

MFT Educator

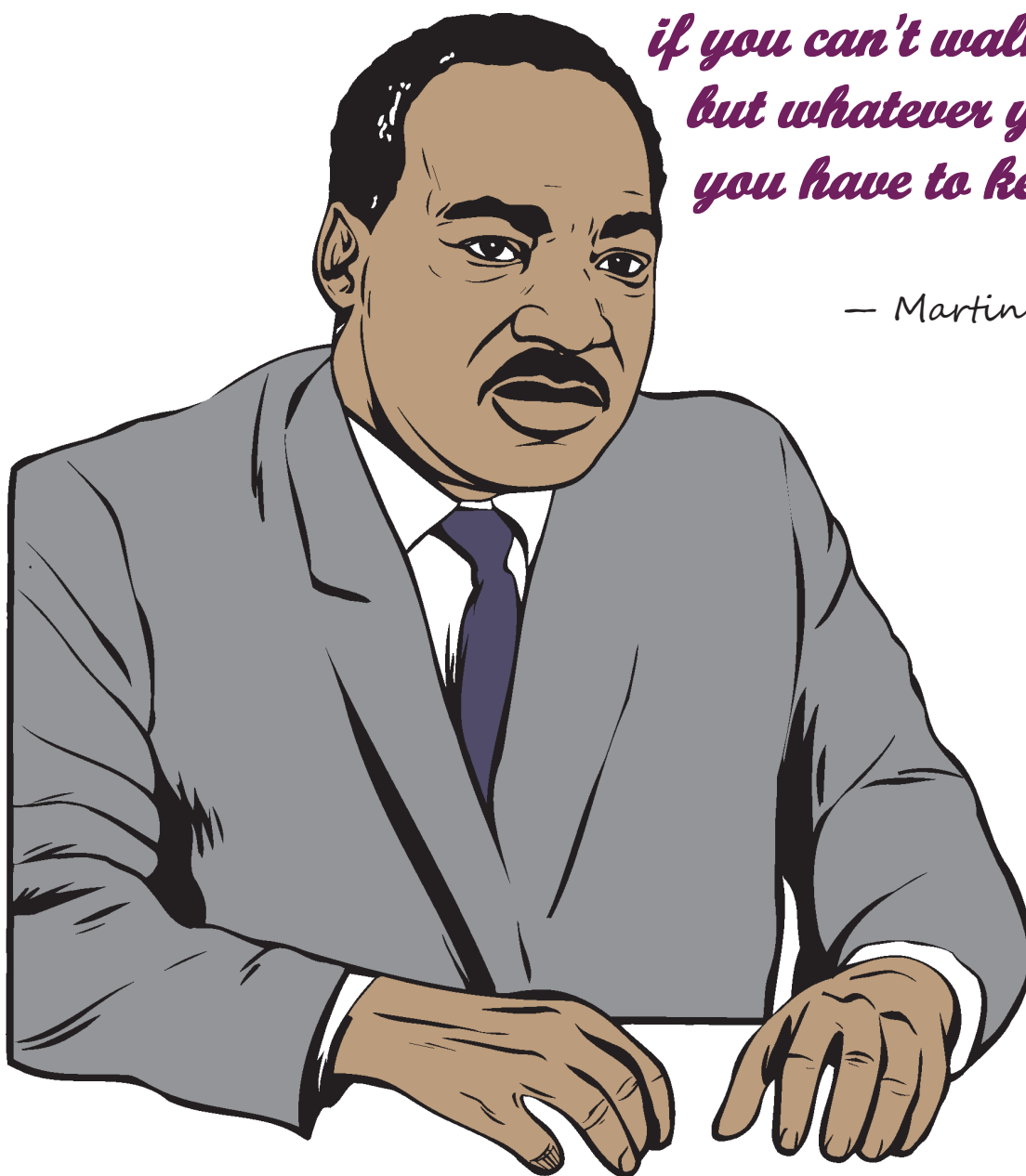
A Union of Professionals

December 2015

www.mft59.org

*“If you can't fly, then run,
if you can't run, then walk,
if you can't walk, then crawl,
but whatever you do,
you have to keep moving
forward.”*

— Martin Luther King Jr.



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Minneapolis Federation of Teachers & ESP, Local 59

Teachers deserve thanks, not blame

by Dr. Tom Staszewski

As our public schools begin another school year, it's time to stop blaming and criticizing teachers and start thanking and acknowledging them.

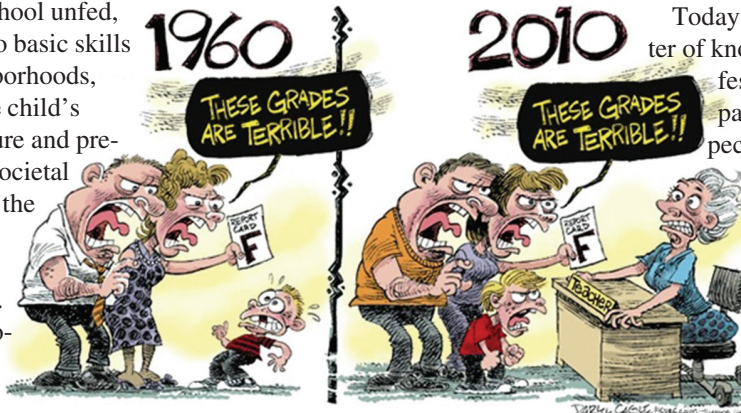
Our schools reflect society, and society has undergone a dramatic shift from previous generations. A typical classroom today consists of many students with severe behavioral problems, limited knowledge of English usage, emotional and psychological difficulties, learning disabilities and attention-deficit disorders. And many suffer from abuse and other adverse home and socioeconomic conditions.

