

MINNESOTA EDUCATOR

JUNE/JULY 2020

**EDUCATORS STEP UP
TO CHALLENGE OF
DISTANCE LEARNING**

**UNION AWARDS GO TO
DESERVING EDUCATORS**



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS



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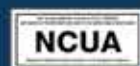
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THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

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

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: Nina Frost, age 9, La Academia Elementary, Eastern Carver County.

WE OWE IT TO EACH OTHER TO KEEP OUR DISTANCE DURING GRADUATION SEASON

High school seniors and their families aren't the only ones who will miss the big, traditional graduation ceremonies this year.

Educators will miss seeing students they've known for years walk across the big stage and into the next phase of their lives. Losing that is heartbreaking.

However, Education Minnesota supports the guidance of the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education for school districts to cancel traditional graduation ceremonies this year.

The joy of a typical graduation is outweighed by the terrible consequences of spreading COVID-19, and we must acknowledge the risks of these events are not the same for all our students' families.

No one really knows how much the re-opening of the economy will accelerate the spread of the disease by graduation season, but everything we do know about COVID-19 argues for avoiding large gatherings.

Even one infected person in a room can spread the disease, both through the air and by contaminating surfaces like doorknobs, handrails and bathroom faucets.

Does anyone believe a crowd could get into a school auditorium or stadium without touching anyone or anything?

It's true the elderly and

people with pre-existing conditions tend to get sicker than children, but there's new evidence that children without symptoms may bring the virus home and spread it.

We also know this is a disease no one wants. Even in mild cases, people suffer fever, chills, back pain, diarrhea, uncontrollable coughing, gasping for breath. It's like having an anvil on your chest, one patient told *The New York Times*. Another compared the body pain to losing a fight to Mike Tyson.

It's even worse for the people who need hospitalization. More than 700 Minnesotans have been admitted already to intensive care units and state health officials are modeling a sharp increase through July.

Then there's the financial cost. Health care isn't cheap in America, as everyone who has negotiated a labor contract knows. A common seven-day stay in the ICU for COVID-19 can easily mean more than \$70,000 in medical bills.

COVID-19 is a danger to every Minnesotan, and no one should be forced or pressured to attend a graduation ceremony that puts themselves at increased risk of catching the virus. The reward isn't worth the consequences and those risks change by race and how much money you have.

This disease is simply more

dangerous physically and financially for students who live in households with their grandparents, or with an adult with a pre-existing condition like heart disease, or who lives in a family without health insurance. In each case, families of color tend to be at higher risk for devastating outcomes than white families.

Canceling traditional graduation ceremonies was one of the most difficult decisions of a difficult year, but it was the right call for everyone who is concerned about the health of their community and who cares for equity in education.

Minnesotans have always made the choice to watch out for each other, no matter where we're from or what we look like. We do it every time we slow down on an icy road. It's one of the things that makes our state great.

Let's keep it up during this long winter of a pandemic and celebrate the accomplishments of our seniors, but only equitably and from a safe distance. We will get through this...

Together,



Twitter: @DeniseSpecht



Denise Specht

Education Minnesota offices closed until at least June 15

With Minnesota schools closing and recommendations coming in from the government and other sources, Education Minnesota has decided to close all of our offices around the state and implement a remote work plan through the rest of the school year.

All staff will be working remotely during this time period. Staff will be accessible through their regular email, work numbers and/or mobile phones. We will respond as quickly as we can to all messages. It is our intention to continue all our work as if we were in our offices, without significant interruption or inconvenience to members.

We are committed to putting our members first as we face this unprecedented challenge and uncertainty. We're grateful to all of you for your patience and understanding.

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!



Out on the buses today delivering meals. The handoffs were quick, smiles were genuine, waves were plentiful, and making a difference is contagious. @BHSisd786 @EducationMN



Where are you reading your Minnesota Educator?

Congratulations, Becca Rudquist from Dover-Eyota, for being this issue's winning submission!

We love seeing all of the places where you are reading your Minnesota Educator! See more photos on page 20.

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 Target gift card!

Submissions are due July 10. Happy reading!



Educators in the news!

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



We are proud to recognize each and every teacher for their professionalism, commitment, compassion and creativity as they deliver instruction in a way they have never done before.

Each teacher will be presented with a gift card that the CEA will be purchasing from local businesses. Great job Crookston teaching staff. You truly are Teachers of the Year!



—Crookston Education Association President Kim Davidson said in a Crookston Times story on May 6. The union usually recognizes one member as Teacher of the Year, but decided to honor all of their members this year for the amazing work they have done during distance learning.



Zimmerman Middle/High School teacher Julie Beaver not only has been teaching math virtually, she is also checking in with her students to make sure they are doing well.



Lakeville South High School teachers painted this rock before the stay-at-home order and distance learning began as a sign of love and support to their students.

EDUCATORS STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

In the last two months, educators across Minnesota have taken their classrooms and moved them into online spaces, delivered paper materials and internet hotspots and made sure their students were well and felt safe.

"We will keep educating students and building relationships in every way we can," said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht, after the governor announced distance learning will take place through the rest of the school year. "We will make sure students have healthy food and the children of essential workers have a safe place to go during the day. We will take care of our students' physical and mental health as we have in the past. None of this will be easy, but the educators of Minnesota are up to the job."

With traditional graduation ceremonies canceled this spring, many educators have found new and creative ways to celebrate their seniors.

In Fergus Falls, band instructor Scott Kummrow recorded himself playing over 22 different parts in the song, "Pomp and Circumstance," including conducting himself. He edited the video and shared it with his school's seniors.

Lawn signs, social media posts, videos and light pole banners are just a few other ways educators are making sure seniors are feeling special without their traditional goodbyes.

For Julie Beaver, a math teacher at Zimmerman Middle/High School, it's not just about teaching algebra, but making sure her students are doing well during this time.

