

M I N N E S O T A

EDUCATOR

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019

**MARY
CATHRYN
RICKER –
TEACHER,
ADVOCATE –
NAMED MDE
COMMISSIONER**

**TEACHING IN AN
EVER-CHANGING
DIGITAL WORLD**



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS





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THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

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COVER PHOTO: Middle school English teacher
Mary Cathryn Ricker was announced as the
new Minnesota Department of Education
Commissioner at Farnsworth Aerospace 5-8
campus in St. Paul on Dec. 20. Ricker used to
teach in this school before being elected to
leadership roles at the St. Paul Federation of
Teachers and American Federation of Teachers.
Another former teacher, Gov. Tim Walz, stands
by as Ricker accepts her appointment.

LET'S BE BOLD, BLUNT, RELENTLESS FOR OUR STUDENTS THIS YEAR

What a difference a year makes.

Twelve months ago, our union was facing two of the greatest threats in its history. The U.S. Supreme Court was about to rule in the *Janus* case, a lawsuit brought by national groups committed to the destruction of the labor movement. The November 2018 elections had the potential to deliver state government to politicians happy to silence our voices in the workplace and demean our profession, as had been done in Wisconsin, Iowa and other states.

Consider the difference today.

Labor lost the *Janus* case in the courtroom, but we won it in worksites all over Minnesota. Members rallied to protect educators' freedom to join together and negotiate for our students' learning conditions and for a fair return for our work. We enter 2019 with our membership as large and as connected as it has ever been.

In politics, Minnesota voters rejected the campaigns to divide us against each other with fear mongering. Instead, our state elected a former teacher from Mankato, Tim Walz, as its governor and a longtime advocate for children, Peggy Flanagan, as lieutenant governor.

Walz picked a former St. Paul teacher, Mary Cathryn Ricker, as his commissioner of education. The state House has a pro-education majority with former teachers on many key

committees. I believe those results could not have happened without the unprecedented engagement and work of our educators last year.

Rather than facing a Legislature with the motivation and opportunity to cripple public education, we enter the year with a projected budget surplus of \$1.5 billion and a willingness by a majority of lawmakers to increase the state's commitment to public education.

But there are obstacles ahead and there are no guarantees our successes will carry over into the sort of changes educators want to see in their schools, campuses and other worksites in 2019. Nothing is automatic.

The majority in the Minnesota Senate has been hostile to many of our ideas for improving public education and has strongly opposed raising any more revenue for the investments we all favor, including smaller class sizes, increasing access to mental health care, reducing education debt and paying educators wages that will sustain their families.

Too many educators are still working under contracts that don't give them enough control over how new revenue will be spent by their districts. New state money for schools doesn't mean much if it only goes to build the district's reserves or into an administrator's pet program.

We can't say we won the

November elections until there is a noticeable, measurable improvement in the learning and working conditions in our worksites.



Denise Specht

We must keep the pressure on the Legislature and hold the elected officials accountable for their campaign promises, through face-to-face meetings, phone calls and lobby days. 2019 is a contract year for many and we must go to the bargaining tables with straightforward proposals for what we really need—not for what's easy, or for what we think we can get.

As I write this, more than 30,000 teachers are on strike in Los Angeles. They want caps on class sizes, library services in every middle school, more support staff including counselors and nurses, and a pay raise. Sound familiar? Their fight is our fight. Their courage helps us all, but only if we seize the opportunity.

This can be the year of the educator in Minnesota if we make it so. It is time to be bold in our ambition, blunt in our demands and absolutely relentless in pursuing our dreams for the students of Minnesota and for our profession as educators.

Together,

Twitter: @DeniseSpecht

Degrees, Not Debt workshops, lobby day this spring

Education debt took center stage in the 2018 election. Now, it is time to make real progress on expanding our state teacher loan forgiveness program and creating a consumer advocate in state government for borrowers who were misguided or mistreated by loan servicers and lenders.

If this is a topic you are passionate about, come to the state Capitol on March 27 to tell your education debt story and speak with state policymakers about these critical legislative priorities.

Sign up at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/Degrees-Not-Debt/2019-lobby-day.

Want to join your union in our Degrees, Not Debt campaign or get more information on loan forgiveness? Go to www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy#Degrees-Not-Debt to learn more about the program or to inquire about hosting a training.

Getting social!

Educators use social media as a way to connect with their communities, colleagues and the world. We will feature posts from Education Minnesota members and locals each issue! Make sure to follow Education Minnesota on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and Pinterest!



Where are you reading your Minnesota Educator?

Congratulations, Christi Kreigh from Triton for being this issue's winning submission!

We had a large amount of submissions for this round of the contest. See more of where people were reading on page 20.

The contest continues! Email a photo to educator@edmn.org or share it on social media using #mneducator of where you are reading your Minnesota Educator to be entered into a drawing to **win a \$50 gift card!**

Submissions are due March 8. Happy reading!



Members in the news!

Education Minnesota members are often interviewed in their local newspapers or TV station. We will feature a quote each issue!



We just love being around students, love interacting with students, working with them on a daily basis. Some of our classroom budgets have been cut, so teachers really have had to dig into their pockets a little bit more.