Unlike previous generations, many parents today send their kids to school unfed, unprepared and with little or no basic skills or social skills. In many neighborhoods, it's the school building, not the child's home that provides a safe, secure and predictable haven. Despite these societal problems, we need to focus on the success stories of what's right with our schools rather than what's wrong with our schools.

In my previous work as a motivational speaker and professional development trainer, I have personally worked with thousands of teachers nationwide. I have found them to be caring, hardworking, dedicated, industrious and sincerely committed to the success of their students.

Teachers' duties have now grown to the added dimensions of counselor, mentor, coach, resource person, mediator, motivator, enforcer and adviser. Instead of acknowledging that teaching is a demanding profession, critics will often focus on the supposedly shortened workday of teachers.

Still others claim, "Yes, teachers are busy, but at least they get a planning period each day to help get things done." In reality, the so-called planning period is really a misnomer. A typical teacher is so involved with the day's activities that usually there is no time to stop and plan. Those minutes that are supposed to be devoted to planning are often filled with endless amounts of paperwork, meetings, interruptions, schedule changes, extra assigned duties, phone calls, conferences, gathering missed work for absent students, completing forms, submitting required data and on and on. Maybe they call it a planning period, because there's NO time left for planning...period!



Most teachers leave the building long after the students' dismissal time and usually with plenty of paperwork and tests to correct. Evenings are spent reviewing homework assignments and planning for the next day of teaching.

In addition to earning a bachelor's degree and teaching certificate/license, once teachers begin to work in the classroom, they need to immediately continue their own education. During summertime, they are constantly updating their education, earning a graduate degree or two and making sure their teaching certificates are active and valid.

Too many people have the mistaken notion that anyone can teach. They think that they could teach because they have seen other people teach. Yet, when looking at other professions and occupations, these same people understand that they can't perform those jobs. They may have briefly seen the cockpit of an airplane, but they don't assume they can fly it. They may

have spent an hour in a courtroom but don't believe that they can practice law. They certainly don't think they are able to perform surgery.

Every day, teachers are making a significant difference. At any given moment, teachers are influencing children in positive and meaningful ways. Many societal problems exist, such as violence, drugs, broken homes, poverty, economic crises and a variety of other woes. Teachers struggle with the turmoil of society while trying to offset the negative influences outside of school. As they roll up their sleeves and take strides to improve the lives of their students, teachers are the real heroes.

Today's teacher is more than a transmitter of knowledge; the demands of the profession are ever-increasing. Many parents and taxpayers have an expectation that a school system should be the do all and be all in their children's lives. Some parents have a notion that they can drop off their child at the schoolhouse door, and behold, 12 years later, they will be able to pick up a perfect specimen of a human being — well-rounded, academically proficient, emotionally sound, physically fit and ready to meet the next phase of life.

But we know that teachers cannot do it alone. A sound, safe and secure home life is essential. An effort on the parent's part to prepare the child for school is vital. And parental involvement that results in a partnership in the child's development is necessary. When that doesn't occur, then it's easy to scapegoat the classroom teacher.

As the school year begins, our public schools welcome everyone. The individual classroom teacher is faced with dozens and dozens of human beings who come to school in varying degrees of ability, potential, maturity, motivation levels, and readiness to learn. Students arrive with a tremendous amount of baggage, with various health and nutrition factors, family issues, neighborhood influences and differing socioeconomic levels.

In today's climate of high stakes testing, business leaders and politicians continue to **Teachers deserve thanks** - cont. on p. 5

MFT Educator is a publication of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, Local 59, AFT, AFL-CIO, NEA and Education MN

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From your president

Building perseverance through union solidarity & ACTION

By Lynn Nordgren

Two decades of turmoil...

Across the country and for a long time, teachers and related services professionals have been feeling the heavy pressures of large class sizes and caseloads, untenable workloads, lack of resources, student behavior issues, and the over-testing of students—to mention just a few of the issues. Despite the failure of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the federal and state education departments and school districts throughout the country continue to chase after the educational policies and procedures that have not produced student results for the past 15 years—or, at least according to the ill-fated test scores that tell us this is so. During this same time, real learning, real human development and childhood and adolescence needs were lost in favor of schedules and scores.

We didn't give up...and change is on its way...

Through the vigilant voices and passionate persistence of teachers, related services professionals, ESPs, parents, and other social justice groups, things are beginning to change for the better. Whether it has been through working behind the scenes to

educate politicians, getting the right people voted into office, reaching out to parents and community to form partnerships, speaking up by writing or marching or negotiating something better, and pushing forward solutions not just complaints, there is big change in sight. Unions and their members are at the forefront of this change and will persevere—not only fighting back but also fighting forward with solutions.

What will it look like?

Facts and predictions...