Beaver sent out a spreadsheet just as a quick "check-in" to current and former students asking what their favorite meals have been and how they have been keeping themselves active and happy. She received numerous responses. Beaver shared a photo of the spreadsheet on social media using the #morethanjustmath.

Educators are also trying new ways to still do their classes' traditional in-person work and celebrations.

In Waconia, third grade teacher Josh Sell teaches a unit on immigration and Ellis Island. He normally holds a night where families come in and students portray immigrants coming through Ellis Island. This year, he hosted the evening on Zoom and families and students were still able to share, and even dress up, to show what they have learned.



Badger Education Association members shared a photo collage with their students to tell them how much they miss them during distance learning.

Parades of educators in cars, driving through their schools' neighborhoods, have become a fun way to connect with students and families.

In Plainview-Elgin-Millville, the school communities are so spread out through the rural area that the parade took three hours to complete.

But elementary physical education teacher Kimberly Ihrke said it was such a mood booster for the educators who are missing their students that it was worth that length of time.

Minnesota State College Faculty have been transitioning to virtual labs, with some also keeping in-person classes for those that need to receive hands-on lessons.

While educators have been doing amazing things, Specht also acknowledged in May the challenges this pandemic has made even more apparent.

"Distance learning is putting incredible stress on parents, students and educators," she said. "It's widening disparities by wealth, race and geography. I hope educators can use these last few weeks to wind down the academics while increasing attention on the mental and emotional health of our students. At the same time, we need to plan for addressing the inequities this crisis has made even worse."

Many school nurses are joining hospital staff on the front lines due to the need for staffing. Others are making house calls to check in on students and help treat the children attending school-based child care.

The pandemic has made the inequities in access to broadband internet more apparent than ever, both for students and for educators.

In a press conference with Gov. Walz about what is happening in education, Angela Forland, a third grade teacher in Spring Valley, said her internet connection is so poor it crashes around 7 a.m.

every morning. She tries to use a mobile hotspot, but can't load videos or assignments. Her third grader gets up at 5 a.m. to try to get internet for schoolwork when the network is less busy.

At Pine City High School, hundreds of students are on a "no internet available" list. Art teacher Laura Strand testified in front of the Minnesota House of Representatives that she loses hours of her own work daily and cannot upload documents due to poor connectivity.

For Intermediate School District 287 math teacher

Glazell Toledo, her students don't have time for distance learning because they're working extra hours or caring for siblings. And because their families lack access to health care there is an extra level of stress in their world.

Toledo has also spoken publicly as an Asian-American about the racism she has felt during this pandemic.

Lindsay Peifer, who is a technology integration specialist in St. Paul, also spoke about this issue with the National Education Association. Peifer also believes educators must take responsibility for protecting vulnerable students.

"Educators need to be really open and transparent in how they are modeling for their students and community," says Peifer, who is the secretary of NEA Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus. "We need to lead with love and kindness and ... take a stand that racism has no place in our community."



Schools in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage held educator parades as distance learning began, where educators drove through their school's neighborhoods waving to their students. The Gideon Pond parade featured decorated vehicles.



Waconia teacher Josh Sell hosted his annual immigration night with families over Zoom instead of in person. The event features students researching and sharing how immigrants entered through Ellis Island.



St. Cloud Education Association members donated school supplies to their students who needed resources to be successful during distance learning.

COUNSELORS FIND WAYS TO CONNECT VIRTUALLY

From creating a calming room online to making a video honoring seniors' scholarships, school counselors may be supporting students from a distance, but their work remains important.

"Counselors are so vital to the school community," said Tanis Henderson, a counselor at Deer River High School and the president-elect of the Minnesota School Counselors Association. "We blend the academics, career- and college-readiness, mental health support and relationship building."

The MSCA has created a Facebook group and email listserv to connect counselors across the state to share resources and ideas on how to do their work in a distance learning environment.

"We're finding that balance of providing them support and honoring where the kids are at," said Henderson. "Anything we provide should be a good extra to their work they are doing with their classroom teachers."

Henderson and her colleague, Lael Storlie, in Deer River have created grade-level counseling groups on Schoology, and are pushing out weekly stress management tools online and in paper form for those who need it.

"We do web or telephone appointments with students who need it," said Storlie. "And it's nice we can refer them back to resources online they can use."

Storlie is also working with fifth grade students

who would normally be having in-person sixth grade orientation as they prepare to move into a new school building next year.

"These points of transition always weigh on counselors," she said.

Henderson is also working on transitions for graduating seniors.

"We are doing our senior exit meetings over WebEx," she said. "Our students are still getting the same services, but it's not the same."

Elementary-level counselors are also getting creative to meet students' needs.

Kayla Kujak, a counselor at Gibbs Elementary in Rochester, has created online spaces for students and families to use whenever they need it.

"I have an online calming room with different activities and other resources," she said.

She also posts an activity each week with some discussion questions.

Kujak is still meeting with the 25 kids she had been working with before distance learning began via Google Meet, where she can talk with them about what's going well and what they need help with.

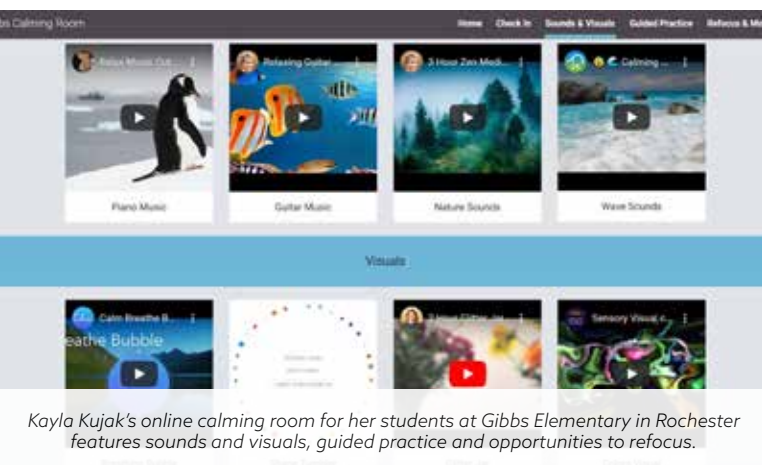
Kujak is also working with classroom teachers and shares a lesson with them each week on social-emotional learning.