— Forest Lake teacher David Sauer, in a Minneapolis WCCO TV story about the Forest Lake Lions Club giving teachers up to \$100 to offset classroom supply purchases



Newly appointed Commissioner of Education, Mary Cathryn Ricker (right), discusses her vision for the Minnesota Department of Education with the Senate E-12 Committee on Jan. 14.

MARY CATHRYN RICKER SHARES HER OUTLOOK ON EDUCATION

Gov. Tim Walz, a former teacher himself, named long-time teacher and education advocate Mary Cathryn Ricker as his commissioner of education last December. Ricker sat down with the Minnesota Educator in January to share her thoughts as she started this new role. Read more about Ricker and the department on page 6.

WHAT ABOUT THIS POSITION INTRIGUED YOU TO APPLY FOR IT?

For my whole career, I have been working on issues of teaching and learning and they've been in different pockets. The first thing I did was work on my own delivery of teaching and learning. I got involved with my school and then my district's professional development committees. Then I got in these advocacy positions, whether it was on the Professional Advocacy committee at Education Minnesota or writing letters to the then-commissioner of education.

When this opportunity came up, I had been working in these pockets but being commissioner of education meant that I got to work on it in a comprehensive scale. It was no longer the pocket for just my English department or just for new teachers in St. Paul Schools. It has become an opportunity to talk about the kind of teaching and learning conditions that students across the state of Minnesota deserve. That was a really exciting prospect for me to be able

to sit alongside Minnesotans in every corner of the state and shape the teaching and learning conditions that our students deserve.

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO SET PRIORITIES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION?

The first thing is to survey the landscape. I come in with areas of expertise that I am very passionate about. I know that I am working alongside a staff at the Minnesota Department of Education that has also built up areas of expertise that we should tap into, whether that's at the office in Roseville and in the Regional Centers of Excellence.

I also know that students and families and community members across the state of Minnesota also have talents we can be tapping into and they also have ideas to shape public education for the future.

One of the hallmarks of my career has been listening first, learning from what I hear and then shaping the work ahead based on what I've learned. That is going to be an important part of this role.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION RIGHT NOW?

Our biggest challenges have to do with disparities and invisibility. Disparities in achievement, disparities in discipline and disparities of experiences. We have different students who have access to a different wealth of experiences depending on the school they are going to or the district they are in.

Then we have Minnesotans who feel like they are invisible in our system and that needs to stop. We need to look at every individual in our system, see what they need and then go about breaking down the barriers to what they need and what they deserve.

WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE TO WORK ON MAKING SURE EVERY CHILD IN MINNESOTA HAS ACCESS TO THE SAME QUALITY OF EDUCATION?

Students bring assets with them that maybe don't get measured on a test, but that help our communities flourish. Any work that we can do to make sure that we're lifting up the incredible assets that our students are bringing when they are bringing their whole selves to school is part of making a more equitable climate in our schools and a more equitable climate in our communities.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE DEPARTMENT SUPPORTING EDUCATORS IN THIS STATE? DO YOU ENVISION EDUCATORS ALSO SUPPORTING THE DEPARTMENT, IN TERMS OF BEING A COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP?

I love that idea of a collaborative relationship, where educators are promoting what is best about their profession and educators are shaping our profession and those teaching and learning conditions, and the Minnesota Department of Education is taking a lead in advancing professionalism.

Attention to professionalism will do a number of things. It's going to bring attention to what goes into those high-quality teaching and learning conditions. It's also going to bring attention to the expectations we have when we earn a teaching license in the state of Minnesota.

MDE can lead the way on some of this work but MDE should also not be standing in the way of educators who want to do this work as well. And really, we should be looking for those opportunities.

One of the opportunities we have to grow in this state is to recognize the sophisticated responsibilities our education support professionals hold—when they are working alongside teachers, when they are driving students to and from school, when they are serving lunch to our students. Those are roles that come with a great deal of responsibility in meeting the needs of our students.

We can play a bigger role at MDE in recognizing that and amplifying that and we can make sure that we have a partnership that goes both ways with them as well.

WHAT SKILLS FROM BOTH YOUR TEACHING AND ADVOCACY BACKGROUND DO YOU BRING INTO THIS POSITION?

When I accepted my first teaching job and earned my license, I was accepting great deal of responsibility with that. Some of that was personal responsibility and some of that was institutional responsibility. I recognize now that this position is similar. I am accepting a great deal of responsibility on behalf of the people of Minnesota, their students and their families, as well as the governor and lieutenant governor who have trusted me with this position. I take that very seriously.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT EDUCATION?

I looked for a career that took what I loved to learn, such as reading and writing, and where I could apply that every day. I realized that was teaching. I could be in a classroom and be really excited about what I was sharing. There was an awe in realizing that this career could make such an impact on students, and that awe has never really left me.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TELL THE EDUCATORS ACROSS MINNESOTA AS YOU BEGIN YOUR WORK?

Recognize the power and responsibility that you have when you accept a job meeting the needs of students and their families. Do everything to do your best work. Offer whatever you can to support your colleagues so they know they can count on you to do their best work as well. While sometimes, these can feel like isolating positions, we can't forget that we're in this together.

