

MEA voice

SCHOOL VIOLENCE:
A 'SILENT CRISIS'
Page 22

ADRIAN LOCAL EASES
NEW MOM'S STRUGGLE
Page 16



We're Listening

Time to Say Farewell



Steven B. Cook
President



Nancy L. Strachan
Vice President



Richard S. Trainor
Secretary-Treasurer

IT'S BEEN OUR HONOR TO SERVE THE MEA MEMBERSHIP, AND NOW WE'VE REACHED THE END OF THE ROAD. YET THE BIGGER JOURNEY IS FAR FROM OVER, AND WE ARE TRANSITIONING LEADERSHIP TO A VISIONARY AND COMMITTED TEAM YOU CAN READ ABOUT IN THIS ISSUE'S COVER STORY.

The new officers' mission—advocating for quality public schools for every student, regardless of zip code—has never been more critical. Their success depends on your dedication to the cause.

Our union remains strong despite unprecedented attacks from politicians who demonize public school employees to serve their own ends. Their goal remains to tear down one of our democracy's foundational institutions to push corporate profiteering.

Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch—now a frontline fighter against the corporate so-called “reform” movement—recently said we’re in the midst of an “existential” battle to save public education.

A leading education historian, Ravitch pointed out in a *Washington Post* op-ed: “Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos wants to expand privatization to include vouchers, virtual schools, cyberschools, homeschooling, and every other possible alternative to public education. DeVos has said that public education is a ‘dead end,’ and that ‘government sucks.’”

We in Michigan know better than most that DeVos and other billionaire backers of privatization don’t care that reams of research show so-called “choice” doesn’t “fix” schools in struggling communities. They aren’t concerned that most Americans oppose vouchers funneling public tax dollars to corporate bank accounts.

Our hope resides in awareness. Widespread public resistance to the disastrous health care plans advanced

by Republicans in the U.S. House and Senate has shown that pushing back works against unpopular ideas. And the massive fight against DeVos’s confirmation proves her ideas are hugely unpopular.

We need all hands on deck. That means it’s important to get involved with your local association. It means talking with new hires in your building about what’s at stake and why they should join. It means speaking up to get your school board, your parents, and your community leaders taking part in the fight.

We have to be prepared to lose some legislative battles without getting discouraged. Sometimes our failure to beat back obviously bad education policies may succeed in exposing the cynicism of would-be destroyers of public schools.

That was the case this summer when Republican leaders narrowly passed a bill attacking pensions for new school employees despite bipartisan opposition—a costly move *Michigan Radio*'s Jack Lessenberry called “Orwellian” and an *M-Live* story speculated could worsen the growing teacher shortage.

MEA was born from a timeless struggle against injustice and the belief that individuals working together can make a difference—a tradition carried through generations that rests now with you.

Best wishes to our new officers and to the next generation of MEA activists. You are the union, and we still believe. ■

4 Editor's Notebook

Reasserting 'We the people'

6 MEA Calendar

Fall Representative Assembly

8 Retirement Case Update

Still waiting for 3 percent

20 MEA Trainings Available

Learn the law: Evals, Reading

22 School Violence Toolkit

MEA targets a big problem

26 Honors & Awards

ESP, Human Rights, and more

On the Cover: Officers-Elect (l-r)

Paula Herbart, Brett Smith, and Chandra Madafferi



12 **COVER STORY** MEA's new officers will step into their roles with a statewide Listening Tour to hear the issues and priorities that matter to members.

5 **NEWS & NOTES** The West Ottawa Education Association brings the books to the students.



16 **STRENGTH IN UNION** MEA members in Adrian help a new mom shoulder a difficult load.



10 **MEMBER VOICES** MI Teacher of the Year Luke Wilcox wants to improve educator PD.



30 **MEMBER SPOTLIGHT** Ideas flow with this Lake Orion technology and library specialist.

MEA Voice

Executive Director Gretchen Dziadosz
Director of Public Affairs Doug Pratt
Editor Brenda Ortega
Staff Photographer Miriam Garcia
Publications Specialist Shantell Crispin

The MEA Voice ISSN 1077-4564 is an official publication of the Michigan Education Association, 1216 Kendale Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48823. Opinions stated in the MEA Voice do not necessarily reflect the official position of the MEA unless so identified. Published by Michigan Education Association, Box 2573, East Lansing, MI 48826-2573. Periodicals postage paid at East Lansing and additional mailing offices. Payment of the active membership fee entitles a member to receive the MEA Voice. Of each annual fee whether for active or affiliate membership, \$12.93 is for a year's subscription. Frequency of issue is September, December, February, April and August. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to the MEA Voice, Box 2573, East Lansing, MI 48826-2573 or via email at webmaster@mea.org. Allow at least three weeks for change of address to take effect. MEA Voice telephone: 517-332-6551 or 800-292-1934. Circulation this issue: 113,913.