The Rochester School District is also filming lessons to be shown on local TV stations, including one featuring Kujak and another counselor talking about making positive choices.

The pandemic has shown the importance of counselors and the shortage of them in our state, said Henderson.

"There are so many students and not as many counselors as we would like to see," she said.

"The students' needs don't go away if there isn't a counselor in the building," Storlie said.



Kayla Kujak's online calming room for her students at Gibbs Elementary in Rochester features sounds and visuals, guided practice and opportunities to refocus.

SOCIAL WORKERS CONTINUE TO PROVIDE NECESSARY SUPPORTS

School social workers are helping students and families more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is the biggest mental health crisis our profession has seen," said Molly Fox, a Mankato school social worker and president of the Minnesota School Social Workers Association. "The need for student support teams in schools is more than ever before."

Fox has been spending her time reaching students however she can—phone conferences, Google meetings. She said she is helping meet students' basic needs, but also making sure her student's families have access to things like food and rent.

For Katie Ficker, Holdingford Middle School and High School social worker, distance learning has presented several new challenges, but also has brought forth a whole new array of resources and services for students and families to access on an online platform.

"My daily and weekly face-to-face meetings with students quickly moved to online Google classrooms, chats and meets," said Ficker. "Several hundred emails have been exchanged as well as phone calls and home visits to families."

Christy McCoy works at AGAPE High School in Saint Paul, which is an alternative school for pregnant and parenting teen moms.

"Many of our students are trying to balance parenting, doing



The Minnesota School Social Workers Association's website, www.msswa.org/Responding-to, has numerous resources for social workers and other educators.

school work and managing anxiety and triggers," she said. "Many of our students have trauma histories and when you add the trauma of this pandemic, it can trigger responses."

McCoy is facilitating groups with graduating seniors and Native American students to provide extra support.

School social workers are also providing support for their colleagues.

Some are hosting virtual staff lounges to connect. Others have office hours specifically for staff.

The MSSWA has been hosting webinars on topics such as trauma and self-care.

The group has numerous resources available on their website on topics such as community resources, activities for families and students, supporting student

mental health needs, special education resources, healthy habits and self-care.

"School social workers from across the state have come together to share ideas and resources, supporting one another, so that we can continue to give our very best to each and every student and family, despite today's current adversities," said Ficker.

"We are leaders in trauma-informed practices and interventions, which is going to be of huge value as we go into the fall," said McCoy. "We need to be supporting the teachers and understanding vicarious trauma and how it can affect them. How can we take care of our staff so they can take care of our students? The students need it and they need it in every school."



UNION BUSINESS GOES VIRTUAL DURING COVID

Just as educators have moved to distance learning, Education Minnesota also has moved to virtual union work and support.

Coronavirus resources webpage

Education Minnesota legal staff and education issues staff are continuing to create FAQs, guidance and resources on all things related to education, employment and union freedoms during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members can access all resources at www.educationminnesota.org/resources/in-the-classroom/Coronavirus.

Representative Convention

Education Minnesota's annual business meeting, the Representative Convention, was held on the GoToMeeting platform on April 25.

The event, normally two days, was shortened to only essential business, and took place over three hours.

President Denise Specht chaired the meeting, and also gave a short address to the 434 delegates.

"We can continue to raise our voices in union and rise above our fears to shape the future as organized labor has done for generations," she said. "We will not allow this to be a step backward in education. We will do well by our students. We are in isolation but we are not

isolated. Rise up to help shape the future."

There were two business items on the RC agenda: debate on five amendments to the Education Minnesota Constitution and Bylaws and speeches for candidates running for elected office in Education Minnesota.

All five bylaw amendments passed.

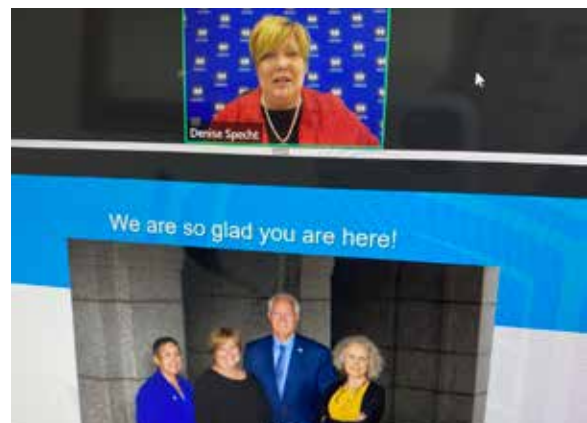
Delegates voted to:

- Decrease the dues formula to better reflect the cost of running our continuous retired membership program.
- Cap dues increases from year to year.
- Implement a prorated dues calculation for members joining mid-year.
- Bring consistency in filling vacancies of elected positions until the next opportunity to elect a replacement at a convention.
- Ensure all members understand the process of local disaffiliation from Education Minnesota by adding the process that must be followed.

Ballots for the union elections were mailed to delegates in May and results will be certified at the end of the month and posted on www.educationminnesota.org.



Education Minnesota members logged into the virtual Representative Convention from home.



President Denise Specht chaired the virtual Representative Convention, the union's annual business meeting.



Education Minnesota members are able to join a bi-weekly Zoom event to talk with colleagues about issues related to distance learning and staying well during these times.

Connecting During COVID

Education Minnesota's Education Issues Department has created spaces for educators to connect and gain some professional development.