FACT: The Federal government is pulling back on both testing and teacher evaluation and are assessing the value of NCLB/ESEA as we currently know it. Change will come soon to the relief of many.

PREDICTIONS: In the future, schools will have more informative and meaningful ways of assessing student work; get social emotional learning and supports into schools; build more collaborative relationships with parents and community where everyone takes responsibility to work together for children's lives; utilize richer and deeper ways of teaching that are based on how the brain learns such as project based and experiential. There will be access to higher quality

and more diverse curriculum as well as resources including high quality, integrated technology. We will figure out how to have smaller class sizes so every student gets the full attention they deserve and teachers can build strong relationships with each. A more diverse group of Teachers and Related Services Professionals will

be considered experts in the field of education and will have the proper time needed to collaborate and prepare for their work with students. They will take their proper leadership roles in their professions and school districts, as professionally powered schools become the norm.

In addition, early childhood education will finally take center stage and there will be either the full funding of mandates or the reduction in them if not funded. We will understand and fight against poverty in deeper ways and ensure all students have access to the opportunities that help with equitable and critical early learning development. Schools will become the hub of the community and serve many functions.

What barriers do we still face?

It is unfortunate that we cannot just soar unencumbered into this new student centered world of education. But, there are still those "out there" who believe a cookie cutter style of teaching and learning is best and the only way to do that is through charters. They want to undo public education as they privatize teaching and learning. They are putting a lot of money into accomplishing this goal. One example of this effort is the recently announced "Minnesota Comeback" that wants to take away 30,000 "seats" (sadly, they do not call them students) from Minneapolis Public Schools. Since we have 38,000 students in MPS, which students are they leaving behind? Special education students? ELL students? Interesting that millions of dollars (\$35 million to start) is being invested in this effort instead of working to support the children and youth of Minneapolis directly. Why not put that money into MPS to ensure small class sizes, create wrap around services in schools where students have many needs and ensure all student

Building perseverance - cont. on p. 8

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Follow us! Retweet, repost us and help spread the word about the great work of Minneapolis teachers!

The role of the MFT business agent

By Sue Backus

Mike Leiter and Bonita Jones are the Teacher Business Agents at MFT. Their primary role is to guarantee member rights, assist members with various questions or issues, help negotiate our contract and accompany members in disciplinary meetings. They do these jobs daily and do them with diligence. In other words, they persevere to be sure you receive the best possible representation the MFT can give



Bonita Jones

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you. Mike and Bonita go the extra mile for members and work to ensure your due process rights are performed correctly and with precision. Mike and Bonita also work with your site steward to ensure your building steward understands the contract, can identify and address contract violations and help them to find answers to questions you may have about the contract so that they can accurately inform and represent you.

Mike and Bonita also work directly with individual members if issues arise that can't be resolved by your building steward. They're always ready to listen to your concerns, help you explore solutions to work related issues, and explain your contractual rights. If an issue or complaint isn't covered by the contract, they can help you find

the district department that can best assist you. Mike and Bonita persevere to get you the best possible representation available no matter what the issue is.

Through their work, Mike and Bonita are creating capacity for the Union, empowering members by protecting member rights, and ensuring that members understand their contract. If you have a question about your contractual rights or need union representation, feel free to contact either of them. ■

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Mike Leiter

A story from Barbara Rice

Music Teacher at Seward Montessori

I have to share this gem with all of you! I was standing at bus 12, waiting for it to arrive, and asking some students what they learned today.

A 3rd grade student told me he learned to write in cursive. I was complimenting him on that and a 1st grader asked me, "Do you know how to write in cursive?"

Yes, I told him, that word has a "v" sound in it - "cursive".

Yeah, he said, do you know how to write in "curses?"

Ok, I admit some days I might feel like I'd like to write in curses but not today. I had a great day of teaching and hope all of you had a great day too!

Barbara



COPE

Committee on Political Education

The legislative committee meets at least monthly to determine the legislative and political program of the union. They interview and endorse candidates for political office, lobby on educational issues and organize union members around political issues of importance.

Teachers deserve thanks - from p. 2

demand better results with data driven assessments and test scores. It is important to realize that the classroom is not a factory floor where uniformity and precise precision can be molded into just one final finished product. Unlike the manufacturing arena, teachers don't select the raw materials (students). All are welcome as teachers strive to meet and serve all levels and all kinds of students. Test results will always vary from low to high ranges because schools are dealing with human beings with varying degrees of potential. The school is not an assembly line that can mass-produce exact templates of finished products meeting the same exact predetermined standard.

