

MFT Educator

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A Union of Professionals

www.mft59.org



*"I am a
teacher.
I am
blessed."*

— *Katharine
Skibbe*

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Minneapolis Federation of Teachers & ESP, Local 59

A life well lived . . .

By Lynn Nordgren

Why did you become a teacher? Or, a related services professional? It is a question we started asking MFT members seven years ago when we began our journey to a student-centered union. Through supporting what's best for students and you, being involved with our cities' communities, and building political advocacy for students and their families, we've changed our union narrative for the better. Of course, we were not surprised when members shared heartfelt answers to the question. In the end, none of the reasons involved money or notoriety. For the great majority of us, our work is about wanting a better life for our students and making the world better as a whole. We seek to empower our students to create a life that has value, is sustainable, and has the elements of being healthy, happy and productive. It is all pretty amazing – and honorable.

My reasons for becoming a teacher were simple – it was what I always wanted to do since I was 6 years old and, the only thing I ever wanted to do. It was (and still is) in my blood. My love of children, the journey

of learning, and putting them together to inspire a passion for life has always been exciting to me. And, like most of you, I wanted to make the world a better place in whatever way I could. When I left the classroom after 17 years of teaching in MPS, it was to serve all of you in reaching your aspirations of helping students be successful. In truth, however, as much as I admire and respect all of you, the best part of my career was my time with students in the classroom – there truly is nothing like it when you see a life grow and change for the better and know you helped a student find their way. As my time in this profession comes to a close in June after 40 passionate years in MPS, I will carry my memories of special times with my students and with you – those who inspired me to keep going each and every day. I feel so lucky to have had the journey.

In this Educator, you will hear from MFT members about why they do what they do – we hope it inspires you to not only reflect on your initial reasons for doing what you do but, why you stay. And, even if some days are difficult and you feel you cannot make it another day, just remember, as you create better lives for students, you are also creating a life well lived for yourself. There is not much else like it. ■

Why did you become a teacher?

Beautiful, complex and curious

By Brionna Harder

I cannot pinpoint the moment that I decided to become a teacher. I cannot say that I was called to the profession or that being a teacher was the only thing I ever wanted to be. I cannot describe the thought process that led me to choose this career. Others, however, saw it as the obvious path for me. When I contacted a former teacher for advice about becoming a teacher, he said that he saw within me the “fire in the belly and the big heart” needed to be the kind of teacher that all students deserve. When I informed my parents that I intended to earn my teaching license, my mother declared “It’s about time

you figured it out. We’ve known since you were a little girl.” A couple of weeks before I began the post-baccalaureate program at the U, I had my very first conversation with my biological grandmother through which I learned that I “came from several generations of educators.” What others saw so quickly came to me gradually over time. Now, with 17 years in this profession, I cannot imagine doing anything more beautiful, complex and curious, nor can I imagine anything more fulfilling and important.

I see teaching as an inherently optimistic, hopeful act – a daily exercise grounded in a strong belief in the potential and the possibility. As educators, we believe in the potential of our students and the possibility before them and we strive to infuse that belief into our every decision and our every interaction. We recognize that for our students to reach and exceed their potential and to open up the doors of possibility before them, we must see

our students as individuals who are infinitely beautiful, complex and curious. On our best days, we are able to do these things – live in and act from that strong belief in the potential of the beautiful, complex and curious individuals with whom we spend our days and the possibility before them – without challenge and without distraction.

On our hardest days, we struggle. Exhaustion
Beautiful individuals - cont. on p. 5



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From your president

Teaching and learning go together

By Lynn Nordgren

If you want great learning to happen, you have to respect, value, resource and support those doing the teaching so they can meet the needs of every learner. It is a simple equation based on common sense.

Unfortunately, much of our common sense about the critically important relationships between the students and teachers has gotten lost in the effort to have the best tests scores (on low quality tests), the lowest suspension rates (while simultaneously ignoring the social emotional needs of students), and the flashiest schools with "from-on-high" labels and awards (that mean much of nothing in the end but lead us to believe in the hype of the numbers). Education has become a numbers game rather than figuring out how - at rich, deep, and meaningful levels - to fully support both students and staff to be successful.