Our students are counting on us to be in this together to meet their needs.



MEET MARY CATHRYN RICKER

A native of Hibbing, Mary Cathryn Ricker is a National Board Certified middle school English teacher with over a decade of classroom experience.

She has taught in classrooms from St. Cloud to Washington to South Korea to Yemen. She spent a large part of her career teaching middle school English in St. Paul Public Schools. She previously served as executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers and as the president of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 28.

Her teaching and leadership skills have been recognized with a number of other honors, including receiving the Education Minnesota Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award, qualifying as a semifinalist for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, and serving as a featured contributor in the Annenberg Foundation's national professional development series, "Write in the Middle."

Ricker is a third-generation teacher. Her grandfather and father were both teachers on the Iron Range.

She earned her undergraduate degree in English with a mathematics minor at the University of Saint Thomas, and completed her graduate work in Teacher Leadership at the University of Minnesota. Ricker's husband teaches English language learners in the St. Paul Public Schools, and they have two children, one in St. Paul Public Schools and one in college.

(Information from the Minnesota Department of Education)

ABOUT THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Minnesota Department of Education provides an excellent education for Minnesota students by striving for excellence, equity, and opportunity.

The agency focuses on closing the achievement gap, supporting high-quality teaching, using innovative strategies to improve educational outcomes, and ensuring all students graduate from high school well-

prepared for college, career and life.

The Minnesota Department of Education develops, builds and maintains collaborative relationships with schools, districts and other stakeholders through a wide variety of advisory boards, councils and committees.

(From the Minnesota Department of Education)

EDUCATORS IN ACTION DURING LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Even if you're not into politics, politics is into you.

The decisions state legislators make affect your classroom, school and profession. State funding dictates what districts can do about class sizes, special education caseloads, your salary and benefits, even the condition of your building.

The most effective advocates for public schools are you and your colleagues. You are with our students every day in the classroom, lunchroom, buses, hallways and college campuses.

Join us in our planned actions this session and follow Education Minnesota on social media and at www.educationminnesota.org for more information and ongoing updates or to sign up to get involved.

March 13: Unity Day at the Capitol

Join Education Minnesota in a statewide lobby day and public show of unity at the Capitol.

May 18: #EdMNVotes in Action Rally

The last Saturday before session ends is when last-minute negotiations take place and final bills are discussed. When we join together, our voices cannot be ignored.

Lobby days:

Education Minnesota encourages members to come to the Capitol to lobby on behalf of their students and professions.

Find out more about how lobby days work and check out a list of those already scheduled at www.educationminnesota.org/advocacy/at-the-legislature/details-on-lobby-days. Contact your local president or Education Minnesota field representative to schedule one.

Town halls and back-home meetings:

Your local legislators represent your local communities, so while the Capitol is where their business gets done, they also need to hear from you back home. Education Minnesota would like to help you organize town halls and back-home



meetings with your lawmakers. The more they can see and hear about what is going on in their local schools, the more likely they might be to fight for what you need. Look for more information on how to schedule a meeting at www.educationminnesota.org.





Stillwater High School teacher Rachel Steil goes through an “adopt a journalist” assignment with her newspaper class. The class picks an opinion writer to follow throughout the year to see how his or her writing changes with each topic. Steil spends a lot of time going through the differences between reporting and commentary with her students.

TEACHING IN A ‘FAKE NEWS’ WORLD

In Rachel Steil’s newspaper class at Stillwater High School, she teaches them about writing and editing, taking photos and doing layout. But she also spends a lot of time on news literacy.

“Even if these kids aren’t going into journalism, I need them to be savvy consumers of media,” Steil said.

Steil’s colleague in the Stillwater English department, Peter Schield, uses that same philosophy when it comes to his senior classes’ research projects.

“When I was in college and graduate school, how we did research was time consuming. These kids have the world at their fingertips,” Schield said. “But we teach them the same kind of stuff—looking at the timeliness of sources or what else the author has published. The benchmarks of what makes a source credible hasn’t really changed.”

Steil and Schield aren’t alone in navigating the ever-expanding digital world that doesn’t always focus on truthfulness. Curriculum in classrooms and databases in libraries in schools and campuses have had to adapt to how we consume information and view news.

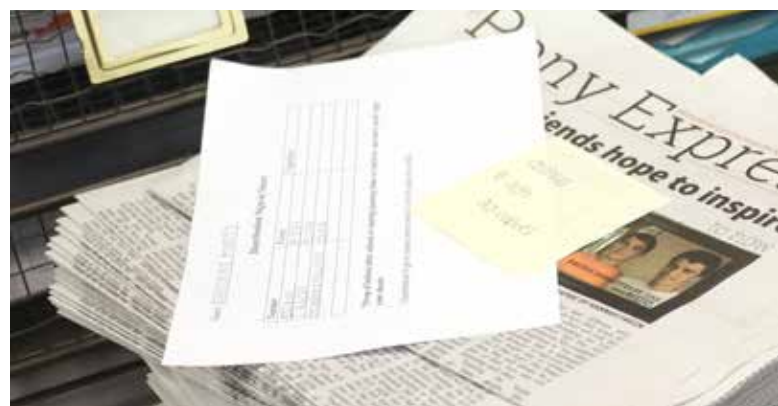
A 2016 study from Sanford University found that middle and high school students have a hard time identifying sources of online information and distinguishing real news

from fake, even though they have grown up using technology and the Internet.