Editor's Notebook

One of my favorite newspaper columnists wrote something empowering recently that made me think of you, the *Voice* readership. MEA members. School employees. Educators. The folks who love and guide and care for and teach the next generation. *The best people in the world.*

In his *New York Times* piece titled “Where Did ‘We the People’ Go?” Thomas Friedman wasn’t writing specifically about educators, and his message wasn’t about a Rocky-running-up-the-steps-and-doing-a-victory-dance sort of empowerment. He was appealing to everyone and promoting the kind of strength that quietly radiates from inside out.

But—if you’ll bear with me—his premise seemed tailor made for educators.

There’s no doubt in today’s political climate we are witnessing deep societal divisions that present potential for trouble. Friedman and others trace the divisions to a breakdown in “truth and trust”—fueled by technology and social media—that has eroded our sense of shared values.

Friedman quotes Dov Seidman, an author and consultant who helps businesses build ethical cultures, who distinguishes between “formal authority” and “moral authority” in leaders. The best leaders possess both, but eroding public trust undermines political leaders’ moral authority.

“The only thing that will save us is if more people... build moral authority in their respective realms and then use it to do big, meaningful things,” Friedman writes. “Use it to run for office, start a company, operate a school, lead a movement or build a community organization.”

Formal authority can be won or assigned, while moral authority is *earned*—and you, dear readers, possess it in spades. For years, polls have shown Americans trust public school educators, dislike high-stakes testing, and prefer to fix struggling schools rather than close them.

Remember that the next time you’re talking with a parent, a friend, a family member or neighbor. Use it to animate your actions the next time MEA urges members to contact their legislators or write a letter to the editor.

Call on it to inspire deeper engagement within your local union—and to motivate yourself, your colleagues, and your local association to do “big, meaningful things” in your schools, districts and communities.

And, as Friedman concludes: “In so doing, you can help put the ‘We’ back in ‘We the people.’”

—Brenda Ortega, editor

57%

Percentage of Michigan voters who said teachers and school employees in their local public schools are paid too little in a statewide EPIC-MRA poll conducted in May among likely 2018 general election voters. This represents a significant change from answers to the same question in a December 2014 survey—when 45 percent said teachers and school employees were paid “too little.” By contrast, only 5 percent said they were paid too much.

QUOTABLES

“I hope he knows what an impact he’s made on me and so many others. I’m grateful I could be a part of giving back to him.”

Algonac High School senior Noah Todina, speaking of Algonac teacher and coach Jeff Smith, who moved into his Habitat for Humanity house this summer. Noah and his mother Dana—an AEA member—worked on the home build as part of an MEA-Habitat partnership.

QUOTABLES

“THERE WILL BE NO PHOTO OP.”

NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, speaking to 7,500 delegates at this summer's NEA Representative Assembly (RA) about the union's refusal to compromise with U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. NEA RA delegates voted to approve a new policy on charter schools meant to limit charter growth and increase charter accountability, and slow the diversion of resources from neighborhood public schools to charters. View the new policy at <http://bit.ly/2tviv3L>.



ABOVE AND BEYOND

For 42 years, the West Ottawa Education Association (WOEA) has kept the summer Bookmobile rolling, and for 40 of those years Cherie Versendaal has been one of the members staffing it. The library-on-wheels visits neighborhoods in the Holland area for nine weeks every summer. Versendaal, who retired 20 years ago after 28 years as an elementary school teacher, says kids wait for the bus, and “When it comes, they start to jump up and down!” Toddlers to teens show up to choose books, which the union gathers through fundraisers and drives. Children can later return books, or keep ones they like and return a different book they’ve outgrown. “Some kids find a book they really like and continue reading the whole series,” Versendaal said. Kids who join the book club get to sign the back of the bus after they read 10 books, and they love to see their signatures when the Bookmobile appears in the Tulip Time parade, she says. “It’s so much fun—I’ll keep going as long as I’m able to do it.” The West Ottawa school district supplies the bus, and the WOEA stocks it and staffs it with current and retired teachers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 14

Fall Representative Assembly

Lansing Center, Lansing

The Representative Assembly (RA) is the top governing body that conducts the business of MEA. The group meets twice a year, in the fall and spring. Delegates to the RA are elected by their local associations. Go to www.mea.org/governance for more information.