To really make things work in a school or school district, we need to listen to the teachers, related services professionals, and the learners. That is where the rubber hits the road. We cannot continue to roll out initiatives with little to no in-depth training or resources and hope it all works out through osmosis or divine intervention.

We cannot keep adding time for learning but lessen the time a teacher has to prepare for bringing that learning to life. We can-

not ask our related services professionals to do what they were educated to do but then assign them other duties or not give them the proper time or caseloads to do their best work. And, we cannot place blame when something doesn't work that leadership has asked professionals to do and then say it is the practitioner's fault - especially when leadership has under-resourced an initiative or not been willing to listen to constructive feedback about their top down commands.

So, what to do? We can complain and protest that we do not like what is going on but that still does not lead us to solutions. I have never been a big believer in being a victim to a situation and pounding on the window from the outside to get change to happen on the inside. Instead, WE (all of us) need to make things happen from the inside by taking charge of our work and creating the solutions we know will make a difference. Yes, this is easier said than done but that does not mean we should give up because it will be hard work. Together, we can make the change we believe in happen if we believe we can.

To stand up for what is right and what is needed, MFT has been in a constant mode of listening to members for the past 8 years to learn about what's working,

what's not, and what the solutions you believe will help you and the students to be successful. Through emails, one to one conversations, site visits, surveys, many focus groups, committee meetings, house meetings, petitions, social events, steward meetings, rallies, community engagement work, legislative efforts, and more, we hear and act on

A TEACHER TAKES A HAND,
OPENS A MIND

AND

TOUCHES A
HEART

change
with you
and for you
on what **you** say is important.

Our recent contract is a result of listening to what you said you needed. While we rarely get all we want in negotiations, we always are successful at moving the contract along a continuum of support and improvement. Based on what we have learned from all of you, MFT formulated goals for negotiations and were successful in achieving some that we believe will make a difference. Your voice did and does matter especially when you use it!

In addition to negotiations goals, MFT also created *Goals for Student Success* that has been guiding the union for the last five years. We work hard to bring them to life at the district, community, and legislative levels knowing they can make a difference in schools and the community. Here is the summarized version of the goals:

1. Ensure Early Childhood preparedness Birth to Five.
2. Fully support, staff, and fund special education.
3. Eliminate the equity and learning gap through better access and opportunity to life for all students.
4. Provide mental health services to every

Teaching and learning - cont. on p. 8

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From your business agent

When teachers are assaulted

By Bonita Jones, MFT Business Agent

Assault is the intentional infliction of or attempt to inflict bodily harm upon another. Intentionally placing another in reasonable apprehension of receiving bodily harm, or making statements threatening physical harm. (*MPS Levels of Behaviors, Interventions, and Responses*)

Immediately following an assault:

Take a moment to check-in with yourself and a colleague

Do not underestimate the psychological or emotional effects of a verbal or physical assault. It's important to take a moment to determine whether you're okay to continue teaching. If needed, call the office and ask to be relieved so you can take a break, go home, or seek medical attention.

Record the details of the incident as soon as possible

Create a written record of the assault as soon as possible. Include any injury, witnesses, damage of personal or district property, and the circumstances leading up to the assault. However, do not submit your written statement until your building steward or an MFT Business Agent has reviewed it. If you've sustained an injury, ask your steward to take photos for your personal records.

Notify your supervisor

Always inform the principal immediately if you believe a student is a serious threat or if a student has harmed you, yourself or others. If you've been assaulted, request to be informed, in writing, what specific actions were taken by the site in response to your report.

Notify your Union

Always contact your building steward, who will in turn contact an MFT Business Agent.

Complete an Incident Report and First Report of Injury within 24 hours

It's important to report your injuries immediately even if you think you'll get better without medical treatment. There are times when an injury doesn't require immediate medical attention, so it might seem like a good idea to wait and see how you feel in a few days. However, waiting can affect your ability to make a claim.

The Incident Report and First Report of Injury forms are available in the site offices, or you can get assistance from the District Workers' Comp Coordinator, Heather Geis, by calling 612-668-0510, or emailing Heather.Geis@mpls.k12.mn.us.

File a Police Report

Some threats may rise to the level of requiring that the police must be notified. Some factors to consider in determining the seriousness of a verbal assault are the student's age, history of aggressive behavior, and his ability to follow through on the threat. When in doubt, talk to your SRO (school resource officer).