The Connecting During COVID series aims to provide a space for educators to vocalize their concerns and needs, as well as share in their joys and successes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the bi-weekly Zoom event, educators have the opportunity to process thoughts, ideas and experiences that they would like to discuss with others. Educators breakout into small groups with others to discuss the important topics chosen by participants during registration.

Topics on the webinars so far include education support professional issues during COVID, distance learning best practices, educator well-being, student well-being, equity and returning to school.

Summer Seminar

Education Minnesota has made the decision to hold our Summer Seminar virtually this August. Details about timing and session offerings are still being worked on, but educators can look for information on www.educationminnesota.org in the coming weeks. Staff are working to make sure educators can still receive access to the high-quality professional development and union leadership training that is offered at Summer Seminar.

Other professional development opportunities are being planned virtually and will be announced this summer.

Unity leadership assembly

After the successful Unity Summit earlier this year, participants who had signed up to be involved in the 2020-21 campaign attended an online leadership assembly in April. The event featured member speakers discussing their distance learning experiences and especially how education support professionals have been crucial to this work during this time. Participants broke into small groups to talk about their experiences and why they were still committed to working on uniting their colleagues, either virtually or in-person, this summer and fall around voting for pro-public education candidates and fighting for what our schools' and students' need.

Read more about how our campaign continues on page 12.



District 287 math teacher Glazell Toledo shared her story of working during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the racism she has experienced as an Asian American during this time, at the Unity Leadership Assembly in April.

Learning and Teaching During COVID-19 Facebook page

Education Minnesota has a private Facebook page just for members to share resources and connect. Search for "Education Minnesota Learning and Teaching During COVID-19" and asked to join. Once membership has been confirmed, educators can post, comment, share and download content from colleagues and Education Minnesota staff.

Posts on the page include social-emotional learning videos, socially distant graduation ideas, Google doc templates and best practices for virtual meetings with students.

EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS ESSENTIAL TO DISTANCE LEARNING WORK

From providing child care to children of essential workers to supporting students, education support professionals have been a key piece to the success of distance learning.

"ESPs can still give support to their students and encourage them to learn with distance learning," said Emilee Eastes, an ESP in Lakeville. "Sometimes the role may be to support students in a child care setting, and sometimes the role may be to help answer homework questions for students remotely."

ESPs are the primary employee group staffing the essential worker child care programs in schools.

"Some of the tasks may be helping a student with questions on their assignments, cleaning the classrooms and anything that has been used by staff or students, planning some activities for the children when they are finished with their assignments, and also supervising a classroom, lunchtime and recess," said Eastes.

ESPs are often the employees who are delivering meals, technology and paper materials to students.

In Aitkin, ESPs travel more than two hours a day on buses to deliver meals and packets to students.

"I have been delivering food and hotspots. Our work as educators



Robbinsdale ESP Annette Davis shared her story of working and not feeling valued during this pandemic at Education Minnesota's Unity Campaign Leadership Assembly in April.

looks very different now. We are willing to take on new challenges to educate our students and help families," said Jason Vasquez, an EA at Paul and Sheila Wellstone Elementary in St. Paul, during a press conference with legislators about the support needed for ESPs during this time.

ESPs are also working directly with students who may need additional assistance in their learning.

In this time, ESPs across the state are being leaned on by teachers to do even more student support than ever before.

Robbinsdale Education Assistant Annette Davis shared that she is working with her students with autism.

She said that ESPs are leading Google Meets with students and instructing some of those classes.

The pandemic has given more light to many of the inequities in support and respect given to ESPs.



Emilee Eastes, a Lakeville ESP, is working in the district's child care program, and used her social media to ask lawmakers to help protect ESP jobs during this pandemic.

Many ESPs are having to advocate so the proper safety and distance requirements are met when in school buildings.

For Davis, this pandemic has strengthened her motivation to fight for legislation that supports ESPs and gives them more respect in the workplace.

"ESPs are hourly workers who don't get the respect they deserve during good times and are the first to lose pay as well as face layoffs during crises, and in Minnesota are often our educators of color," she said. "Before this pandemic, ESPs were already experiencing inequities. It has only gotten worse"

"Being involved with the union is more important than ever because our voices are still being silenced. I want our district and lawmakers to show ESPs are valued. Give us a livable wage so we don't have to work more than one job. Give us affordable health care."

LEGISLATURE ADJOURNS WITH IMPORTANT WORK LEFT UNDONE

The Minnesota Legislature adjourned May 18 without voting on state employee contracts as they were originally bargained or adopting language to improve the economic security of hourly school employees.

The Senate rejected legislation that would have protected hourly school workers from unnecessary layoffs. Many of those educators are education support professionals, who don't get the respect they deserve during good times and are the most vulnerable to loss of pay and benefits during uncertain times.

The education finance bill passed does include a directive to the Minnesota Department of Education to prioritize federal funding from the CARES Act to areas that enable a school to comply with Executive Order 20-19 (distance learning), including paying employees.

As of press time, Gov. Tim Walz has announced that Minnesota anticipates receiving \$43 million in the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, and asked that GEER dollars be used to:

- Prioritizing technology for K-12 students to assist their learning.
- Summer school programming for students who need additional support over the summer months.
- Wrap-around supports like those students would receive in a full-service community school.

STATE CONTRACTS

The Senate also failed to pass contracts originally negotiated last year for state employees. This includes educators who work in our two-year colleges, state correctional facilities and residential schools, along with other frontline workers like nurses, epidemiologists and law enforcement officers. The contracts were passed in the House.

For most of the 2019-21 contracts, pay raises were 2.25 percent in the first year and 2.5 percent in the second. The contracts were negotiated last year within the budget appropriations made in 2019, and therefore are paid for.

"Educators and people who care about Minnesota's students should let their senators know we expect better when the Legislature meets again," said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht.

