



Time to get off the merry-go-round

By Lynn Nordgren, MFT President

I like change. I especially like when change brings about good things that positively impact our lives and the lives of others and when the need for change brings people together in a shared cause. We can all point to changes that have made the world better – and our own lives better, too. Change is at the core of our existence and essential for moving life forward.

Yet, there can be a downside to change. The wrong kind of change, too much of it all at the same time, unsupported change, or change that isn't monitored or followed up to measure effectiveness, is frustrating. When we continuously chase change out of panic, fear, lack of understanding or misuse of data, change ceases to be good.

An audit of the Minneapolis Public Schools done five years ago showed MPS has had a very high rate of non-stop change for many years. The average rate of change for urban school districts (or "churn", as the report called it) is between one and three percent each year. "Churn" equals changes in leader-

ship, employees, students, programs, boundaries, policies, buildings, resources, support, and so on. In MPS, the "churn" rate has been between 16 and 30 percent in any given year. It's no wonder we feel overwhelmed and unable to get our feet underneath us.

It's time to get off this merry-go-round. Successful change takes, among other things, a coherent vision and a thorough plan for implementation; intentional focus; widespread collaboration and support; transparent communication; preparation and practice time; adequate resources; and flexibility to make adjustments. It uses meaningful data and allows for useful reflection.

If we rush from one strategy to the next and pile them on top of each other, as we've seen in MPS, results will be shallow and incomplete. While we must each ensure we're the best we can be in our various roles, MPS' constant and continuous change must stop so proper implementation of a few good strategies can take place with fidelity and depth.

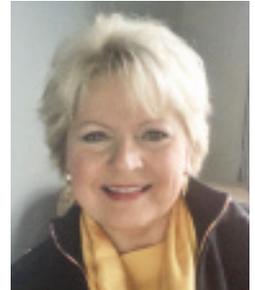
I believe we change a lot because we don't have

a systemic or shared foundation of beliefs about teaching, learning and our students that's embedded in the soul of our work. Instead, we too often bend to whatever is popular at the moment or whatever each new leader thinks we ought to be doing. With leaders coming and going, change has been the only constant.

To improve education in MPS and get off the merry-go-round of change, here are a few suggestions:

1. Establish a culture of trust, cooperation and shared responsibility

2. Work from a compelling, inclusive, and inspirational vision that is based on what it takes for students to develop appropriately as they grow into healthy, happy, productive, and self-determined adults.
3. Partner proactively to unleash the innovative talents and rich skills of every professional and every student.
4. Combine practitioner expertise along with evidence-based results (not test scores) to determine what is



Lynn Nordgren

needed to ensure success of all students.

5. Communicate with openness, transparency and integrity all the time; listen and learn from one another.
6. Build on our collective assets when determining changes

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Stopping the rumor mill Creating a healthy, fact-based culture

By Lynn Nordgren, MFT President

We need to change how we communicate. The MPS culture is too often fueled by the "rumor mill". It never ceases to amaze me how much misinformation and disinformation spreads across the district with too many of us believing it. Too often, so proper implementation of a few good strategies can take place with fidelity and depth.

The way to beat the ru-

mor mill is through fact-checking. Taking time to learn the truth has saved me from many a potential overreaction through the years. And I appreciate those of you who call me to check things out when rumors start to fly.

It's great to discuss current issues, but harmful to pass along misinformation without checking facts. Our jobs are hard enough without worrying

about what the rumor mill is saying. So let's stop it.

Here's how: don't start rumors, check out rumors if you do hear them, provide facts if you have better information, and don't speculate if you don't know the answer. Here are a few 'rumors' that need to be stopped in their tracks:

MPS rumor mill - cont. on p. 5

Changing your employment status: Transfer, Reassignment and Recall

By Mike Leiter, MFT Business Agent

Some of you may have heard the duck soup of employment terminology this spring - including "Excessed", "Released", "Non-renewed" and "Laid off". "Excessed" status means you are still employed in MPS but not in the assignment you currently hold. "Released" or "Non-renewed" means your probationary contract is not being renewed for next year. "Tenured layoffs" only occur if all similarly licensed probationary teachers have been released in the event a reduction in force is necessary.

Some of you may also choose to "voluntarily transfer" yourself from your current job and apply for another. In other words, you want to shop around for a different job. You will still hold your current position while going through Interview and Select (I&S) unless you accept another position. If you do not find another position, you stay in your current job.

Excessed Status

If you are excessed, you are expected to seek interview(s) during the Interview & Select (I&S) process. This is done via online applications and subsequent interviews with the prospective sites. There are also other ways to find district positions if you wish to become a Teacher On Special Assignment (TOSA). These jobs are posted online at the District website and take place outside of, and typically before, I&S.