Instead of bashing our teachers, we should be conveying recognition, accolades, tributes and positive acknowledgments. Teachers deserve a sincere thank-you for the tremendous benefits they provide society. And that's why my all-time favorite bumper sticker offers a profound and important declaration: **"If you can read this ... thank a teacher!"**

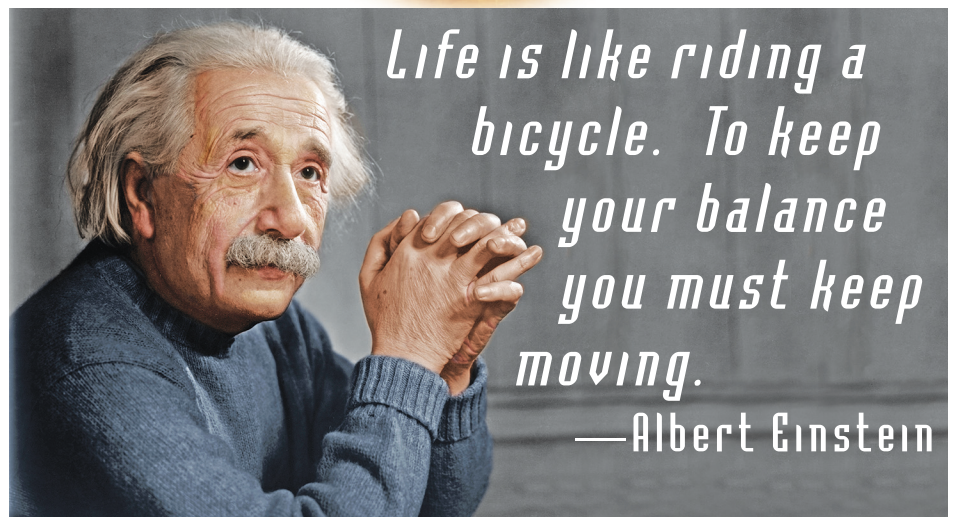
In our schools today, there are thousands of success stories waiting to be told and there's a need to proclaim those successes proudly and boldly. Teachers should stand tall and be proud of their chosen profession. Critics should not judge them unfairly. Together, let's become teacher advocates and show admiration for the inspiring and important life-changing work they do. ■

DR. TOM STASZEWSKI, a former middle school teacher, lives in Erie with his wife, Linda. He recently retired after a 35-year career in higher education administration. He holds a Doctorate from University of Pittsburgh and is the author of "Total Teaching: Your Passion Makes it Happen" (tomstasz@neo.rr.com).

Erie Times News, Erie PA OP ED Column August 30, 2015 and Harrisburg, PA Patriot News, Pennlive.com

Warm coat give away

The Firefighters Union and MFT partnered together to make good things happen for students at Anishanabe, Bethune, Mona Meade and Sullivan. 1600 American and union made coats were handed out. MFT along, with other unions, partnered with Minneapolis Firefighters Local 82 to make sure our students will be warm and ready to learn.



Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.

—Albert Einstein

Youth Frontiers honors educators with free concert

By Jodi Stee

On Sunday, October 25th, we walked through the front door of the Metropolitan Ballroom in Golden Valley to attend a concert just for educators, sponsored by the non-profit organization Youth Frontiers. We were taken to the "Honor Room" where we were led to an expansive table of appetizers and then given time to socialize with other educators. The appetizer table was adorned with candles and flowers in a celebratory way but also had the most delicious array of food that spread across the entire room. There was salmon, spring rolls, chicken kabobs, shrimp cakes, fruit, salads and so much more.

After the socializing, we were led to our table and had the pleasure of being entertained by three musicians – Dan Rodriguez, Sebastian Davin and Debra G., who did a fantastic job of getting us all rocking and swaying to their fabulous music. As the music subsided, we were entertained by the comedian Bill Arnold, who

made us all laugh at his jokes and his school experiences as a child. Several of the Youth Frontiers staff also shared inspiring stories about their childhood education and how the teachers they had had formed relationships with them, never gave up on them, taught them to persevere and guided them to become the people they are today.



The evening was enjoyed by all!

The evening wound down with the founder of Youth Frontiers, Joe Cavanaugh, thanking us for what we do every day for children and sharing with us how important teachers are and how everyone needs to get back to honoring them and the work they do. Joe stated, *"One of the most important things our society can do to improve schools is to support, inspire and honor teachers. We are killing the passion that inspired them to get into education in the first place."*

Thank you Youth Frontiers for supporting and honoring teachers, and for a great evening. The entire event was free for educators, with no strings attached. ■

We need your feedback!

As you persevere through another school year, we'd like you to take a few moments to let us know how we're doing.

What articles would you like to see this year? What items matter to you? Do you like success stories; do you

prefer articles on the workings of MPS, or a combination of both? Do you want to know more about the legislative side of things, or is activism more your thing? Take a moment to let us know.

We'd also like to know if you have the time to write for us. Would you like the opportunity to help tell your stories to your fellow professionals? In short, we want to know what matters to you. We want to create a team of writing teachers who can carry a message either to the public at large, or to your co-workers, about the important work you all do.



This is *your* publication.

To make it as successful as possible, we need to hear from you. Please contact Sue Backus, MFT First Vice President at subac001@live.com with your comments and suggestions. ■



THE MINNEAPOLIS COMMITTEE OF THIRTEEN "advocating for Minneapolis teachers' pension security"

With your support, the Committee of 13 advocates for our defined benefit pensions. We work to make sure that you have the facts about your MPS/TRA defined benefit pension. We also make sure that the legislators who serve on Minnesota's Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement have up-to-date information on MPS/TRA pensions.

We provide facts that counter the biased information distributed by groups seeking to undermine our retirement security. You'll find up-to-date news from the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, the Minnesota Legislature and Congress at <http://committeeof13.org>



From your business agent

Tips on using social media

By Mike Leiter

Social media has dramatically changed how we share information in our professional and personal lives. Although Google has been around almost 20 years, the last 12 years alone have brought us Facebook (2004), You-Tube (2005), Twitter (2006), and other social media networks. Whether in a classroom or a restaurant, smartphones are everywhere allowing us—or anyone nearby—to snap pictures, record videos, make comments, and send links to any number of others instantly.