The Legislature is expected to go in to special session in mid-June, when the governor's peacetime emergency expires. An extension would trigger a special session.

An education policy bill is expected to pass when the legislature meets in special session, and some proposed provisions include::

- Adding a requirement for renewal of Tier 1 and Tier 2 teacher licenses that these teachers be trained in mental illness, which is currently required of

Tier 3 and 4 teachers.

- Requiring vaping prevention instruction for public school students in grades 6 to 8; encourages vaping prevention instruction for high school students; and requires MDE to include tobacco use and vaping questions in the Minnesota student survey.

BILL HELPS TEACHERS RENEWING THEIR LICENSES

Teachers who needed to complete licensure exams or renew their license by July 1 have six more months to do so.

HF4415 gives those teachers until Jan. 1 to complete the requirements. Only about half of the 17,000 teachers who had to renew their licenses this year were ready to do so before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

The bill also allows the state education commissioner to waive certain testing and graduation requirements for the 2019-20 school year. School boards are also given the ability to transfer money between community education and general funds through next year to help fee-based programs in our schools.

The bill also reduces the number of service days required for probationary teachers by the number of instructional days canceled due to COVID-19.

UNITY CAMPAIGN CONTINUES ON WITH FUNDING MESSAGE

At the Unity Summit earlier this year, Education Minnesota kicked off a campaign for fully funding education through electing pro-public education candidates in 2020 and advocating for the resources our students' need.

While the pandemic has changed a lot in the world, the public is talking about the need for more support for public education now more than ever before.

During this pandemic, those trained at the Unity Summit started taking action.

More than 200 attended the campaign's virtual Leadership Assembly in April. They were asked to take a photo with their colleagues to show support for hourly workers and the bill being debated at the Legislature that would have protected them against unnecessary layoffs this school year.

Hundreds of selfies from all over the state were shared to show support and posted on Education Minnesota's social media channels.

More than 500 educators attended the Unity Summit and the hope was to continue more trainings in person throughout the spring and summer.


Education Minnesota staff have been working on moving the training to an online platform that will be ready for members this summer.

Members who are interested in serving as worksite unity team leaders can talk to their local union leadership or Education Minnesota field staff.

Unity leaders will help unite their worksite—doing selfie collages, texting, sharing our info about actions around the campaign—before the November election and beyond.

Staff are also planning a big back-to-school campaign training in August. At that training, members will be asked to start planning virtual campaign events at their worksites in September.





Joe Cerar spoke at the 2019 Representative Convention. Cerar is this year's Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award winner.

CERAR EARNS TOP AWARD FOR CAREER OF LEADERSHIP

When Joe Cerar was in eighth grade, the teachers in his school district went on strike and he saw first-hand the values of unions.

"My dad (a teacher in Eveleth) was the lead negotiator during the strike," he said. "No one crossed the picket line—not garbage workers, no one. They couldn't even get enough scabs, who were paid \$150 a day, because no one was going to cross the picket line."

Cerar took that lesson, as well as what he learned from his mom—who was also an educator and union leader—and has been an active union member and leader for his entire 29-year career.

That legacy is why Cerar is the 2020 Education Minnesota Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award winner. This award is the union's highest honor.

"Rich with history, quick with a

story, or an amusing quip, Joe Cerar leads by example, doing the work required of a leader, engaging multiple perspectives, and facilitating change," said Matt Wilmes, who leads the Hiawatha Valley Teachers United intermediate organization with Cerar and nominated him. "He is an accomplished and exemplary leader, worthy of standing among the other recipients of Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award."

Cerar spent the few years of his teaching career in northern Minnesota, but then came to Plainview-Elgin-Millville, where he has remained for 25 years.

"I wanted to get involved, so I started going to HVTU meetings," Cerar said. "And you know what happens when a young teacher starts showing an interest in being active, I was approached to take on some roles."

Cerar has served both as president and vice president of Education Minnesota-Plainview-Elgin-Millville, and has also served as negotiator and chief negotiator. He currently serves as president of HVTU.

"He's always looking to expand the reach of our organization," Wilmes said of Cerar's HVTU leadership. "We have seen a growth in education support professional members, because Joe really made sure we elevated the voices of ESPs. He includes unaffiliated locals in our area so they can see the benefits of being in an IO. He always tries to find a way to include people."

He also knows the connection to the larger labor movement.

"Our IO was the first to fully affiliate with our Area Labor Council," Cerar said. "We

**CERAR,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 18**

MCCAMMON BRINGS JUSTICE, CARE INTO EDUCATION

When Becky McCammon went to college, there wasn't a major for doing what is right by people, so she majored in English and teaching instead.

But in her teaching, McCammon has always brought an intention and thoughtfulness to her work, making sure her actions and words impact others in a positive way.

That mentality and her advocacy for Saint Paul Public School's restorative practices program is why McCammon is this year's Education Minnesota Human Rights Award winner.

"We need to speak with a reverence for self and students and education," she said. "Because we have that empathy, the hard work is still hard, but it's supported. I believe in the infinite possibilities and goodness of educators. Restorative practices has a way of nurturing habits and practices in wellness."

McCammon helped bargain for the program as a negotiator with the Saint Paul Federation of Educators, and found her calling in the restorative practices work.

"When we were bargaining, union leadership got us together and we met with circle keepers," she said. "One said, 'Restorative practices is a way of being.' And it just felt right."

And with McCammon at the helm, it has been a successful district program.

"There's a lot of ways that RP work could have gone after we won contract language around it. Even though we had worked with practitioners in town to craft the language, to make it actually happen was a risk. And it didn't go bad, because of Becky," said SPFE President Nick Faber, who nominated McCammon. "This isn't how we 'handle behaviors' in our buildings, but decolonize our buildings. It's been inspirational to watch."