Also, a reasonable loss of time resulting from an assault won't be deducted from your sick leave, provided you file an Incident Report and police report. (A police report will not be taken/required in cases where the student is 10 years old, or younger)

Seek medical attention

A medical assessment of any injury should be made as soon as possible. A doctor's report can be important evidence in any claim or legal proceeding. Be sure to tell the doctor exactly how you were injured and be consistent with how you reported the injury to your employer.

Report loss of work time and medical expenses

If you need to take time off due to an assault related injury, notify Heather Geis, the District Workers' Compensation Coordinator (see above) and procedures will be followed as per state law.



Seek reimbursement for damaged personal property

Per the contract, the District will reimburse teachers for the cost of replacement or repair of personal property damaged or destroyed as a result of student assault, up to \$250.

Counterclaims

These situations can be sudden and unpredictable. Despite what we've learned in classes, or what we've been directed to do – we're human, with emotions, fears, and we instinctually protect ourselves. When a student is out of control and you fear that he may seriously hurt himself, you or another staff member, move away from him and tell other students to the same. You do

When teachers are assaulted - cont. on p. 7



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.

Being fortunate to do what I love!

By Amy Carpenter, 1st Grade Teacher at Waite Park

I have been a first grade teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools for over 25 years. I have taught on the north side, south side, downtown and currently in Northeast Minneapolis. I have worked at both high poverty and lower poverty schools.

I wanted to be a teacher from as far back as I can remember. I used to force my younger sister to play "school" with me. I recall her often asking me, "Why do you always get to be the teacher?" But, being the younger sister, she always complied.

As a child, our family of eight was poor, although I didn't know it at the time. My parents chose not to have a television in the house. Instead, we made weekly trips to the local public library in Madison, Wisconsin. We were allowed to check out as many books as we could individually carry. Then, back at home, we would sit on the floor with our backs against the heaters and read for hours. Soon, we had to take the city bus downtown to the central library because we had exhausted the supply of books at our local library. Part of my motivation for becoming a teacher was to impart my love for reading in children. This life long love persists as an adult. I enjoy introducing children to the Caldecott's and Newberry books. Additionally, every year I share fiction, non-fiction, humor, fairy tales, folk tales, multicultural books and poetry with my students. We do author studies using books written by Nancy Carlson, William Steig (for the tier two vocabulary), Ezra Jack Keats, Laura Numeroff, Mem Fox, Kevin Henkes and of course, the beloved Dr. Seuss.

I truly believe in public education and the right of all children to a high quality education. All six of the children in my family graduated from college and half of them have advanced degrees. Highly skilled and passionate teachers can level the playing field and give all children the opportunity to overcome obstacles and become productive citizens. My belief in public education as a way out of poverty drives me every day in the classroom.



I absolutely love to teach children to read and write. I was really struck by the joy of a group of children from the highest poverty school in the state as they read a chapter from Frog and Toad in which Toad bangs his head against the wall and pulls the covers up over his head declaring that he will do all his chores tomorrow. The children who were reading chorally broke out in spontaneous laughter. The joy this early chapter book elicited made me see how ineffective and joyless the direct instruction I was mandated to use was. I learned how important it is to get real literature and non-fiction books into the hands of children as soon as possible. I believe that the Little Bear series and Frog and Toad series should be in every first grade classroom along with Go, Dog, Go.

A child can write phonetically as soon as s/he knows all the letters and sounds in the alphabet. When children are encouraged to "write the sounds they hear," without worrying about the "correct spelling," they can write freely. I love the power a child feels when his/her writing can be read by an adult. Teaching children how to put their thoughts, ideas and feelings on paper is one of the reasons I love teaching.

While teaching first grade is labor intensive and requires tremendous patience, it is incredibly gratifying to teach children how to read and write. First graders are full of energy and curiosity. Every day, my students say or do something that makes me laugh out loud. I consider myself very fortunate to be paid for doing a job that I love. ■

It's a joy to plant seeds of knowledge that grow for a life time!