While these can be valuable tools to communicate with students, families, the community, colleagues, and friends, it is critical to maintain professionalism in your interactions while on and off of the job so you don't risk violating District policy.

Here are some quick tips that should help you stay clear of major pitfalls that can crop up:

1) Be aware of District policy.

As an educator, you are probably aware of Internet use policies and regulations for students and staff. However, in 2014 the District adopted a Social Media Use policy (#4038) which can be accessed at MPS homepage → "About" tab → "Policies and Compliance" link. Policy 4038 specifies rules for both professional and personal use of social media by employees. It requires you to be careful with communication that... *"adversely affects the workplace or violates applicable professional codes of ethics or other laws"* and to avoid *"...disclosure, whether purposeful or inadvertent, of confidential or private information, information or data that violates the privacy rights, or other rights, of a third party."* Like many workplace rules, failure to do so could subject you to *"discipline, up to and including termination of employment."*

2) Respect others.

Avoid the use of offensive comments about students, colleagues, or the District in general. Along with the obvious (slurs, personal insults, obscenity), content that denigrates or insults others is risky given that we live and work in settings that reflect a diverse set of customs, values, and perspectives. Also, be sensitive to linking or referring to other sites that may have questionable content, since that redirection may imply that you endorse that content. Along with laws, the District has policies that forbid discriminatory conduct towards others, particularly those in legally protected classes.

3) Be Aware that private can become public.

The reality of the rumor mill is that "if you talk, it will walk". When it comes to social media, you should remember that "If you post, it will coast"—even with "private" settings, since anything shared with others can be shared again.

Just assume that anything you post can be read by everyone you know.

4) Maintain professional boundaries.

Case law and public expectations hold education employees to a higher standard of conduct than the general public. Personal and public relationships can be blurred when engaging in social media. It's appropriate to communicate through a District approved means about assignments, tests, grading expectations, etc. since there is an educational purpose. However, when communicating through methods not controlled by the district, inform your supervisor and alert parents of its use and educational purpose.

Remember that information related to your employment is never for public consumption; it's probably fine to say that the PTO fundraising for more books, it's another to comment that a supervisor is not approving your budget requests. Express your ideas and opinions in a respectful manner and consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. Remember to respect copyright and fair use guidelines as well.

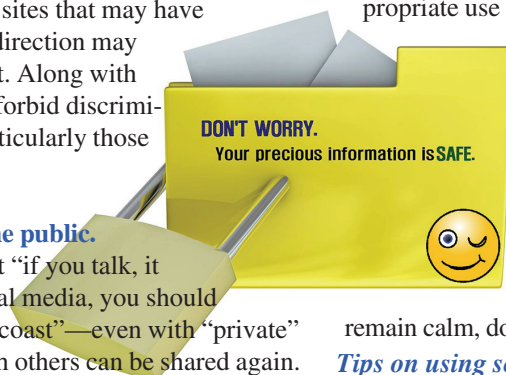
5) Protect private information and student safety.

Confidential information about students, staff or others should not be shared. Although parents may have signed a permission form for awards or accomplishments to be included in school publications, make sure to obtain permission to share pictures. Mentioning birthdates, grades, or why someone is missing school might inadvertently be sharing private information. When using an electronic means of communication as a classroom tool, set expectations, get use agreements signed by students/families as needed, monitor interactions and correct inappropriate use immediately.

6) Consider your audience.

When blogging, tweeting, friending/unfriending, liking/unliking, hashtagging, lurking, snapchat-ting or otherwise interacting on social media channels, remember that readers are people with varying perspectives. It can be easy to alienate a group of people. When confronted with a difference of opinion, remain calm, don't pick a fight and correct mistakes when needed.

Tips on using social media - cont. on p. 10



Lessons in behavior

By Lynn Nordgren

All of my life, I wanted to be a teacher. I even practiced being one in a nothing fancy, make-shift classroom my parents pulled together in the basement of our home (my poor younger sister was my one and only student). So, on the first day of being a real Minneapolis special ed teacher in a self-contained classroom with 15 students (EBD, LD, ADHD, and DCD all in one room), I was elated! I was barely able to contain my joy. Finally, my lifelong dream was coming true. On the first day, I stood beaming proudly at the door of the classroom to greet each student. My bulletin boards and learning stations were in place, engaging lessons ready, expectations and daily agenda posted, parents contacted. All of my ducks were in a row. Clearly, I had no idea of the reality that was about to punch my dream right in the gut—and my confidence about whether or not I really knew how to teach.

What I learned in college did not prepare me for what happened: flying chairs; desks being pushed over; hitting, kicking, shouting, biting, spitting; loose profanity and finger gestures; students running all around in and out of the classroom—and more. I knew there would be some of this happening given the nature of self-contained classrooms but not like this. What about the really fun and interesting lessons I had prepared? Wouldn't that be enough? Surely, my engaging, caring personality would grab them. Maybe if I just called their parents, life in Room 318 would settle down. Nothing, however, was working. My principal was supportive but didn't offer much advice about what was going on in my room. He just did not want other classrooms disturbed or a disruption in the hallways. Finally, a mentor showed up. Stay tuned...things got better in Room 318.