You have a right to the same FTE (number of employment hours) you had during 2014-2015 unless you have voluntarily chosen to demote yourself to less FTE than you currently hold.

If you have been partially excessed (you retained part of an assignment at your current site), another part-time assignment may or may not be available later to allow you to remain at your site (no guarantees). You're en-

couraged to seek an assignment(s) that will fulfill the FTE owed to you in some manner - whether it is a finding another part-time assignment(s) to make your FTE whole (example: two part-time jobs adding up to one) or, a full-time assignment at another site.

You can always seek full-time or part-time assignments during the I&S process per your situation and needs.

Following the I&S process, those who did not secure a position will participate in "Matching". A list of the postings still available is opened up and applicants and schools

hold short interviews all in one place. It is kind of like speed dating.

If you don't have an assignment by the end of the Matching Session, you will need to complete an *MFT Excessed Placement Preference Form* before you leave (visit our table right after the Matching Session is complete). You are not present during Placement. The placements are done by a committee made up of Human Resources, MFT and Principals' Forum representatives with MFT advocating using your stated preferences wherever possible. A site interview is also now a part of the



Mike Leiter

Placement process after the HR and MFT meeting to ensure no one is forced to work in a school or take a position they are not comfortable with and vice versa.

All Excessed staff will have a position by next fall either by going through Interview and Select, Matching or Placement, or through applying for a TOSA position.

Interview & Select (I&S) Basics

Any staff who has been *Changing* - cont. on p. 4

Appreciating our Deans

Sanford Middle School has come up with a unique way to show appreciation for its deans. If you've got a similar setting in your school, read up on what Sanford does in the words of Steward Ken Beck:

"The original idea came from Sanford's other union steward, Bruce Black. Sanford has been blessed with deans that have been in the building for a very long time. At the time of the idea, we had 3 of our 4 deans with over 6 years of service at Sanford. They are indeed the mortar that holds Sanford together!

So here's how we (the teachers) showed our ap-

preciation for Sanford deans:

- Usually, our deans handle lunchroom duties with students, but on our "Dean Appreciation Day", teachers volunteered to do it for them. Some of our teachers volunteered to circulate and connect with kids.



- Our deans also usually handle duties in our "Alternative Instruction Room" (AIR), where students go for a period or a day for reflection, make-

up work, or in-school behavioral support. On Dean Appreciation Day, teachers volunteered to host the AIR for the deans.

- The deans used their newly found "extra time" to be in their classrooms, connecting with kids and catching up in paperwork.
- Each teacher contributed a small amount of money to be split among the deans so they could go out for lunch. Any extra money was divided among the deans as a "thank-you".

Our entire staff either volunteered time or donated money to buy our deans lunch as well! ■

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MFT teachers among semifinalists

Three MFT members were recently named as semifinalists in the 2015 Minnesota Teacher of the Year competition.

Mary Macaulay of Folwell School of Performing Arts Magnet, **Terri Primm Ricks** of Anthony Middle School

and **Kristin Shanley** of Bethune Community School were among the 30 teachers statewide to reach the second level of the statewide competition.

Macaulay, who is a seventh-grade math teacher, has 90 percent of her students



Mary Macaulay

on free or reduced

lunch. Those students posted the third highest growth in MCA scores in the district, up by an average of five percent. She also volunteers to teach an after-school math enrichment course that further helps her students. Her principal refers to Macaulay as a "master teacher".

Ricks, who teaches

Studies, recently finished work on her Doctorate in Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development from the University of Minnesota. On her Minnesota History syllabus, she writes, "I want to end this syllabus returning to where I began. I believe that we need to work together to be successful."

Shanley, who teaches science in grades PreK-5, works with a large population of homeless and highly-mobile families. All of her students are on free or reduced lunch and she's earned a reputation as an unrelent-



Kristin Shanley

ingly positive, caring teacher who communicates well with families through phone calls, conferences and monthly newsletters.

Congratulations to our three semifinalists for the great work they do – and to all Minneapolis teachers and related service professionals for their commitment to student success! ■

President - from p. 1

rather than dwelling only on fixing the deficits; assets can help transform the deficits.

7. Make schools the hub of the community where students, families and employees are fully engaged because they feel the schools belong to them.

8. Create wrap around, full service community schools that help remove some of the barriers to learning by fulfilling the basic needs of students.

9. Encourage innovative teaching

and engaged learning by stopping the over-reliance on unreliable tests; change to performance-based assessments that include demonstration, hands-on projects, action research, interactive experiences, work products, etc.