"People view RP too much as an alternative discipline thing. But Becky has really changed the work in such a way that we're able to address some of the disparities through RP. We all have an opportunity to grow as humans and connect better with our students in a really positive way."



Becky McCammon (second from left) with her restorative practices colleagues, daughter and other Saint Paul Federation of Educators members and supporters during the union's strike in early March.

In her four years in the role, McCammon has gone from coordinating a few schools to 12. The district won a federal grant to expand the program.

"I go where I can to be of help, and I don't go where I can't be of help," she said. "We try and create as thoughtful a space as possible. RP has supported a way for people to ask something that isn't an answer and to ask for opportunity and space and time to sit with what they're holding."

McCammon works with the restorative practice coordinators at the building sites. They get together once a month and do coaching sessions and circle.

"When we are all together as RP leads, she makes sure that she shows you she respects you as a leader," said Fallon Henderson, the RP coordinator at Maxfield Elementary. "She is always encouraging everyone around her, seeing something in them that they might not see."

Lifting up the educators who do this work is very important to McCammon.

"(RP coordinator) is now a job title and classification that have been filled mostly by our education support professionals," she said. "I'm always called to be respectful of a history of harm how our non-licensed staff have been treated by our institutions. They are the heart and compass of our buildings to transform and make change."

MCCAMMON, CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS DISPLAY COURAGE, SOLIDARITY

The 25 preschool teachers in the South Washington County School District were included in the teacher bargaining unit, until they weren't.

For over 20 years, this group were members of the United Teachers of South Washington County and paid on the salary schedule. In 2018, that changed when the district decided not to require a license to teach preschool in the district, which then removed them from the bargaining unit.

Without hesitation, the teachers called the union president and said, "What can we do?" and got to work on a plan.

Because of their commitment to their union and their display of courage, the preschool teachers of South Washington County

are Education Minnesota's 2020 We Are One Solidarity Award winners. This award honors members or groups who actively promote union solidarity.

"They never said, 'Oh we're fine on our own,'" said Marty Fridgen, UTSWC president who nominated the group.

Changing one word, from "required" to "preferred," in the licensure requirement for preschool teachers is what removed them from the bargaining unit in June 2019.

"We couldn't be part of the union if we weren't considered teachers," said Angela Sell, a preschool teacher of 11 years.

It wasn't just removing them from the union that felt like a blow to the teachers, it was

the feeling that the district didn't value their license and what it took to get it.

"I take pride in being a teacher and having that license," said Nicole Liffbrig. "I take pride in saying that I'm an Early Childhood teacher."

"It was a hard pill to swallow," said Sell. "We had worked for five years to get into the teacher bargaining unit. As most districts are adding Early Childhood Family Education teachers to their bargaining unit, we're getting kicked out."

"And we never really heard a reason why," said Cathy Feltes, an 18-year South Washington County preschool teacher.

But the teachers got right to work.

"We had a long road of fighting it and going to board meetings together, arguing our importance to the board," said Sell. "That was to no avail."

If they weren't going to get back into the current bargaining unit, the teachers decided they would make a new one.

The group filled out their cards for the Bureau of Mediation Services to say they wanted to become their own bargaining unit, as part of the UTSWC.

The district tried delaying their vote to authorize the union, again saying that they can't call themselves teachers.



The preschool teachers of South Washington County on a staff call in early May. Top left: Meg Kiemen, Cathy Feltes, Kelsey Pinault; Middle left: Nicole Liffbrig, Kelsey Most, Mary Bachman; Bottom left: Katie Solem, Grace Birdseye, Kristi Koenings; Bottom single: Aimee Mediger.

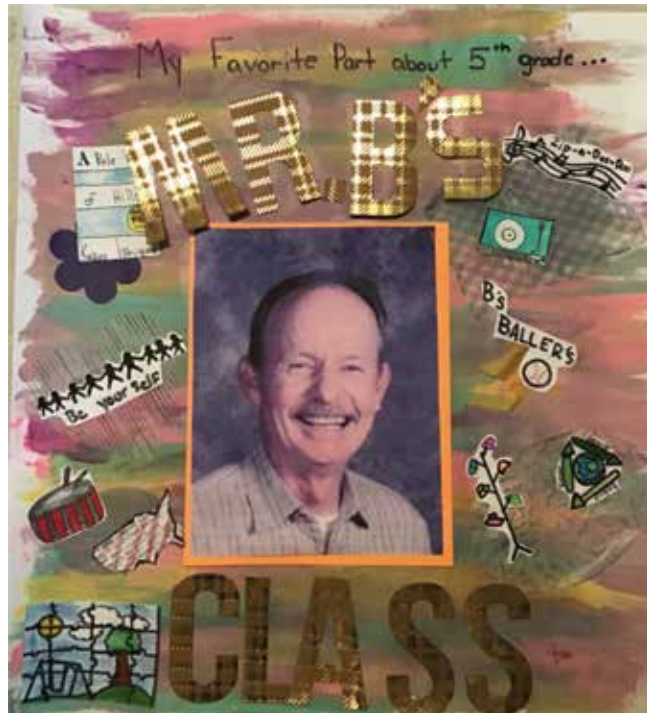
UTSWC,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

STUDENT ART CONTEST

With distance learning taking place across Minnesota, Education Minnesota wanted to take the opportunity to highlight student art and the educators who support them in their work.



Ava Beal, age 17, Farmington



Josephine, age 10, Oak Crest Elementary School, Belle Plaine



Lainee, age 14, Robert J. Elkington Middle School, Grand Rapids



Whitney, age 14, Robert J. Elkington Middle School, Grand Rapids



Daniel Meza Molina, age 11,
Anwatin Middle School, Minneapolis



Mason, age 9, Tri-City United



Sydney, age 14, Robert J. Elkington
Middle School, Grand Rapids



Sawyer, age 6, Tri-City United

**THANK YOU
TO ALL OUR
PARTICIPANTS!**

CERAR, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

worked really hard to make those connections at the regional level and then at the state level. As the biggest union in the state, we need to play a role and support them and they support us."