Beautiful individuals - from p. 2

and frustration sometimes clouds our desire to live in and act from that strong belief. On our hardest days, we find ourselves so challenged and so distracted that we sometimes lose that hope. We wish desperately for what we need and too seldom have – time, autonomy, respect, recognition, understanding, support, trust – and feel a sense of resignation or defeat. Thankfully, our interactions with those beautiful, complex and curious individuals so often energize and inspire, particularly when we are most in need of energy and inspiration. So often, on those hardest days, those beautiful, complex and curious individuals remind us of that strong belief in the potential and the possibility, not only in and before them, but also in and before ourselves.

Those moments – the moments when those beautiful, complex and curious individuals find greater

beauty, complexity and curiosity in the world through their experiences with us, the moments when smiles, laughter, passion and wonderment spill out of the faces, minds and hearts of those beautiful, complex and curious individuals, the moments when we glance at the lives of those beautiful, complex and curious individuals beyond our classrooms and school buildings, the moments when those beautiful, complex and curious individuals are inspired by us to do and be better than they thought possible and inspire us to do and be better than we thought possible in return – those moments are why our profession is so essential. Those moments are why our work is so hard and, at the same time, so fulfilling. For all those moments, and for all those beautiful, complex and curious individuals, I see teaching as my life's work. And, there is no other work that is so beautiful, complex, curious, fulfilling and so very important. ■

I eventually listened to my little voice — It's the best thing I ever did!

by Alex Hoselton, Southwest High School

You know that little voice in your head? Some call it our conscience. It kept telling me to become a teacher, but I ignored it. I wanted to use my creativity to build wealth as an entrepreneur. I even had a strategic timeline, but my conscience had another plan.

Teachers even encouraged me to join the profession, but I said things like “teachers don’t make enough money.” Friends asked me to let them copy my work; I refused and instead tutored them because they should learn it. Then I tutored at a nearby elementary school. I became a Link Crew Leader and mentored ninth grade students. While my conscience was quietly implementing its plan, it didn’t hit me until I understood *why* life was much harder for so many people I met.

I grew up spending a lot of time in my dad’s office. My friend Keith and his siblings lived in a small rundown apartment behind the parking lot. Keith’s parents were both addicts and unemployed. He told me he was born addicted to drugs and that’s why school was harder for him. Hearing that while riding bikes at eleven years old didn’t make a lot of sense. My dad asked Keith if he wanted to go out for pizza with us. After dinner, as Keith was getting out of the car he asked my dad if he could take the leftover pizza home. He quickly said his family was running out of food and couldn’t go back to the food bank until the beginning of the month. He ran inside with a big

smile and pizza in hand. My dad explained in very explicit terms that I should respect Keith for his courage and I should do what I can, when I can for others. It’s just the decent thing to do.

Soon it was the last day of school, I saw Keith with a big sticker on his shirt that read “Least Likely to Smoke Award.” He was incredibly proud of this sticker. His teacher gave it to him. While puffing a cigarette in the parking lot his dad was also proud. There is something universal about educators and

parents; we both want our kids to have a better future despite the circumstances. We went to different high schools and lost touch. After graduating high school, I heard Keith was convicted of attempted murder. It just didn’t seem like he had a fair chance.

Junior year of high school, I was sitting in a small plastic chair tutoring a third grade student named James. We had

spent the entire semester working through math problems and reading books. One morning he was very quiet and didn’t respond to my questions about math. He stared at his hands in his lap with distress on his face. I asked him how he felt today.

He said he felt sad because his parents lost their jobs again and he was afraid of living in their car again. His biggest fear was not going to school. It wasn’t fair that a nine year old had to struggle this