10. Use common sense during decision making; is having 30 five-year olds or 38 ten-year olds per classroom common sense? Is having 2,000 students per nurse, 600 students per

counselor or 175 students per teacher at secondary using common sense? What about 225 initiatives, programs and other "to-do's"? Let's use some sense in MPS to get us on track to supporting each and every student.

Change is a constant in life but it is time for positive, doable and sustainable change in MPS that is allowed to flourish and grow. Let's work for positive change based on trust and belief in what we can do together. ■



Terri Primm Ricks

seventh-grade Social

Changing our . . .

Future: COPE/Legislative Update

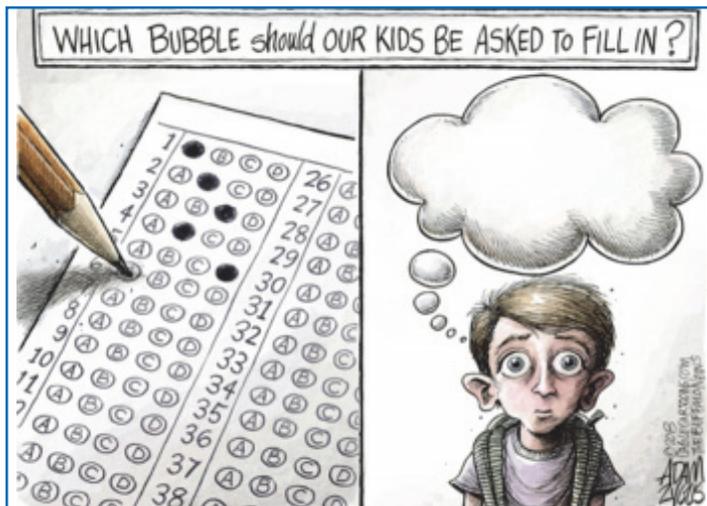
The 89th Legislature is in full swing in St. Paul! Thank you so much to everyone who contacted their Senator and Representative on House File 2; while the resolution passed the Minnesota House on mostly partisan lines, it was stalled in the Senate Education Committee. This bill would remove seniority in layoffs but there is the potential for this bill to come back in the Senate Education Omnibus Bill this year. MFT will continue to e-mail and

call members to tell them how to take action against this bill as needed.

It's not all bad news at the Capitol. After consulting with MFT and other community groups, Education Minnesota introduced Senate File 1206 which would provide state funding for full service community schools! We're extremely fortunate to have a budget surplus and Governor Mark Dayton who wants to spend that money on public education in Minnesota! Let's hope Sen-

ate File 1206 passes!

How can you help forge a positive future for education? Many of you have been asked by your MFT steward to contribute to COPE (Committee on Political Education). This is extremely important, as we cannot legally use any member dues for political advocacy and activity. We need everyone to contribute something, no matter how small, to COPE so we can continue to fight for student, families, and YOU. ■



Change - from p. 2

exceeded, or who are seeking a voluntary transfer through I&S, must use the process created and follow the timelines that will be posted on the District website and sent out to everyone.

Job postings will be released April 22 for the first round of I&S. Watch your global e-mail for updates on when everything will take place.

During Round 1 of I&S, you may accept a position if offered to you but if you see another posting of interest during Round 2, you may apply and interview for it as well. If you are offered a job during Round 2 and accept it, you drop the first job you accepted.

Check for notifications through the **online I&S system** (Departments → Human Resources → Interview & Select).

During I&S, if you find you have questions or are struggling with technology, report issues ASAP.

For technical issues contact:
webteam@mpls.k12.mn.us

For any other inquiry contact:
staffing@mpls.k12.mn.us

Also, copy Mike Leiter (mleiter@mft59.org) or Bonita Jones (bjones@mft59.org) on these communications. Contact us if you need any other assistance.

Licensure/Relicensure Reminders

Your license must be current through at least 2016 in order to seek an interview. Check your license on the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) License Lookup page (link below). You need to apply per instructions (see human resources link below) by sending your relicensure hours to the MPS Relicensure Committee. They will notify you once they approve your hours. You'll then need to make a payment for your new license to MDE. It takes at least 48 hours to update your status online after payment.

Please note: Once in awhile, a school is given "New School Status". These positions are sometimes posted earlier and interviews might be held outside of I&S. Watch for any updates about schools/sites that may qualify for this status.