By perseverance the snail reached the ark.

— Charles Spurgeon



That experience was 39 years ago but what is going on in too many of our schools harkens back to what I ex-

perienced in my early days of teaching. This time, however, it is happening in too many classrooms, throughout the hallways, in lunchrooms, on buses, and outside the school. Tough behavior is showing up every day in many schools. When too many students are not learning (including the ones who are not struggling with behavior), we have to find a better way for all students. Not just a stop-gap intervention but deep solutions based on the needs of students and schools.

Right now, district leaders have agreed to help de-escalate behavior to settle things down. Emergency teams will come into schools when the district gets a call to the help line to intervene and assess what is going on. Then, deeper solutions must be found and implemented. I suspect any type of suspension is not coming back so, what can we do? How about smaller class sizes and caseloads? What about a co-teaching model? How about wrap around services on the school site so students can get help whatever problem may be causing the bigger problems in school? We also have to examine our roles in any of this as professionals—that is what professionals do. Cleveland Public Schools, in collaboration with the Cleveland Federation of Teachers, is implementing student behavior process that MPS Executive Director of Student Engagement Danielle Grant and I were able to hear about at an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) seminar a couple of weeks ago. We will be studying and sharing more about this soon. It has made a big difference in Cleveland Public Schools who were dealing with many of the same issues we are experiencing in MPS.

Meanwhile, there are solutions we can take into our own hands, as I found out way back when. Fortunately, a mentor came into my room early in the year and taught me useful skills that I used to turn around my disrupted classroom and, I continued to use those skills everyday thereafter for 17 years. My first classroom turned around beautifully and became an admired classroom in the school. It took hard work and perseverance but I never gave up because I remembered why I was there in the first place. Best of all, the joy of teaching and the fun in learning also returned. Many of those strategies still apply today.

Much of what I am going to tell you many of you already know. What I have noticed in

my time in schools, however, is that all too often we get frustrated and forget to use the skills we know or give up too soon on them if they do not work right away. We get understandably stressed and escalate our

Behavior - cont. on p. 9

Building perseverance - from p. 3

are connected to technology? How about investing in early education or jobs for youth? (Go online to Minnesota Comeback and *IFF.org* to learn more).

Facing our own changes...

Do we have to break down our own barriers along the way to change? Do we have to do better than we are in MPS with all students? Of course, that is a given. We must continue to fight forward and persevere for what is right, however. I truly believe we can make the changes needed if we follow the deep research on the brain and how it learns, ensure early childhood development from birth on, include more social emotional learning, and the use of differentiated teaching strategies we know work best—especially in small classes. We have to also trust that real collaboration works as does shared leadership. The voices of the professionals who do the work every day with students must be at the center of planning on how to best reach all students. And, nothing much will change without everyone else in our city getting involved in the education and lives of our cities' children. It is time to stop blaming teachers if things are not going well. It is time for all of us to come together to reclaim the promise of education—not as it was, not as it is, but as it could and should be for all students. ■

Behavior - from p. 8

own feelings. There is nothing magical about the strategies below—it is about sticking to them for consistency and clarity.

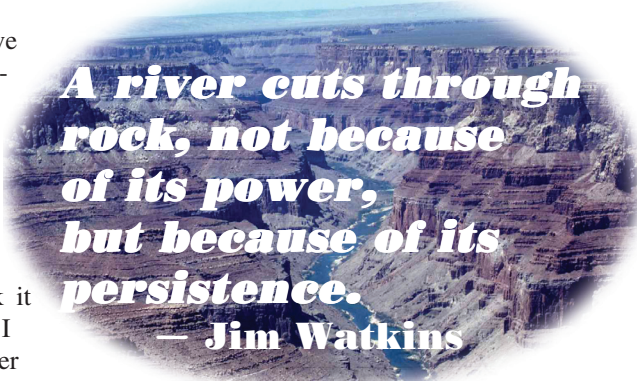
1. Model what you want. Example: if you want students to be quiet and sit still, you need to be quiet and be still. (Think ENVoY's Freeze Body, if you took the course.) Too often, we talk over our students and walk around the room getting ready for the next lesson rather than following our own request. I have had the great opportunity to watch hundreds of teachers teach and this is a common observation—watching teachers talk over the classroom noise to get attention. It may take a little time at first to stand and be still, but it does work if you persevere. Make sure you do the next suggestion (#2) as you implement this one.

2. Catch them being good. This phrase has been around for a long time but it has great impact if done well. Most of you know how to do this, we just forget when things get busy or behavior is out of control. Too often as adults, we point out what is not working rather than what is (and, students often tell us this is how they hear us speak to them). During the first few months of teaching, I told students to stop doing this and stop doing that, get in their seats, stop running around, stop the profanity, get ready for whatever was next and so on. I was worn out and they were not listening. Once I started doing the opposite—catching them being good, it worked. It wasn't instant but as each one of them saw what was going on and those doing good stuff were getting thanked and praised, they all wanted in on it even some of the toughest kids. Now, it isn't that constructive feedback is wrong; we need that in life, too. It is just that it has to be balanced with the positive. So, call on those students who are doing what is expected and thank them as

you also name the positive behavior they are exhibiting. Try as hard as you can to only focus on those who are doing what you asked—ignore the other behaviors unless someone is going to get hurt. I didn't think it would work—remember I had flying chairs and other calamities going on. (Note: for those students who have a mental health diagnosis, additional assistance from the social worker, may be needed.