“When I first taught (research papers) in 1994, source options were limited to what was available at the library. My students could choose from our collection of books, a few shelves of magazines, and four rusty file cabinets containing newspaper articles that the librarian had clipped and organized by topic,” said Edina High School English teacher Jackie Roehl. “In the decades since, so much has changed when it comes to teaching students how to find credible sources for their research papers. It is essential, now more than ever, for teachers to develop strategies to help students sort fact from fiction online.”

Steil’s newspaper class is a part of Stillwater’s English department. Students are able to get a newspaper and an English credit in the same course.

“The first month, we just go through what is news,” she said. “It’s more than just taking out your cell, snapping a photo and sharing a post.”



Students' social media platforms are a good entrance into the topic of opinion writing, though, Steil said.

"They are reading so much content every day. They are seeing a large volume of words. But they aren't reading news," she said. "They are writing down stuff on social media, which has opinion in it. It's hard for them to even see that."

Steil spends a lot of time talking about press law, the First Amendment, libel and slander.

"We also talk about it in terms of their digital footprint," Steil said. "When you write something and one other person sees it, it can be seen as libel, defamation. You own what you say."

Steil's students put out six issues a year. They have an online publication, including a podcast, social media platforms and a business component for selling ads.

"The core of what we talk about is why journalism matters," Steil said. "Understanding communications can apply to just about anything. It translates to so many things. The art of storytelling is communication."

That understanding of communication and the world around you is what Schield and Roehl also focus on when teaching research papers.

"We spend quite a bit of time talking about plagiarism," Schield said. "I tell them that most of you are really good kids and trustworthy, but you can unknowingly plagiarize and the consequences are still the same, whether you meant to do it or not."

Schield and Roehl are both grateful that their school districts have invested in good databases, which contain vetted sources. But Google is still a tempting tool for some students.

"Teaching students how to sift through Google search results to find credible sources has always been a struggle for me," said Roehl. "I have

Media and digital literacy resources

- ▶ **Society of Professional Journalists' #Press4Education program:**
www.spj.org/press4education.asp
- ▶ **Center for Media Literacy:**
www.medialit.org/educator-resources
- ▶ **Center for News Literacy:**
www.centerfornewsliteracy.org
- ▶ **NewsGuard:** www.newsguardtech.com
- ▶ **NewseumED.org**

tried a variety of strategies to help guide them, such as distributing a complex decision tree containing a web of 'if yes' and 'if no' options."

While the digital world can be difficult to navigate, there are also a lot of online tools available to help students work on becoming a better consumer of media.

Roehl was introduced to one by her daughter who now works at NewsGuard, a company formed by veteran journalists with the goal of fighting fake news and misinformation. The group rates the credibility and transparency of thousands of news and information websites based on nine journalistic standards and provides a rating in a free browser extension.

Other online resources include NewseumED.org, the Center for Media Literacy and the Center for News Literacy.

The Society of Professional Journalists also has a journalism education committee and a program if educators want to bring a local journalist into their classroom to talk with students about the profession.

Stillwater High School's newspaper class produces six issues a year of their printed publication, but also do social media, online content and podcasts.



RUNESTONE ESPS UNIFY THROUGH FIRST CONTRACT AS EDUCATION MINNESOTA MEMBERS

The Runestone Area Education non-certified staff wanted a unified voice, so they started looking at organizing as a union.

"We wanted our staff to become more unified because we work in a co-op. We are spread out all over the place and do not get many opportunities to come together," said Taryn Ladd, who is now the local president. "We also were concerned about proper representation during wage negotiations. There was a non-certified negotiation team that did not include any non-certified staff. We were not a part of the decision-making process at all. We just wanted to be properly represented and heard by our district."

The group gathered information about unions and decided to join Education Minnesota at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

"It was all a really interesting process and experience," said Ladd. "We were all under the impression that the Runestone Area Education non-certified staff had never been with a union before but during this process we learned that there had been a union about 10 years ago but do to inactivity it had sort of just dissipated."

After joining Education Minnesota, the members of the new local union started to work on their first contract.

"No one was quite sure where to even start," said Ladd. "We decided to gather information from

surrounding districts to compare our current contract with theirs and from there we just began making changes and filling in the gaps."

Their first contract tackled some of the major issues the union members wanted to see addressed by the district, including pay increases and health insurance contributions.

"One major change was a significant pay increase across the board for everyone. It was an incredibly satisfying experience, knowing that we were able to help people financially, while also knowing that we were being paid appropriately for the work we do," said Ladd. "We also made changes to health insurance contributions and sick leave and personal days."

The reaction from members has been really positive—not only to their contract, but joining the union, said Ladd.

"It had been a long time coming that we needed a change for the non-certified staff," she said.

Now that their first contract is done, Ladd said the union is looking forward to working with Education Minnesota more and participating in the union's events and professional development opportunities.

"I am excited to improve the lives of all that work within the district and to be able to take advantage of the learning opportunities Education Minnesota has to offer," she said.