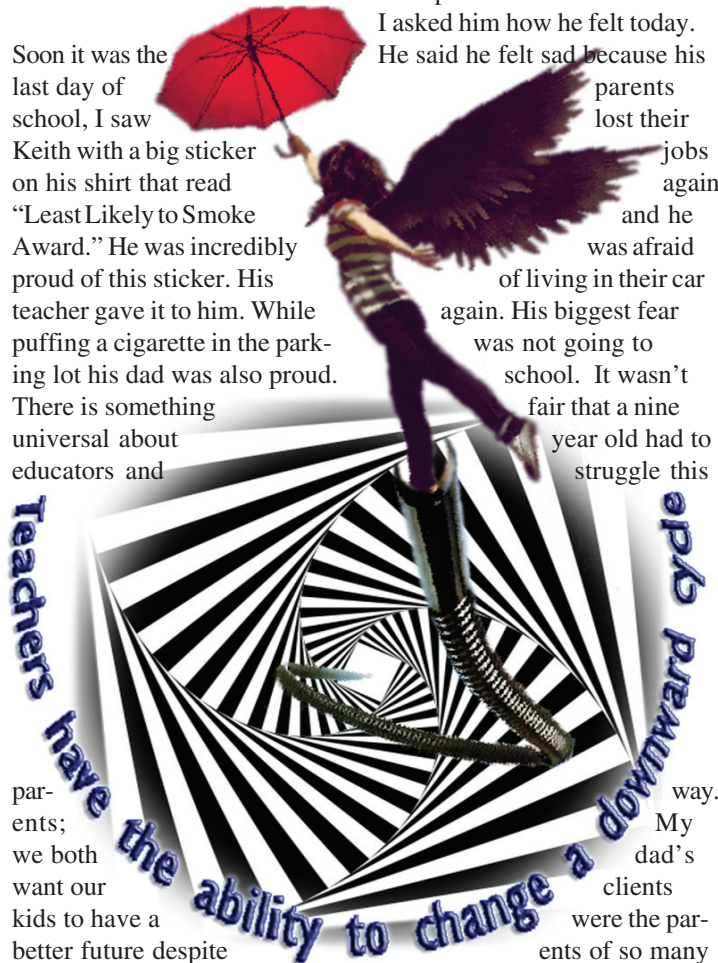
way. My dad’s clients were the parents of so many kids like James. He is a bankruptcy lawyer and I’m pretty sure 99.9% of his client’s aren’t happy to find themselves sitting across from him. As a youngster I used to play with my dad’s clients’ kids. As a family business I always did filing or folding brochures, and getting coffee or tea for clients. In high school and college I added answering phones, calling

creditors of clients to threaten to invoke federal law for their violations of our clients’ rights, worked the reception desk and completed research projects for my dad.

In that time, I learned a huge cross section of people file bankruptcy. The idea that only irresponsible people file bankruptcy is wrong. I learned many people don’t have a decent wage. That makes them one car accident, family medical emergency, divorce or a flippant boss’s decision away from crippling debt. Low wages forced families to use credit cards to pay for groceries and keep the heat on. It gave me great joy to drive down to the courthouse to file papers to halt the foreclosure on someone’s home. Everyone deserves stable housing. Many people who sought my dad’s help were trapped by a set of unfair rules that took advantage of them. The payday loan industry is one of the worst predators of hard working people. Without a decent education rarely does a decent paycheck follow. Despite working harder and longer hours at multiple jobs just to make do, fairness eludes very good people.

My conscience finally spoke loud enough while I sat in a sociology class at Augsburg College. I learned about generational poverty and the impact education has on someone’s lifetime income. I had known life wasn’t fair, but this finally helped me understand *why* life wasn’t fair. I finally understood

Listening - cont. on p. 7



— Alex Hoselton

When teachers are assaulted -

from p. 4

have the right to protect yourself, but physical intervention should only be used in extreme cases and as a last resort. If you must intervene, use reasonable force given the student's age, size and ability to injure others.

If you have any reason to suspect that there may be allegations that you instigated the assault or used excessive force in protecting yourself, do not sign any statements or participate in any investigative interviews until you have consulted an MFT Business Agent. ■

I am a teacher

By Katharine Skibbe, Seward Middle School

I am a teacher. I come from a family of teachers, although in my youth it wasn't a profession that I necessarily thought was something I wanted to do for a lifetime. I taught for a year, took a ten year break in the business community and accidentally fell back into teaching 25 years ago, being recruited into the Minneapolis Public Schools.

I love that I get up every morning knowing that each and every day is different. I am lucky enough to surround myself daily with what will be our excellent future - my middle school students. I love that at almost 59 years old I have to continue to learn, to be current, to look for ways to engage and relate to every student that I work with. I love the *ah ha* moments that middle school students have and the drama that often goes with these moments. I love that I have learned colleagues that have a sense of humor and passion for our profession and that I get to work with a diverse group of students that teach me new things every day. I love that I laugh every day...and sometimes shed tears because the work is hard and in these days a political minefield. I am a teacher. I am blessed. ■

INSTRUCT
ENCOURAGE
PRAISE
INFLUENCE
SHARE
GUIDE
INSPIRE

Our ABE peers share their passion for teaching

By Lynn Nordgren

Most of us in Pre-K-12 know very little about the MPS Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs or the MFT colleagues who work in them. While ABE has their own MFT contract, they are a chapter of our union. Like all of us, they are licensed teachers who have standards to meet, curriculum to teach, and students to inspire. ABE students are a very diverse population who range in age from 16 to 70 and are there to learn English, get a GED, become a citizen, and get on a pathway to a career or college. The impact of their education also touches the lives of their own children- many of whom we teach in Pre-K-12. The ABE mission is about helping their students succeed in life, work and academic skills.