3. Be respectful. If we want students to be respectful, we have to be respectful—no sarcasm, no belittling, no threatening (I am not saying you are doing these things...just sharing). It can be easy to predict a student's short term future ("you won't graduate if you don't...") or a long term future ("you won't amount to much in life without an education...") but it doesn't really help them succeed. Instead, pointing out great skills they already have or knowing what they are interested in can be inspirational to a student—it shows you notice them and care. Being respectful requires monitoring your words, tone, cadence, and body language—which is 85% of communication. Staying calm, listening, identifying interests, being aware of personal space, and anticipating triggers that may set off behaviors are critical. Do not argue or try to have the last word. The new research behind positive psychology tells us this works. (Google it!)

4. Help students feel socially and emotionally equipped. This doesn't sound so easy but, if each day, we reinforce some of the foundational pieces behind this, it will help. Dr. Michael Rodrigues of the Educational



A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence.

— Jim Watkins

Measurement Department of the University of MN says there are 5 things that correlate to high levels of performance:

1. Social emotional (I feel.)
2. Community learning (I belong to something.)
3. Positive integrity (I am valuable.)
4. Social competence (I can get along with others.)
5. Academic persistence (I can learn.)

Notice that four of the five have to do with social emotional aspects of being a human. All too often, some of our students have had none of the five in their lives. They come to school stressed and unable to cope as needed. This is why it is so critical to set up our classrooms and schools as welcoming places where everyone belongs, everyone is of value and everyone has important feelings. Again, sounds basic but it is at the core of why some of our students do not do well in school. We cannot control what happens outside of school but making our schools more keyed into these five elements can be very helpful.

Resources

If you are looking for more information to help with student behavior, there are many resources online. *The Tough Kid* book series and tools are very useful and the "Adverse Childhood Experiences" (ACEs), which is the study of the impact on trauma in student's lives, has amazing information on how to deal with student trauma. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)—something that was started in MPS but trailed off a few years ago—also has some good strategies. While MPS gets a Student Engagement plan in place to support schools and student behavior, maybe these are some resources you might find helpful. ■



Not currently a full-share member?
Go to mft59.org, scroll down and click on the "Join MFT 59!" box. Fill out the online form by selecting the first option.

Legislative update

When members talk, legislators listen

Educators and lawmakers met to talk Oct 29th

By Anne Lewerenz

The October 29th MFT Legislative Review & Preview Happy Hour gave the



The MFT Legislative Review and Preview happy hour drew many interested members.

Minneapolis legislative delegation a chance to talk with 80-plus Minneapolis teachers, RSPs, and ESPs. The lawmakers heard educators discuss the successes as well as the challenges of teaching MPS students in 2015. Those conversations may help legislators as they make decisions about how they'll use the state's \$1 billion budget surplus.

2015 Legislative session reviewed

Education Minnesota lobbyists **Jodee Buhr** and **Kathi Micheletti** reviewed the 2015 Legislative Session and the \$17 Billion 2015 Omnibus Education Bill that brought \$400 million dollars in new funding to schools statewide.

Education Minnesota also unveiled a new report on testing authored by a team of eight teachers from around the state including Minneapolis. The report is from the Education Minnesota Educator Policy Innovation Center, EPIC, and is called *"Testing Better: How to Improve Minnesota's Use of Assessments in Education."* You may access it by going to www.edmn.org

Teachers, legislators agree on key issues

Both teachers and legislators emphasized the following issues for continued work:

Teaching not Testing, All-day Pre-K in the public schools, teacher recruitment and retention, continued expansion of mental health services for students, partnering with families and communities in full-service community schools with wrap around services, diversity and economic justice.

You CAN make a difference

You helped legislators and other public officials focus on public education when you attended the Legislative Review and Preview and talk with legislators. You can also help our candidates and political parties shape policies that will benefit your students and their families by attending your precinct caucus March 1, 2016. (Watch for more information from your union). The last precinct caucus and City Convention had more teachers and RSPs attending than ever and it made a big difference in the outcome. ■

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it"

— Henry Ford



Your VOICE does matter!

Tips on using social media - from p. 7

You may need to ignore comments rather than acknowledge with a response. If you can be identified with school in some way, you may need to approach your union for advice and possibly your supervisor in case it might create a disruption in the workplace.

7) Create Value and Be Productive.

Social media and electronic communication will be better for you if you add value for others. Communication associated with the district should be engaging, thought-provoking and community building. If it helps others understand the educational process better—then it's adding value. Make sure that your online activities do not interfere with your job. Remember that

District technologies are provided for educational use and that you should be engaged in your work while on paid time.

Please feel free to contact your steward or an MFT Business Agent (Mike Leiter at 612-287-0260 or Bonita Jones at 612-287-0278) if you have further questions or need advice related to this article. ■

Why wear union blue on Wednesdays?