Cerar sits on the Minnesota AFL-CIO board and is a delegate to the Southeast Minnesota Area Labor Council.

At the local level, Cerar says it's been important for the union to be seen as a leader and advocate and work together with administration.

"It's so much better when we're working together," he said. "We don't always see eye-to-eye, but we have trust and that's important."

Thankfully, Cerar's current superintendent knows that value, too.

"I was the vice president of the teachers' union when I taught," said Superintendent Bill Ihrke.

"Joe and I were peer teachers together. We negotiated contracts together when I was a teacher. Now I'm on the other side. In our district, the administration and union feels like a partnership. Joe's a big reason why that is."

Cerar has also been very active in Education Minnesota and the National Education Association, serving on the state governing board and as a NEA Director. He also has sat on the state Council of Local Presidents and the Political Action Committee.

This kind of involvement is the reason Wilmes said he nominated Cerar for this award.

"He has lived and breathed Education Minnesota for a long time," Wilmes said. "As our organization shifts and grows, we need to listen to the voice of history and know where we came from to inform the direction we need to go."

MCCAMMON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

While her work is mostly with adults, McCammon's care for others is felt by students, too.

"Becky puts students first by centering the personal narrative, well-being and growth of the educators she works with," said Kurt RuKim, another RP coordinator in the district. "Becky models how we might imagine what leadership, collaboration and the restorative impulse may look like in our respective selves and decision-making processes."

McCammon has put so much of herself into this work, it was noticed by publishers.

McCammon's book, "Restorative Practices

at School: An Educator's Guided Workbook to Nurture Professional Wellness, Support Student Growth, and Build Engaged Classroom Communities," was released this spring.

"I'm not an expert, but I'm doing my best every day to be as trustful and soaked in my values and with other people in their journeys," she said.

McCammon is someone everyone always remembers, said Henderson.

"She's not the flower, but the grass," she said. "She leaves a piece of her everywhere she goes, but she still stays whole."

UTSWC, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

"In the end, the ruling by the BMS agreed with us and stated that 'preschool teachers' is the correct name for them," said Fridgen.

In October 2019, the teachers voted to form their own unit.

"The vote was 100 percent," said Feltes.

The group currently has a short document that says most teachers are grandfathered in and are working under the previous pay and benefits structure, but anyone hired in the last year is not. They will work on bargaining a contract that gives them the salary, benefits and working conditions they had when

they were with the licensed teacher bargaining unit.

"To me, it was inspiring that they knew what a union meant and that we were going to be better together," said Fridgen.

"For our group, it gave us a sense of solidarity," said Feltes. "We were a strong group of teachers before, but this has made us stronger."

The teachers plan to not only settle a contract, but work on the legislative fix that would allow all ECFE, as well as adult basic education, teachers, to receive continuing contract rights.

Professional development

AFT SHARE MY LESSON WEBINARS

The American Federation of Teachers' Share My Lesson webpage continues to share resources that educators can use in their classrooms or distance learning, as well as professional development opportunities for all educators. The AFT recently released capstone projects for all grade levels on how to finish the school year and celebrate what they have done this year. See all of the opportunities and resources at www.sharemylesson.com.

NEA EDUCATING THROUGH CRISIS WEBSITE

The National Education Association's Educating Through Crisis website offers advice for engaging students online, strategies for maintaining support for the most vulnerable, words of encouragement, ways to alleviate stress and avoid burnout and more. The website features resources on knowing your rights, digital supports, meeting students' and families' needs, wellness and taking action. To see all of the resources, go to www.educatingthroughcrisis.org.

LEARNING NETWORK RESOURCES

The Learning Network is a website from The New York Times that supplies lesson plans and other online resources for educators and students. Along with lesson plans, some of the offerings include a news quiz, student opinion questions for ages 13 and older and the Word of the Day, which provides vocabulary words in the context of recent Times articles. A digital subscription is not required. The blog and all New York Times articles linked from them are free, but you may need to create a free New York Times account to comment on posts. Go to <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/about-the-learning-network/> to see the opportunities.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WEBINARS

The Minnesota Department of Education continues to host professional development opportunities for educators online throughout the summer. The offerings include workshops on special education, social-emotional learning and English language learners. To see all of the offerings and how to register, go to education.mn.gov/MDE/about/cal/.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS VIRTUAL EVENTS, ONLINE RESOURCES

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association is offering multiple opportunities for online professional development. The group is hosting webinars with topics specific to the COVID-19 response, as well as their summer institute. The institute will still take place June 15-17, but registrants will have 30 days to view content. The institute includes presentations on trauma, building strong relationships and working across differences. The institute is open to non-MSSWA members for an increased fee. The MSSWA also has multiple online resources for communities, families and students and supporting students with mental health needs and IEPs. To learn more about the MSSWA professional development offerings and other resources, go to www.msswa.org.

MATH WEBINARS

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is celebrating its centennial by hosting 100 hours of professional development. Webinars are taking place through August, but educators are able to access previously recorded sessions as well. Go to www.nctm.org/100-Days-of-Professional-Learning.

SCIENCE TEACHER LESSON SHARING

The Minnesota Science Teacher Association has created an online COVID resource page, www.mnsta.org and click on "COVID-19 Response Resources." The page includes a webinar recording of a MnSTA and Minnesota Department of Education presentation. The webpage also includes places for Minnesota science teachers to share any lessons, either digital or analog. Also included on the website are resources sorted by subject and grade level, as well as screencasts and other opportunities for educators to find resources.

Grants

NEA FOUNDATION COVID RESPONSE GRANTS

The NEA Foundation is offering grants to support educator-led initiatives to adapt to the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic during the summer months of 2020. Applications are due May 28 and June 11. For more information, go to www.neafoundation.org/for-educators/covid-rapid-response-grants.