At a recent meeting to talk about contract negotiations, I was happy to meet some new faces on the ABE bargaining team who are stepping up to make their voices heard. Before we got started on discussing negotiations, I asked each of them to share why they became an ABE teacher. I was so touched with their heartfelt comments that I wanted to share them with you. At any time, each of these teachers could come into the K-12 contract and make tens of thousands of dollars more each year. But, they choose to stay where they are - and here's why:

Katie - "I want to lead the way for ABE so
Shared passion for teaching - cont. on p. 8

Listening -

Cont. from p. 6

education could change that cycle. I finally listened to my conscience. I didn't want to have success as an entrepreneur at the expense of others' misery. The logic was simple, if my business does well, my competitor's layoff employees or close down.

I finally learned my heart was bigger than my ambition. Teaching is an act of social justice. We teach for a more just and fair future for our students and hopefully their future children as well. I'm just happy that I have been able to teach for eight years and be a part of a selfless profession. I take that back, it isn't selfless because I enjoy teaching, even with all the challenges. ■



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.

Friedrichs vs CA Teachers Association

Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association is a lawsuit filed by Rebecca Friedrichs, nine other teachers and a teacher group, the Christian Education Association. The suit challenges the authority of CTA and other public-sector employee unions to collect fair-share fees from all employees they represent.

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has decided to hear the case in its current session, with a decision expected by June 2016.

The plaintiffs want the court to overturn a 1977 decision in *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Abood* that teachers, firefighters, health care workers and other public employees have the right to join together to form a union, and the union would be their exclusive representative for bargaining wages, benefits and working conditions, just like workers in the private sector.

SCOTUS also ruled in *Abood* that states could charge workers who didn't want to join the union a fair-share fee that covers collective bargaining for everyone in a bargaining unit — members and non-members.

If the plaintiffs prevail, fees for non-members would no longer be mandatory. ■



- SCOTUSBlog overview of the case and resources
- America Works Together, a resource page compiled by a coalition of groups about the case
- Friedrichs infographic

Videos

- Friedrichs vs. CTA: What you need to know
- Value of belonging to Education Minnesota
- The Big Picture: Strengthen Unions



Who would it affect?

About half of the states, including Minnesota, have laws establishing mandatory “fair-share” or “agency” fees employees pay to unions. The remaining 27 “right to work” states either prohibit collective bargaining by public workers or ban mandatory dues and fees. Although the case directly involves the CTA, a decision could affect all unions representing public workers, depending how narrowly or broadly the Supreme Court rules.

Who is underwriting the case?

The Center for Individual Rights, a Washington, D.C.-based public interest law firm, is underwriting the case for the plaintiffs. Its mission is “the defense of individual liberties against the increasingly aggressive and unchecked authority of federal and state governments.” It has pursued lawsuits seeking to ban affirmative action and racial and gender preferences.

The respondents are the California Teachers Association, the National Education Association, a number of local teachers associations and some California superintendents.

Who pays a fair-share fee?

In Minnesota, employees of state and local government may be members of a collective bargaining unit if their colleagues have elected to have a union represent them. Employees who are in a collective bargaining unit, but do not want to be

members of a union, pay a fair-share fee in lieu of union dues.

What is a fair-share fee?

The fair-share fee represents the portion of union spending that is related to collectively bargaining and enforcing a collective employment agreement covering everyone in a bargaining unit. In Minnesota, fair-share fees cannot be greater than 85 percent of the dues that the union charges full members. The fee ensures that individuals who get the benefit of a bargained and enforced contract help contribute to the cost of maintaining it. It does not include the union's costs of campaigning for candidates and lobbying for issues at the state or federal level.

How do you determine who pays the fair-share fee?