Education Minnesota recently welcomed two new bargaining units!

The Elk River School Readiness Teachers and Eden Prairie Preschool Teachers are two new bargaining units which joined their local teachers unions, the Elk River Education Association and Eden Prairie Education Association.

They join the more than 20 new units to organize with Education Minnesota since 2016. #chooseunion

WHO'S THE BOSS? EDUCATORS AS 'ACTING PRINCIPALS'

The Education Minnesota legal department has occasionally received questions about the consequences of administrators designating teachers or other school staff to serve as an acting or substitute for a principal on days when a principal is absent. This designation raises questions about licensure, as well as the liability of a teacher who temporarily serves in this capacity. The arrangement is permissible and the teacher should be protected so long as certain conditions are met.

First, the educator should not be called "acting principal" if he or she does not have an administrator's license. Districts should not use that title or otherwise hold the educator out as an administrator, since doing so could be considered working outside the scope of the educator's license. A more appropriate title is "administrative designee."

The educator should also not perform any of the functions that would require an administrator license, such as evaluating teachers or disciplining students or staff. If an emergency occurs that requires such action, the administrative designee should call a designated backup administrator (someone from another building or the superintendent) for assistance.

If the educator does have a valid administrator's license, he or she could be called an acting principal and perform administrator functions. However, educators with administrative licenses should consult with their local union representative before volunteering to serve as acting principal on a long-term or regular basis. In some cases, it may be appropriate to compensate the educator for the additional work or responsibility that they are temporarily assuming in an administrative role.

The Minnesota Board of School Administrators has agreed that a district may assign someone who only holds a teaching license to be an administrative designee in the absence of the principal as

This Legal Briefs column, written by Education Minnesota attorneys, is one of an occasional series on legal developments that affect educators.

long as it is not a multi-day assignment and the teachers are not evaluating teachers or disciplining students. In addition, the board has always had a position that anyone calling themselves a principal needs to be licensed as a principal, including those who work at a charter school.

When acting as an administrative designee or acting principal under these circumstances, an educator must be indemnified by the district under Minn. Stat. §123B.25 and Minn. Stat. §466.07. Indemnification means that the district would provide legal counsel for the teacher in a lawsuit and pay any damage award that might result. Indemnification only applies when an educator is acting within the scope of his or her employment and is not guilty of malfeasance, willful neglect of duty or bad faith.

Members of Education Minnesota are also covered under the National Education Association Educators Employment Liability Insurance plan. Coverage under the plan would depend on the specific facts of the case, but serving as an administrative designee at the request of administration would likely be covered.

If you have specific questions about a request you have received to serve as an "acting principal" or administrative designee, please contact your local union leadership or Education Minnesota field representative.

– Paula Johnston
Johnston is an Education Minnesota staff attorney.

MINNEAPOLIS TEACHER LOOKS TO BROADEN STUDENT'S MUSICAL EXPERIENCES

In Sarah Minette's music classes at Minneapolis South High School, she doesn't look for students to just play a piece of music together as an ensemble. She wants to see them create.

That philosophy is a big reason why Minette was recently named one of the five 2018 Music Education Innovator Award winners from the Give A Note Foundation.

The Music Education Innovator Award recognizes creative music programs that attract students not typically enrolled in music education courses, thereby increasing access to music education through diversity in curriculum and approach, according to a press release from the foundation announcing the award recipients.

With the title, Minette was awarded \$4,000, which she plans to use to start a sound production class at South.

"I want to get as many students into music-making as possible. By adding this class, we can get more students involved," she said. "The grant helps. Every little bit of money helps. It brings an awareness to what is possible in education. It doesn't just have to be band, choir and orchestra."

The sound production class will begin in the 2019-20 school year and while Minette is still figuring out some of the logistics like classroom space, she already has plenty of projects in mind.

"I want to allow students to create beats and have a more in-depth look into audio creation and mixing to create music," Minette said. "I also want to look at how we can engage other areas of the school. What if one of the language arts classes wrote poetry and my students came up with beats to turn it into a song?"

Creating this class is not the only way Minette is bringing music to students in an innovative way. She teaches two levels of guitar and piano and has taught a pop music course that looked at music through a social justice lens.

"We all have musical experiences and backgrounds. How can we harness that?" she said. "Students can go home and create music on their own. This is providing a space in school for it. It's not just school music. It's student music."

Bringing more opportunities for musical experiences to her students is also important to Minette because of her school's diverse student population.



Minneapolis South High School music teacher Sarah Minette won a \$4,000 grant to help bring a sound production class to her school and was named a Music Education Innovator by the Give A Note Foundation.



Minneapolis South High School music teacher Sarah Minette currently teaches guitar and piano classes, but hopes a sound production class will bring more students into the music department.

"The majority of the students with whom I work are immigrants and refugees who are not native English speakers," Minette said in her grant application. "Many of them have not played instruments before or have had the opportunity to experience music making in school. [As] newcomers in our country, they attempt to navigate the complexities of a new language, being a teenager, [all while] maintaining a sense of their culture. Through music, we are able to bridge these many gaps. By experimenting with different styles of music, through collaborative and individual opportunities, students begin to see themselves as not only musical, but creative beings."