Every Wednesday,

MFT members should wear union blue (**royal blue**) to show the following:

1. We believe in solidarity and unity because together, we can make a difference!
2. We will always stand up for what's best for students and our profession.
3. We have strong and important voices that need to be heard on the issues facing the school system, students, families, and the city.
4. We have solutions as well as ideas for innovation to continuously improve education and student outcomes.
5. We support the efforts of MFT leadership – if we see you in blue, we know you are behind the efforts to:
 - reduce class sizes, student loads, and caseloads
 - streamline the workload for effectiveness
 - support students and their needs
 - improve the quality of our school system overall
 - stop the over-testing of students
 - build trust and collaboration; increase collaboration
 - improve the culture and climate throughout the district
 - and, more...
6. We want to be recognized. Union blue becomes an easy way to identify Minneapolis Federation of Teachers members (as well as, our affiliates – Education MN (state union) and the national organizations – the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association).
7. We stand together even if we are not always in agreement; we stand with each other for the good of the whole. It is a great feeling when everyone wears blue - a sense of pride is created that in turn builds synergy. A shirt, sweater, tie, scarf, jacket - anything **blue** works. You can also find MFT Gear Wear at mft59.org



Let's wear blue on Wednesdays!

**Send a photo of MFT members wearing blue –
whether a few of you do or the whole staff –
take a snapshot and email to subac001@live.com**

**We will put the picture
on our mft59.org website! ■**



Calendar of fun events

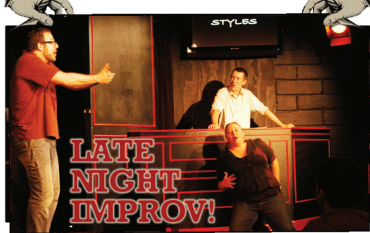
Open Mic Night



Date: Weekly on Wednesdays
Time: 8:00 pm
Location: Joke Joint Comedy Club

Every Wednesday is open mic night! Come out and see the Twin Cities' best and brightest comedians, professionals, amateurs, and first-timers. Always FREE! You'll see professionals working on new jokes, amateurs working towards becoming professionals, and the occasional train wreck. See the area's best and brightest comedians.

Late Night Improv!



Date: Weekly on Fridays and Saturdays
Time: 10:00 pm

Location: Brave New Workshop Theatre
 Using only suggestions from the audience and pure, unbridled imagination, the cast of the BNW delivers an all-improvised 45-60 minute performance without a script.

The Buddy Holly Story



Date: Weekly on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Thursdays thru Dec. 20
Time: 7:30 pm
Location: History Theatre

Live Music at the Lookout



Date: Weekly on Fridays and Saturdays
Location: The Lookout Bar & Grill, Maple Grove, MN
 With awards such as "Best Place for Live Music" and "Best Night Out," when you

come for live music at The Lookout, you're guaranteed to have a great night! With popular bands traveling from all over the Twin Cities, we host a wide variety of music, including rock, country, folks and top-40. Live music is Friday and Saturday nights, with NO cover charge, ever.



Free Family Flicks

Date: Weekly on Saturdays
Time: 10:00 am
Location: The-

atres at Mall of America

The entire family can enjoy select movies for FREE every Saturday morning at 10am. First-come, first-served as seating is limited to the theatre capacity.

A Christmas Carol



Date: Nov. 12, 2015 - Dec. 27, 2015
Location: Guthrie Theater

Christmas My Way: A Sinatra Holiday Bash



Date: Nov. 18, 2015 - Jan. 17, 2016
Location: Plymouth Playhouse

A Don't Hug Me Christmas Carol

Date: Nov. 27, 2015 - Jan. 3, 2016
Location: New Century Theatre
 A Don't Hug Me Christmas Carol is the SMASH HIT sequel to the award-winning musical comedy Don't Hug Me.



Holidazzle Village

Date: Thur-Sun Nov. 27- Dec. 20
Location: Nicollet Mall



The 2015 Holidazzle will take place in Loring Park during the current remodel of Nicollet Mall. A community gathering place, the 2015 Holidazzle will offer free family-friendly programming. Features include local food and beverage vendors, artisan booths, entertainment, and fireworks.

Go 96.3 Snow Show '15

Date: Dec. 3, 2015
Time: 7:00 pm
Location: Northrup Auditorium



Go 96.3 is throwing one more huge party before the year ends. Snow Show '15 promises to be the concert event of the holiday season. With an eclectic lineup including Metric and more, combined with the intimate and beautiful surroundings of Northrop, this show is not to be missed.

Christmas with Amy Grant & Michael W. Smith



Date: Dec. 12
Time: 7:00 pm
Location: Target Center

Selling more than 15 million albums, Michael W. Smith will once again bring holiday cheer to arenas, coliseums and theaters to more than a dozen markets this holiday season through his nationwide Christmas tour. Smith's long-time friend and fellow GRAMMY® winner Amy Grant will co-bill with him.

Date: Dec. 18- Dec. 20
Location: Orpheum Theatre



Blue Man Group thrills with its high-octane theatrical experience. Escape the ordinary and surround yourself in an explosion of comedy, music and technology. If you've never seen Blue Man Group, it's a must-see. If you're already a fan, don't miss it. ■