MDE Teacher License Lookup page:
<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/Licen/TeachLicLook/index.html>

MPS Relicensure Page:
http://human_resources.mpls.k12.mn.us/relicensure

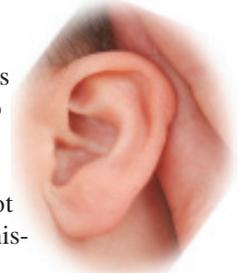
MPS Seniority List:
<https://senioritylist.mpls.k12.mn.us/>
Good luck in your job hunt! ■

Listening tour results

President Nordgren and MFT Organizer Sydney Jordan, have been on a whirlwind listening tour since December, visiting 54 sites. During this tour, they have heard about what's working, what's not, and ideas for improving the District, schools, our jobs, and student learning. A variety of themes have emerged from these visits. Two overall theme are: teachers and Related Service Professionals (RSPs) deserve respect and they admire the good work of their colleagues. The things we have heard need changing are:

1. There are too many assessments and too much testing.
2. Teachers and RSPs are required to attend too many meetings and fill out too much paperwork.
3. Class sizes and caseloads are too big and classrooms are crowded.
4. Students have unmet social and emotional needs. Resources are needed.
5. The discipline policy needs to be revisited and more support provided.
6. Collaborative leadership is needed in our schools.
7. Focused Instruction needs a lot of improvement and benchmarks need re-vamping.
8. Adult bullying is occurring in too many schools.
9. The SOEI is not helpful and is mis-used.
10. Teachers and RSPs do not have enough support from district administration.
11. Teachers and RSPs feel extreme pressure from a variety of sources.
12. The defined elementary curriculum schedule is too heavy-handed.
13. Students need more interactive social development time including play.
14. There is too much change all the time.

If Lynn and Sydney have not visited your school yet, please e-mail Sydney at Sydney.zatha@gmail.com or call/text her at 612-296-3495 to schedule a meeting with you and your colleagues. ■



What concerns you?

What would you like to see
in the next MFT Educator?

Let us know at the
e-mail addresses below!



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Sydney Jordan, MFT Organizer: Sydney.zatha@gmail.com

Changing our . . .

Membership: How to welcome new teachers

By Caroline Hooper, Southwest Steward

We know the connection between good relationships and effective learning. The importance of relationships applies to our professional relationships too, especially within our union. Today more than ever we need to establish positive relationships with our colleagues. Fortunately, as educators, we already have many of the skills necessary to successfully build relationships, organize our union and effectively advocate for our students. Lois Weiner, a professor of education at New Jersey City University and an advocate of social justice unionism writes “I think building a democratic culture in the union that supports members to act on their own behalf uses the same strategies as creating a ‘community of learners’ in a classroom.”

teachers and not-yet-tenured teachers at Southwest High School this past fall was larger than any in recent memory. This holds true across the district too as approximately 1/3 of our teachers are in their first three years. As stewards we felt it was important to reach out to teachers new to our building to build relationships, offer support and let them know that together WE are the union.

We began this past fall with a luncheon for all educators new to Southwest. We also included new ESP’s. While enjoying delicious sandwiches from Bryn Mawr’s Cuppa Java, (paid for by MFT) everyone was able to introduce themselves and engage in some social banter. Stewards were also able to introduce themselves and offer support.

At a mid-winter luncheon with not-yet-tenured teachers

and stewards we focused on the tenure process and invited our building induction coordinator to join us. We were able to answer questions, provide support, and further develop relationships. First year Spanish teacher Caitlin Dowden, who attended both lunches says “As a new teacher, I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet fellow teachers and address common concerns through the union-sponsored luncheons.”

Effective organizing involves not only new teachers, but all educators. Besides regular union meetings, another innovative approach we successfully used this year at Southwest is the union lunch-in where all educators in the building are invited to bring their lunch and join their colleagues. Lunches focused on specific topics such as

Community Partnership Schools as well as just providing a forum to meet and talk with colleagues. Recognizing the importance of relationships and one-on-one communication, stewards at Southwest have also signed up new full members in the union and increased

COPE participation. Organization within the union is important and cannot be left to chance. The union is and can be so much more than insurance and a contract every couple of years. Effective organizing helps strengthen the union and increases our effectiveness as

educators and advocates for our students and their families. I encourage all members to organize your school. Meet your colleagues, sponsor a lunch-in, read and study your contract, and dream big about what you and your union can do. ■

MFT needs an Nominations Chair

Are you looking for ways to get involved with your union? Here’s your chance. Barb Boerboon, the current MFT Nominations Chair and a long time union advocate, is retiring at the end of this school year. We are looking for a Nominations Chair to replace Barb. The job responsibilities include:

- Co-Chairing the Membership Meeting in December to open nominations and to inform members about the upcoming annual conventions.
- Co-Chairing the nominations to conventions meeting in January – ballots, nominated members speeches (30 seconds) and voting.