Evolving her curriculum and working through ideas with her students is a big piece of how Minette approaches teaching.

"Curriculum is always evolving," she said. "It's taking that leap of faith. I learn along with the students. You're going to make mistakes and it's OK. The students are OK with it."

Two years ago, Minette brought the idea of recording an album to her Intermediate Guitar class.

"I pitched the idea to the kids. They loved it and we did it. And then we did it again the next year," she said.

Minette worked with a local recording studio to help with the recording and mixing of the album, but said both her and the kids were invested and learning throughout the whole process.

The award also means Minette will be a special guest at the Country Music Association Foundation's Music Teachers of Excellence Awards dinner in Nashville this April and receive an all-expense paid trip to present on her program at the National Association for Music Education National Conference.

To learn more about the Give A Note Foundation and its grant opportunities, go to www.giveanote.org.

Applications for the 2019 Music Education Innovator Awards are open until Feb. 11.

EDUCATION MINNESOTA MEMBER HONOR ROLL



Matthew Palombo



Rhonda Besel



Jeffrey Bell



Kerry Norling

Minnesota State College Faculty members receive excellence in teaching awards

The Minnesota State Board of Trustees Award for Excellence in Teaching acknowledges and rewards exceptional professional accomplishment and encourages ongoing excellence in teaching. The award proclaims, on behalf of the entire system, the Board of Trustees' pride in the dedication and accomplishment of its faculty who provide instruction that prepares our college and university students for their professional, scholarly and civic lives.

The 2018 awardees were announced last April, and the 2019 awardees will be announced this

spring. The following Minnesota State College Faculty members were recognized in 2018:

- **Matthew Palombo**, Philosophy, Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- **Rhonda Besel**, Cosmetology, Riverland Community College
- **Jeffrey Bell**, Biology, Northland Community and Technical College
- **Kerry Norling**, Communications, Hennepin Technical College

2018 Art Educator of the Year

The Art Educators of Minnesota named **Rana Nestrud**, 2018 Art Educator of the Year. Nestrud will represent Minnesota at the National Art Educators Conference.

Sanford Teacher Award

Taylor Thomas, an itinerant teacher of deaf/hard of hearing in Intermediate School District 917, was named Minnesota's winner of the Sanford Teacher Award. The Sanford Teacher Award is designed to reward teachers who continue to serve as inspirational pillars of education in their community.

Minnesota Middle School Association Teacher of the Year

Carrie Schmitz, an eighth-grade English teacher from Albany Area Middle School, was named the Minnesota Middle School Association Teacher of the Year.

Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC) 2019 Outstanding Teacher Award

Beth Sletta, a STEM teacher at Jefferson Elementary School in New Ulm, has been awarded the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC) 2019 Outstanding Teacher Award.

TEACHING, ADVOCACY AWARD GOES TO OWATONNA'S NOET

Scott Noet never thought that his love of baseball would lead him into teaching, but after an invitation to share his knowledge and memorabilia with a friend's class, he was hooked.

"I graduated with a history major and political science minor," Noet said. "A friend of mine asked me to come in and talk about baseball and the history of the Negro leagues, and the hour went by so fast. I said, 'Wait, you get paid for this?'"

Twenty-four years later, Noet is now a seventh- and eighth-grade social studies teacher at Owatonna Middle School and is Minnesota's nominee for the National Education Association Foundation's Award for Teaching Excellence. He received a California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence.

The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence program recognizes educators from around the country who shine in their schools, their communities and their own learning. The award also honors educators advocate for each other, the profession and students, and they embrace the diversity of their communities and the wider world.

Noet will be honored at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education gala on Feb. 8 in Washington, D.C.

Noet brings his personal love of history and geography into his classroom every day, but he also brings a love for his students.

"The kids are unfiltered," he said. "Whatever you come up with, they are usually game to do it."

Owatonna Middle Schools is an E-STEM school, which allows Noet to try a lot of new things and hands-on classroom activities.

"You think of yourself sitting in class, but if I'm bored they're bored," he said. "If I find something that I think is interesting, I might as well take a shot. I just want them engaged and thinking about stuff."

The environmental piece of E-STEM is an important part of Noet's teaching, but he is quick to add a call to action to the lesson.



Scott Noet, a social studies teacher at Owatonna Middle School, works with students who are building a model boat that they envision would carry supplies to a new settlement as part of their unit on Lewis and Clark.

"Especially as we talk about environmental stuff, it can get to be a bummer pretty fast," he said. "I always try to have a component to take action. There is agency for kids at this age. If you start them now, they'll keep going."

Noet has traveled the world through programs like the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fulbright Program, to places like South Africa, Mongolia, New Zealand and Germany.

"I've always been drawn to the world geography stuff, to see how other people do things," he said. "I can bring it back here and have that real world example. We can travel here in the classroom without actually leaving."

Not only is Noet able to bring back physical items to share with his students when he travels, he is also networking with teachers in other countries.

NOET, CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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DELEGATE SELECTION UNDERWAY FOR REPRESENTATIVE CONVENTION

Plans are underway for the 2019 Education Minnesota Representative Convention, taking place April 26-27 at the Hilton Minneapolis. Represent your colleagues on issues that affect all educators by seeking a post as a delegate or alternate.

