remember what information is private and how to protect it.

“Educational data” is considered private data under state law, the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA). This means private educational data cannot be disclosed to someone other than the parent, unless an exception applies or appropriate consent has been given by the parent or eligible student (18 or older). Educational data is defined broadly as any data on an individual maintained by a public educational agency or institution that relates to a student.

Student educational records are also protected by the Federal Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), which similarly designates “personally identifiable information” as private. Personally identifiable information includes a student’s name, Social Security number, student number or other information linked to a specific student that would allow a person



Debra Corhouse

in the school community to identify the student. For example, the fact that a fourth-grader lost bus privileges would likely not be personally identifiable on its own, but coupled with a specific bus number, it could be.

One exception to the student privacy laws is that personally identifiable information may be disclosed to another school official, including teachers and paraprofessionals, within the agency or institution if he or she has a “legitimate educational interest to access to data.” It is not enough for the other person to simply be a school official without the tie to the student’s

education. Staff, however, are free to discuss situations and seek the advice of their colleagues when they are not disclosing information that is personally identifiable. School staff should refrain from discussing private student data in public areas and with colleagues who do not have a legitimate educational interest in hearing it.

Sometimes districts restrict the “legitimate educational interest” too much and, for example, disallow paraprofessionals from reading a student’s individualized education program (IEP) or attending the student’s IEP meeting. There are many reasons it is important for all educators working with a student to have access to the relevant information.

It is also permissible to release information that has been designated as “directory information” by the school district. This information is publicly available provided the parent does not opt out of permitting its inclusion. Examples of directory information include: address, telephone number, email address, photograph and date of birth. Private data beyond directory information

can be released with a specific consent form; for example, for student work or classroom videos.

Additional authority to release information comes in when no data has actually been recorded; it is simply a “mental impression” and thus, not covered by the data rules.

One of the more difficult situations educators face is when a member of law enforcement requests protected data about a student. The MGDPA is more protective than FERPA is this regard and requires there be a court order, not just a subpoena, to release private educational data. Despite the uniform and position of authority, these officers do not have automatic access to this data, whether it is a school liaison officer investigating something from the community or an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer investigating someone’s immigration status.

If you are ever in doubt, you should contact your supervisor and request advice on how to proceed prior to releasing anything. In the end, the district has an obligation to protect this data and should advise you on what

LEGAL BRIEFS

can be shared.

Parents, however, have the right to request to review their student’s educational records until the student turns 18, or while they remain a tax dependent. You should keep this in mind when creating data. One exception to this rule applies only to teachers. “Desk drawer notes” remain the property of the teacher and do not become district data and thus, are not reviewable by parents. These are notes that are kept by the individual teacher and destroyed at the end of the school year. They can only be shared with a substitute who needs to know what they contain. If these criteria are met, the notes remain in the teacher’s control.

If you have questions about your obligations related to student data, please contact your Education Minnesota field staff for advice.

♦ Debra Corhouse
Corhouse is a
staff attorney for
Education Minnesota.

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ESI

EDUCATION MINNESOTA OPPORTUNITIES

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CREATED FOR NEW EDUCATORS

Education Minnesota has created a new program to work with and engage new educators and those new to the union.

The Education Minnesota Early Career Leadership Fellow program will support up to 60 fellows. Education Minnesota is inviting both teacher and education support professional local unions to apply to join this innovative program in 2017.

Selected local partners will support fellows to develop new skills and formalize an action pathway toward union leadership. Selected locals may identify up to 10 early career educators who:

- Are within the first five years of the profession.
- Are under 35 years old.
- Represent the diversity of America’s classrooms.

- Have demonstrated success in improving teaching and learning.
- Show promise and initial interest in future union leadership.

Six to 10 local ECLF cohorts will meet intentionally and strategically throughout the year through a variety of connecting opportunities.

ECLF locals will be connected in a networked community throughout the year, sharing best practices, learnings and leadership work.

Fellows are expected to participate in both state ECLF meetings and at least 80 percent of local meetings. Fellows will identify and engage a sounding board of five other early career educators through their experience. With other local fellows, they will develop, begin implementing and present about a Leadership Engagement and Action

Project (LEAP) to address an issue of importance to early-career educators. The entire program will take between 60 and 80 hours. Fellows completing program requirements receive a \$500 stipend.

Each selected local will also designate an ECLF coach to support fellows on their leadership journey.

To review questions and/or to submit your application, please visit this link: https://co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/SV_0Sv1GCLdA3DZK8R

The deadline for applying is Feb. 13. Education Minnesota will review applications immediately and anticipates notifying selected locals by Feb. 20. Education Minnesota will accept applications online only. Late applications will not be reviewed or accepted.

Contact Carrie Lucking at carrie.lucking@edmn.org or ECLF@cecillinois.org with any questions.