State Fair booth volunteer signup

As of press time, the Minnesota State Fair is scheduled to go on as usual, although that may change as the COVID-19 response continues.

Education Minnesota plans to continue hosting its traditional booth until either the State Fair or state health authorities advise otherwise.

Every year, Education Minnesota member volunteers and staff produce personalized photo calendars for visitors at our booth in the Education Building on Cosgrove Street near the Snelling Avenue entrance.

Sign up at www.cvent.com/d/gnqfy3.

The booth is open from 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27 through Monday, Sept. 7. Shifts include taking digital photos and acting as Education Minnesota ambassadors to fairgoers. In 2019, members produced more than 15,000 calendars for booth visitors.

Shifts are three hours long. Volunteers receive an admission ticket, T-shirt, mileage reimbursement and parking reimbursement up to \$10.

In addition to the photo calendar, the booth also features a different education group almost every day of the fair showcasing their curriculum area or program.

Education Minnesota cares about the health and safety of its volunteers and the tens of thousands of guests who visit our booth every year. We expect to take extra safety precautions this year, although the exact measures haven't been decided upon yet. They will be communicated to volunteers well in advance of the fair, however.

Please email or call Ashley Behrens at ashley.behrens@edmn.org or 651-292-4862 with any questions.

Watch www.educationminnesota.org for any updates on our State Fair booth.

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



Dorothy Willkomm, Retired



Elizabeth Hillukka, Sebeka



Jill Nysse, Winona



Jodi Prchal, New Prague



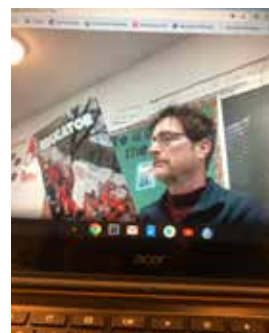
Mary Beth Huttlin,
Minnetonka



Michele Abel,
Minnetonka



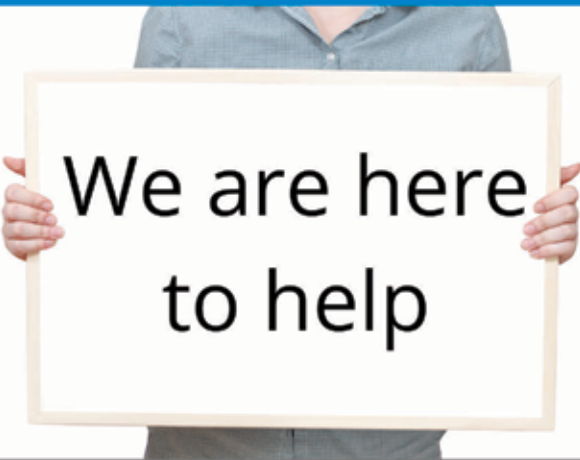
Molly Vievering,
Anoka Hennepin



Thom Green,
White Bear Lake

MEMBERS WANT TO KNOW

ESI Member Benefit resources



We are here
to help

With the COVID-19 pandemic, our world is changing daily. Not only has our work changed but finances may be tight, retirement plans may have changed and paying bills may be difficult or impossible. ESI Member Benefits and our business partners are here to support you. Please reach out to the individual programs or contact ESI at 651-292-4856 if you have questions or are in need of assistance.

Financial concerns and support including budgets, investments and pensions

- EFS Advisors
www.efsadvisors.com | 763-689-9023

Personal loans and other assistance

- NEA Member Benefits
www.neamb.com | 800-637-4636
- United Educators Credit Union
www.uecu.coop | 651-264-0669

Payment flexibility and billing relief options

- Liberty Mutual
www.libertymutual.com/agent/darlenevonarx | 952-229-5692
- Travelers
www.travelers.com/educationminnesota | 888-695-4640
- California Casualty
www.calcas.com | 866-680-5143
- NEA Life Insurance
www.neamb.com | 800-637-4636

Trauma counseling

- AFT Member Benefits
www.aft.org/benefits/trauma | 800-238-1133

Office Max/Office Depot discount program

- NEA Member Benefits Office Max/Office Depot Discount Program
www.neamb.com/products/nea-office-depot-officemax-discount-program

Additional resources

- Educators Lifetime Solutions – life and long-term care insurance
www.educatorsltc.com | 763-689-9023
- Lifesprk – caregiving resources and in home care
www.lifesprk.com/edmnnav | 952-345-3317
- Minnesota Health Insurance Network – health insurance and Medicare supplements
www.educationmn.mnhi.net | 952-465-0072
- PerksConnect - online shopping
edmn.perksconnection.com
- Securus ID – identity theft protection and recovery
www.educationminnesota.securusid.com | 612-238-0340
- Tradition Mortgage – purchase and refinancing
www.mneducatorshomes.com | 952-252-4490
- Zebit – shop now and pay over time
www.zebit.com/edmn
- NEA Member Benefits
www.neamb.com | 800-637-4636
- AFT Plus Member Benefits
www.aft.org/member-benefits | 800-238-1133

Important information for those nearing retirement

Since we have cancelled our seminars this spring and are still in the process of moving them online, if you have individual questions regarding possible retirement plans and your finances, please reach out to an EFS advisor near you. You can find your local advisor at www.efsadvisors.com/Home/Advisor

41 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55103 651-292-4856 800-642-4624

esi.educationminnesota.org esi@edmn.org

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ESI



THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
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Education Minnesota
41 Sherburne Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55103

PD to move online

Education Minnesota is working on moving professional development offerings online.

The Minnesota Educator Academy will continue to be the place to find member-driven and union-led professional development. Staff are working hard to create the platform using LearnUpon and will be engaging members to continue to develop and help train virtually.

Watch Education Minnesota's website, social media channels and your inbox for information about when the online classes will begin.