Individual employees make this determination—in Minnesota, a school or other government employee must affirmatively elect to be a member of the union. If the employee does not, he or she pays the fair-share fee.

Isn't Friedrichs about individual rights? No one should be forced to join a union

No one is forced to join a union. But unions are legally required to represent all workers, even those who do not join the union. Public employees who don't want to join only contribute toward the costs of bargaining and representation they *Q & A continued* - cont. on p. 9



from p. 8

receive. None of those fees may be used for political activities of any kind.

This case is really about politics. Corporate interests not only want to reduce pay and benefits for working people, they are advancing cases like this and Citizens United, so they can have more power in the political process. Weakening the voice of unions and working families makes it easier for a handful of billionaires to elect candidates and write laws to their own benefit.

Do unions have to represent non-members?

By law, unions must represent and bargain for every worker, regardless of whether they join. Abolishing fair share means some employees get benefits for free. It's not fair for some people to have to pay more for the benefits all workers enjoy.

Fair-share fees are like splitting the check at a dinner with friends. If everyone eats, everyone should chip in — even if one person didn't agree on the choice of restaurant. ■

Show your **SUPPORT** from p. 8

Change your social media photos to support working people and/or add an America Works Together banner to your profile pics!

Share the case on Facebook and Twitter:

- Working people help keep our communities safe. Read how upcoming #SCOTUS case could put that at risk. <http://americaworkstogether.us/>
- Enough is enough. Stop the attacks on working people. #WorkTogether <http://bit.ly/1Svil3S>
- #FairShare is a common-sense way to ensure fairness & protect equity, individual rights and the wallets of educators <http://bit.ly/1Svil3S>
- Fact: no one is required to join a #union and no one is required to pay any fees that go to politics or political candidates. #WorkTogether
- Strong unions mean a strong #middleclass, which means a strong economy. - @RBReich #WorkTogether
- Teachers unions like Education Minnesota are important local, state and national platforms from which teachers' voices can be elevated. Read how a critical case before the Supreme Court could put that at risk. <http://bit.ly/1ONXYJd> #WorkTogether
- 100K Americans have signed a petition showing solidarity with working people. We cannot let wealthy CEOs and the Koch brothers hobble the effectiveness of public sector unions. <http://bit.ly/1mzY9Sz> #WorkTogether

The wealthy special interests behind Friedrichs vs California Teachers Association want to limit the power of public sector unions. 100K Americans believe these rights must be protected. Share if you agree. <http://bit.ly/1mzY9Sz> #WorkTogether ■



**Everything has its beauty
but not everyone sees it.**

—Confucius

*I am fortunate to be a teacher,
for I frequently see the hidden
beauty of my students!*

Teaching and learning - from p. 3

student who is struggling with social emotional issues.

5. Create and expect safe, respectful learning environments for everyone.
6. Insist on democratically run schools where teachers, related services professionals, parents, and community have a lead voice in the education of their students.
7. Reduce student assessments to increase learning time and use multiple measures that assess and inform the talents, skills and academics of a student in a wide variety of methods.
8. Educate the whole child/youth through a student-centered, diverse, well rounded, fully resourced, and holistic education.
9. Optimize learning through small class and caseload sizes.
10. Ensure access to a diverse staff, curriculum, and school setting.
11. Support EL learners to achieve language fluency in an environment of respect for and understanding of their diverse cultures.
12. Work for economic justice for all.
13. Work towards a bright career or college for MPS students based on their strengths, desires and talents.
14. Create full service community schools that provide wrap around services to immediately meet the medical, social-emotional, and other important needs of students.
15. Ensure high quality teaching is delivered by committed, respected, and supported educators.

Shared passion for teaching - from p. 7

everyone in our society can have a chance at a good life. I work with amazing teachers who are committed and passionate. This is what I was meant to do in life."

Laura – "After 25 years, I still love teaching here. It is my world and I am committed to it even though I don't make much money. I figured out how to make it work (although I wouldn't mind making more money...lol)."

Erin – "I choose to be here because I am inspired by the students. I can see an immediate effect and positive change that equates to life changing gains. The gains the adults make have a big effect on their children as well which means their children will do better, too."

Danielle – "In ABE, I get to focus on the students. They are grateful for our work together. I also like ABE because we are a small group within the organization but I feel I still have a voice."