Major business for delegates includes acting on changes to the union's constitution and bylaws and considering any proposed amendments to the legislative positions, action items and the statements of principles. This year, delegates will also elect Education Minnesota's statewide officers.

March 22 is the deadline for local presidents to inform Education Minnesota of those 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. 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 hotel reservations.

TWO ENDORSED FOR TRA BOARD

Education Minnesota has endorsed Marshall Thompson, a math teacher in Osseo, and Yohannes Agegnehu, a business and accounting faculty member at Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights, for the active teacher seats up for election on the Teachers Retirement Association Board of Trustees.

Thompson is seeking re-election to the TRA board. He is a math teacher at Park Center High School. He has served as a local negotiator, treasurer of the Metro Area Council and is on the Education Minnesota Governing Board. He has been on the Board of Trustees since 2015.

"I believe that teachers in Minnesota deserve a competent, compassionate and committed member looking after their retirement benefits. I believe I am the best candidate to fulfill that duty," Thompson said in his application materials.

Agegnehu has been a faculty member at Inver Hills since 2011, with a previous career in banking and financial advisement.

"I strongly believe that pension plans need to be protected and improved to ensure the financial future of teachers who committed their professional life to serve their communities through education. I am highly motivated and enthusiastic



Yohannes Agegnehu



Marshall Thompson

about the opportunities and challenges of serving on the board of trustees," Agegnehu said.

Trustees meet about six times a year to oversee the administration of the pension fund. Board members act as fiduciaries of the TRA plan in accordance with Minnesota statute and are subject to state economic interest disclosures.

In March, eligible active members will receive election information, including a ballot and biographical overview of each candidate. Only active members are eligible to vote for active-member board positions. Voting will end April 26. Election results will be reviewed and certified by the TRA Board of Trustees on June 12 and published immediately on www.minnesotatra.org.

NOET, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

"Whenever I travel and talk to teachers, they all have the same issues," he said. "When you're in charge of someone's education, it's a common experience. Everyone nods when you talk about something a kid did."

The NEA Foundation award is also to honor educators with strong union advocacy.

Noet has unionism in his blood. Growing up in Milwaukee, his whole family was union members. So when he got a teaching job, there was no questioning whether or not to join, Noet said.

Noet is now the secretary of the Owatonna Education Association and the middle school

representative on the negotiations team. He has also attended state and national union meetings.

"It builds a different skillset than in the classroom," Noet said. "It's good to get to know your contract."

Receiving this award is not about anything special that he did, said Noet.

"I'm representing all the other teachers that I have learned from and work with," he said. "It could be any one of them. I see the extra time they put in and see them with the kids. They are all working long hours and going above and beyond what most people think. The untrained eye might not appreciate it."



The second REA cohort includes Thom Amundsen, Heather Bakke, Natalia Benjamin, Kendra Caduff, Jason Crespín, Allan David, Annette Davis, Lindsey Erickson, Kaia Hirt, Tracy Ivy, Katherine Kakaliouras, Karen Martinez Tinajero, Samantha Mathis, Jasman Myers, Michele Nelson, Ursula Pankonin, Ilah Raleigh, Janice Reed, Farrah Roberson, Gloria Ruff, Clark Sanders, Mary T. Schmitz, Rebecca Walz, Marcu Whitlock and Annessia Xiong.

SECOND REA COHORT BEGINS WORK

The second year of Education Minnesota's Racial Equity Advocate program has begun. This year's cohort will have monthly assignments and be able to connect via Google Classroom.

The members of the first cohort have continued on with their work in their local unions and together with Education Minnesota.

"You're never not an Education Minnesota Racial Equity Advocate," said Angela Osuji, a teacher in Minneapolis.

Georgia Miller-Kamara from Intermediate District 287 agreed that the work is never

done and the union is a place for that work.

"Equity work is union business," she said. "It needs to be talked about."

Thomas Carlson, a teacher at the Perpich Center for Arts Education, said that anyone looking to build relationships and work on racial equity and cultural competency should think about getting involved in the union's programs.

"It's a great opportunity to a part of a group that is trying to figure this out, and could lead to systematic change at the local and statewide level and beyond," Carlson said.

Professional development

STRONG SCHOOLS, STRONG COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE

The Strong Schools, Strong Communities Conference is a new effort to bring educators, service providers, community partners and families together to explore and learn how schools can be a source of connection in our neighborhoods. The conference will take place March 14-15 at the Radisson Blu Mall of America. Best practices will be highlighted that support meaningful family engagement, create collaboration with community providers and provide opportunities for our students experiencing homelessness and poverty. For more information about the conference or to register, go to www.resilienceimpact.com/events.

PRIMARY SOURCES WORKSHOPS CONTINUE

The Minnesota Historical Society continues its Inquiry in the Upper Midwest workshop series for social studies teachers. The workshops focus on teaching with primary sources. Regional workshops are being held two to three times a month in locations all across Minnesota and Wisconsin. As part of the project, the Historical Society has produced webinars to help teachers use primary sources, inquiry strategies and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. Participants who attend the full training will receive a \$100 stipend. Go to <http://education.mnhs.org/ium> to find a workshop near you.