If you are interested in this position, please e-mail MFT Vice President Sue Backus at subac001@live.com with your name, school, years in district and a short statement of why you would like this position. You must be a full-share member in good standing to accept this position. ■



MPS rumor mill - from p. 1

<p>Rumor: The Expedited Professional Support Process (E-PSP) will cause teachers to lose their jobs because principals will apply it arbitrarily and frequently.</p>	<p>Rumor: Quality Compensation (Q-Comp) will cause merit pay (paying on test scores) to begin in MPS.</p>	<p>Rumor: Community Partnership Schools (CPS) are going to become charter schools.</p>
<p>Fact: From the beginning, E-PSP was to be used sparingly and then only with severe cases. Since implementation this year, just two teachers have been put on an E-PSP.</p>	<p>Fact: No data, test scores or evaluations have been used to start a merit pay scheme in MPS. In fact, giving \$1 to \$3 to teachers snubbed state merit pay expectations. We have met expectations without buying into merit pay.</p>	<p>Fact: No, they are not. CPS sites will be MPS schools that can be free from some “top-down” district initiatives but not to the detriment of employees in CPS sites or by moving them to become charters.</p>

A look at MFT history

Changing Our Rights:

The 1970 Minneapolis Teachers Strike

The Minneapolis Teachers' strike of 1948 showed that MFT could be a potent force in local public education – and beyond.

After MFT supported a janitors' strike in 1951, the state legislature made strikes by public workers illegal – dismissing strikers and stripping them of tenure, among other things, with no right of appeal.

In 1965, other public workers were allowed to bargain, but teachers were held in check by what came to be known as the “meet and confer” law – which was not collective bargaining, made no provision for mediation or appeal, and still made strikes illegal.

But in 1970, teachers were ready to stand in the gap once more. Some issues were similar to those from 1948 – salary and class size being just two – but the overarching issue was the right to collectively bargain.

On April 6, 1970 – two and a half months after the teachers' proposal was presented to the School Board without response –

Minneapolis' two teachers unions voted 1,170 – 312 to strike, in violation of existing law.

However, the ‘other’ teachers' union, known as the City of Minneapolis Education Association, voted against supporting the strike soon afterward. This left MFT on its own – and by existing law, every one of the 2,190 teachers absent from class on the morning of April 9, 1970 forfeited his or her job.

The public commentary of the day centered on whether teachers who broke the law could expect students to follow rules. MFT President (and English teacher) Norm Moen responded to such criticism by citing Thoreau; he said “we are taking a courageous action against an oppressive and repressive law.”

Eventually, after teachers had been off the job for a week, CMEA came around and told its members to stay home. The law, they said, did not require them to be strikebreakers.

As the strike progressed, greater public awareness

of the issues eventually led to better public support of teachers. Teachers' unions from as far away as Florida contributed financial and moral support, while the Building Trades stopped construction on the new South High and Franklin Junior High projects to support teachers.

However, then as now, editorial support for teachers was lacking. Both Minneapolis papers – the morning *Minneapolis Tribune* and the afternoon *Minneapolis Star* – agreed that the law banning strikes was unfair but that teachers set a poor example by refusing to obey it.

By April 21, negotiations with the School Board were in full flow and salary items had been agreed to, but the issue of what to do with striking teachers remained.

In the interim, the Minneapolis Public Schools were anxious to resume classes due to the possibility of a long strike affecting state aid, so officials sent letters to teachers asking them if they intended to return or not. Considered an ultimatum,

these letters were returned to the Board by striking teachers in containers marked “Junk Mail”.

Finally, a settlement was reached that raised teachers' pay, provided prep time, and guaranteed against reprisals. Class sizes were fixed and a new discipline policy was enacted.

Striking teachers were re-hired, but received no pay increases for a year and could work Saturdays to make up lost time. Both sides compromised: the teachers compromised on pay and the board compromised on amnesty.

On April 28, 1970, MFT voted to end the strike, with classes resuming the next day. But most importantly, the strike of 1970 resulted in the passage of the Public Employees Labor Relations Act (PELRA) a year later.

Governor Wendell



Anderson, who was clear about his desire to end the strike through collective bargaining and mediation while a candidate for the office the previous year, signed the measure into law. It strengthened collective bargaining rights for public employees and made strike penalties much more realistic.

And, like their brethren of 1948, the MFT's “Class of 1970” helped create a better, fairer classroom setting for the teachers of today. ■

This article was written with reference to “The 1970 Minneapolis Teachers Strike: A Milestone in Minnesota Labor History” by Corrine Adams Robinson.

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