Shelly – "Every day I can see I am making a difference – there is an immediate contribution to the lives of others. It is a team feeling – a small but committed group of professionals working with students who are also committed to bettering their lives. We all want to make a difference in the world. Everyone is all in."

Diana – "I feel like a cultural ambassador. We build relationships with and amongst diverse groups of people that helps bridge the gap between these groups. We help build a positive, interactive culture in our society."

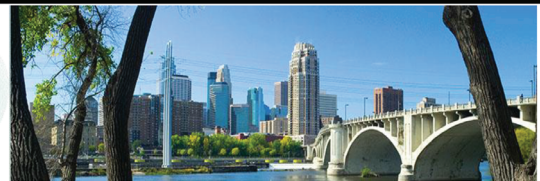
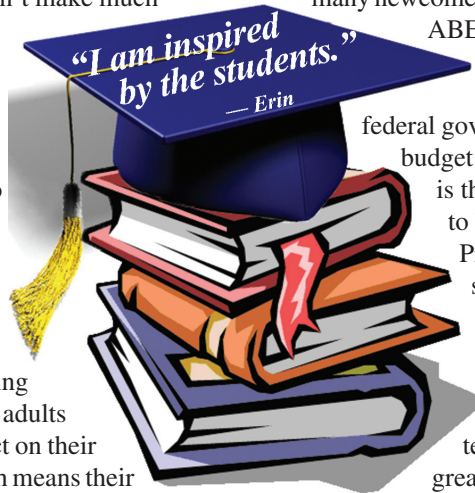
Heather – "I like empowering learners. I like the variety of what I get to teach which is just about every class

there is in ABE. The students are amazing and it is always interesting."

ABE has a continuous enrollment of new students every month but has no SEAs, no nurses, no social workers, some LD issues, some behavior issues but those are limited and many newcomers. The maximum salary an ABE teacher can make – even after 30 years and a master's degree – is \$46,000. The federal government funds ABE so their budget is smaller and, therefore, so is their salary. MFT has fought to bring ABE teachers into the Pre-K-12 salary schedule with some additional funding through MPS but no luck so far. Pay must be addressed, however, if we are going to attract quality teachers as well as retain the great teachers already in ABE.

There are two campuses. The North Campus is housed on the 5th floor of the Davis Center (1250 West Broadway) and the South Campus is just off Lake Street and the light rail (2225 East Lake Street). They are open in the mornings until 12:45 p.m. and in the evenings as well.

Kudos to everyone at ABE for your unwavering passion and desire to inspire! ■



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>

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! ■**



Upcoming events and opportunities

- 2/24 MFT59 Stewards meeting - 2:45 or 4:45
- 3/16 MFT Joint Executive Board meeting – 5:00-8:00 p.m.
- 3/20 2016 Youth Day at the Capitol. Youth Day at the Capitol will provide both training and engagement opportunities for youth and adults to participate in the legislative process. The day-long event will be open to school-age youth and recommended for youth 5th-12th grade.
- 3/23 Stewards meeting – First Call for Election of Officers PEP Cards due to MFT to be entered in drawing
- 3/30-4/2 The 2016 National Service-Learning Conference® is Educate. Ignite. Transform. See more at: servicelearning.conference.org
- 4/16-4/17 Network for Public Education conference – Raleigh, NC
- 4/20 MFT Joint Executive Board meeting – 5:00-8:00 p.m.
- 4/27 Stewards meeting – Officer nominations
- 4/29-4/30 Education Minnesota Annual Convention – Friday, 4:00p.m.
- 5/25 Stewards meeting – Election of Officers Member meeting (Budget)

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. ■



"I love the power a child feels when his/her writing can be read by an adult."

— Amy Carpenter

Using materials from MFT's School Store

Perimeter Math Lesson: Grade 6



Recommended by Michael Bratsch

STOP BY **Wood Pieces** **3-ring binders** **FREE**

SCHOOL STORE
 MFT, 67 Eighth Ave. NE,
 Mpls;
 School Support Area
 (entrance at W parking lot
 delivery doors)
 Ph 612-529-9621; fax 612-529-0539
 Weekdays: 8am-4pm except
 Wed: 10am-5pm

Materials donated by local businesses & MFT distributes them to you!

Some items are grade specific.