MDE SCHOOL CULTURE TRAININGS

The Minnesota Department of Education is hosting a series of free trainings on collaborative culture in schools. The sessions will focus on analyzing program data around collaborative teams to assess future needs and celebrate successes. Trainings will take place in April in Roseville, Rochester, Marshall, Sartell and Mountain Iron. Go to <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/edev/pd> and find the section of the page marked Professional Learning Community (PLC): Sustaining a Collaborative Culture-Spring 2019 Workshops.

FREE TEACHING TOLERANCE WEBINARS

Looking for social justice activities for students? Need EL resources? Teaching Tolerance webinars offer helpful guidance and great ideas from innovative educators and national teaching and learning experts. Watch these free, on-demand webinars at your own pace and share with colleagues. Go to www.tolerance.org/professional-development/webinars to see all of the offerings.

Classroom and student resources

FREE MILL CITY MUSEUM ADMISSION FOR QUALIFYING SCHOOLS

The Mill City Museum offers a wide range of educational opportunities for Minnesota's K-12 students. Thanks to the support of The McKnight Foundation, the museum is able to offer free museum admission and partially-subsidized busing

for students from qualified public schools. To qualify, your school must be a public school in the Twin Cities seven-county metro area, have 50 percent or more of students enrolled in the federal free and reduced lunch program and visit the museum in January, February or March. Registration is now open and funding is limited. For more information and to fill out an application, visit <http://education.mnhs.org/mcknight-foundation-scholarship>.

NPR STUDENT PODCAST CHALLENGE

The National Public Radio Student Podcast Challenge is open to teachers with students between fifth and 12th grades. Podcasts must be between three and 12 minutes long. Submissions close March 31. For more information, go to www.npr.org/2018/11/15/650500116/npr-student-podcast-challenge-home.

NEWSEUM LAUNCHES LATEST ED-COLLECTION

NewseumED, part of the Freedom Forum Institute, has launched the Free Speech Essentials EDCollection, a set of resources for grades 7 through university. From censorship to cyberbullying, the First Amendment and the freedoms it protects are more widely contested than ever. The curriculum guides students to take a position, find evidence to support it and make a compelling argument to their peers. Resources are free with registration on the NewseumED website. To see all of the NewseumED offerings, go to newseumed.org.

Education Minnesota Foundation spring professional development grant deadlines approaching

Applications for the second round of professional development grants from the Education Minnesota Foundation for Excellence in Teaching and Learning are due April 5.

Professional development grants are intended to provide education support professionals, higher education faculty of colleges and universities, and 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, attending a conference, etc. Members may request a grant to acquire these skills and share your new learnings with your colleagues.

ESPs and teachers may request up to \$1,500, and higher education faculty may request up to \$3,000.

For higher education faculty applicants, it is suggested that faculty seek in-kind funds to help finance the venture. Recipients of the higher education faculty grant must pay for all grant expenses out-of-pocket, and then submit receipts to the Education Minnesota foundation for reimbursement.

Classroom, ESP and Higher Education Faculty Professional Development Grants are awarded twice per school year — once in the fall and once in the spring.

The foundation's collaboration lab is also taking submissions this spring.

The collaboration lab is designed for a district's administration and staff to build positive relationships between staff and management to create a system or structure that supports collaboration, supports sustainability of these programs and reaches positive outcomes on a shared goal or project.

To learn more about the grants and how to apply or the collaboration lab, go to www.edmnfoundation.org.

Where were people reading their Minnesota Educator? Read more about our contest on page 3!



Diane Mozol, Duluth



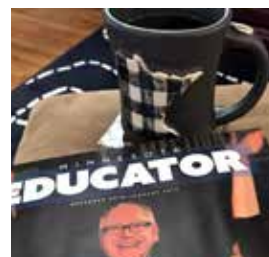
Liz Parr-Smestad, St. Paul



Kathryn Gardner, Rochester



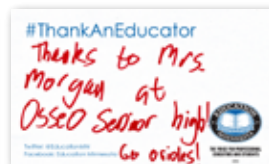
Jerry Mefford, Retired



Doug Werner, Minneapolis

Thank an educator!

Every year, thousands of kids and adults thank educators who were influential in their lives at Education Minnesota's State Fair booth. We will feature a selection in each issue of the Minnesota Educator. Keep an eye out for your name!



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For additional information to ensure you are taking full advantage of what your employer offers, contact an EFS advisor at 763-689-9023/877-403-2374 or www.efsadvisors.com. Your local EFS Advisor knows your 403(b) contractual benefits in addition to other financial planning opportunities.

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RESOURCES FOR NEW EDUCATORS

If you are a new educator, work alongside someone who is or just feel like you need a refresh on education issues, Education Minnesota's website has multiple resources to help you in the classroom and out.

Learn how to form positive relationships with your colleagues, students and parents. Get tips on taking care of yourself throughout the school year. These resources will help you get on your feet and feel more successful on the job.

Go to www.educationminnesota.org/resources.aspx#in-the-classroom to see all of the resources.

Need more advice and tips? Contact your local union's building rep or president for help at the local level.