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

Apply to be a PBS Digital Innovator

The PBS Digital Innovator program is a professional development opportunity for K-12 educators whose innovative use of technology and media create exciting learning experiences for their students. PBS Digital Innovators will attend the PBS Digital Innovators Summit in San Antonio, June 24-26, which includes a day pass to the ISTE Conference. One educator from each state, the District of Columbia and the U.S Territories is selected to participate. PBS Digital Innovators are provided with support and tools from PBS and local member stations so their ideas can be shared with peers in their own communities, and across the nation. Applications are due Feb. 13.

For more information about the program and how to apply, go to www.pbs.org/education/digitalinnovators.

Library of Congress summer institutes

The Library of Congress is now accepting applications for its week-long summer institutes for K-12 educators. Held in Washington, D.C., this professional development opportunity provides educators of all disciplines with resources and strategies to effectively integrate primary sources into K-12 classroom teaching. Each session will focus on pedagogy, with an emphasis on supporting student engagement, critical thinking and construction of knowledge. Three week-long sessions will be offered for general K-12 educators, as well as one with a science, technology and engineering focus and one with a World War II focus. Applications are due March 17.

For more information about the program and how to apply, www.loc.gov/teachers/professionaldevelopment/teacherinstitute/?rssloc=eanft.

Science teacher institutes at Hamline

Hamline University is offering three free summer institutes for teachers of science. The three-day WaterWorks Institute allows teachers to enrich their water-related curricula by learning from experts on how safe drinking water is produced

and experiencing a host of water resources and activities for the classroom. The Rivers Institute is designed to promote environmental and ecological concepts in the science classroom. Over three days, teachers explore the Mississippi or St. Croix River and investigate water ecosystems and river engineering. Biotechnology for Teachers in the Classroom (BioTIC) is designed to bring biology teachers up to speed on the rapid advancements in biotech research, applications and issues.

For detailed information and online applications, please visit www.hamline.edu/education/cgee/teacher-institutes.html.

Free e-membership, conference grants available for state math teachers organization

The Minnesota Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers two forms of membership. A free e-membership is available to anyone connected with the teaching and learning of mathematics. A sustaining membership is available for \$25. The council is also currently offering financial support for its spring conference. Grant applications for this financial support will be accepted until Feb. 10. The grant program is designed for beginning and mid-career teachers and awards up to \$550 for expenses such as registration, lodging, mileage and/or substitutes.

For more information about the council or the grant program, go to www.mctm.org.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Creative writing residencies available through The Loft Literacy Center

The Loft Literacy Center’s teaching artists can offer creative writing programs for K-12 students. Teaching artists will work with English teachers to develop a unique creative writing curriculum. School-based writing workshops incorporate elements of literary analysis, peer critique and revision. Students are introduced to literary examples not traditionally taught in schools, and given a range of creative writing prompts and in-class activities that broaden and deepen students’ engagement with the work already being done in the classroom. The cost for a residency is \$125 per contact hour. Grant support is occasionally available to subsidize the residencies.

For more information, go to www.loft.org/events__programs/residency_program/school-based_residencies.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Minnesota State Arts Board grants

Minnesota State Arts Board’s Arts Learning grant program offers schools \$5,000-\$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.

New PrairieCare grant available for mental health training in schools

The PrairieCare Child & Family Fund has created a new grant program for school-based mental health professional development programs. The funding is to support mental health training for local school district staff and professionals. Eligible applicants may include public school districts, private schools, charter schools and other nonprofit entities that have a primary purpose to support or provide educational services to youth in Minnesota. The total award amount for 2017 is up to \$30,000, divided among one or more proposals. Grantee(s) will be expected to utilize the awards to increase awareness of mental illness and to promote early identification and intervention of youth who may need treatment. Applications are due March 3.

For more information, go to www.prairiecarefund.org/grants.html.



Como Zoo field trip grants available

The Yellow Bus Fund is designed to assist school-aged children who would otherwise not be financially able to visit environmental learning centers like Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Through this grant, the zoo is able to offset some of the cost of your field trip when you book a program with its education department. Individual schools and groups are responsible for coordinating their own transportation to Como. Immediately following the scheduled program, organizations are required to submit an invoice for busing fees to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory to allow reimbursement of awarded funds. Funds are limited, but available until March 15.

For more information or how to apply, go to www.comozooconservatory.org/education/ and click on “grants for school and group programs.”

Historical Society field trip grants available

The Legacy Field Trip Support Fund offers financial assistance to offset transportation costs to Minnesota Historical Society museums and historic sites statewide. To qualify, schools must have 25 percent or more of their students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. The field trip to an MNHS historic site or museum must take place before June 9. Funds may be used to offset transportation costs. Funds are limited and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible schools will be reimbursed at the rate of \$4 per student attending the field trip.

For more information, to see the full eligibility requirements or to apply, go to <http://education.mnhs.org/legacy-field-trip-support-fund>.