October 14

Commissions/Committees/Task Forces (CCTFs)

Lansing Center, Lansing

The MEA CCTFs are advisors to the MEA Board of Directors. Every year, these groups receive charges from the Board, which are the focus of their year's work, and meet at least once a year to discuss their charges. Membership on a commission is by election at the RA or by appointment of the MEA vice president with consent from the Board.

October 20

Higher Education Bargaining Conference

MEA Headquarters, East Lansing

The Conference features sessions designed specifically for higher education members. Sessions covering the trends in online learning, intellectual property, higher education funding, member engagement, and bargaining will provide the information and strategies to help higher education leaders strengthen their local associations.

Election notice: NEA Board of Directors

Delegates to the MEA Fall Representative Assembly (RA) on Oct. 14 will choose one new member to the NEA Board of Directors in a special election.

One new director will fill the vacancy created by Paula Herbart being elected as the MEA President at the 2017 Spring RA. The term begins immediately and expires Aug. 31, 2018.

Nominations can be made from the floor of the Fall RA.



THE BUZZ

MEA's Region 9 delegation to this summer's NEA Representative Assembly in Boston made a statement with their fashion: "Dear America, Sorry about Betsy DeVos. Sincerely, Michigan." You can order yours online at www.mearegion9.com (click on Merchandise).



QUOTABLES

“If they walk into school and they want to be there, it’s a total game changer.”

MEA member Joe Dombrowski, a Royal Oak fourth-grade teacher invited to appear twice on the Ellen show this spring after a hilarious video of his April Fool's Day prank spelling test went viral. Dombrowski makes his students laugh every day to make learning fun.

Cedar Springs Educator Selected as Global Learning Fellow

MEA member Shayne Dove, a social studies teacher at New Beginnings Alternative High School in Cedar Springs, has been named one of 48 NEA Global Learning Fellows for the 2017-18 school year.

The fellowship will immerse participants in coursework, including a two-day professional development workshop this fall and a nine-day international field study next summer, bringing the full cohort together with experts in global learning.

Dove says he has been able to finance travel abroad in the past few summers by applying for grants and fellowships. He uses the experience to broaden his teaching and expose his students to the wider world.

"I want to learn as much as I can," Dove told the *School News Network*. "That's how I treat these trips. The exposure to different ways of thinking, different perspectives, being open to challenging your beliefs, is what I love."

The NEA Foundation will accept applications for the 2019 Global Learning Fellowship this fall at www.NEAFoundation.org.



\$1 billion

The amount of money per year that 17 states divert to private schools via voucher school "tax credits." Congress is considering implementing such a scheme nationwide, which could devastate public school funding, according to a June report from AASA, the school superintendent's association, "Public Loss—Private Gain: How School Voucher Tax Shelters Undermine Public Education." Ten of these states' tax credits are so lucrative that some upper-income taxpayers turn a profit on contributions they make to fund private school vouchers.

MEA Staff Win Communications Awards

MEA's Public Affairs and Communications staff won several awards at this summer's State Education Association Communicators (SEAComm) Awards in Portland, Ore.

First place in Group 3—which includes state associations with membership of 55,001 or more—was awarded to MEA for the following campaigns:

- Earned Media Campaign, "Flint Water Crisis"
- Social Media Campaign, #StopTheAppeals

- Government and Political Affairs, 2016 Elections

The State/National Collaboration Award went to MEA for: "Battling Betsy DeVos—From Michigan to D.C."

Award of Distinction went to MEA in the following categories for Group 3:

- Use of Social Media—#WearRedForPublicEd
- Magazine—MEA Voice

Lead Plaintiff in 3% Retirement



MORE THAN A YEAR AGO, LANSING TEACHER DEBORAH McMILLAN PRESSED GOV. RICK SNYDER TO STOP APPEALING THE 3 PERCENT RETIREMENT COURT CASE. THE 40-YEAR VETERAN TEACHER WAS A LEAD PLAINTIFF IN THE 2010 LAWSUIT SEEKING THE RETURN OF MONEY INVOLUNTARILY TAKEN FROM SCHOOL EMPLOYEES' PAYCHECKS.

McMillan marched in protests last summer and helped to deliver 33,000 petition signatures to Snyder's office on behalf of MEA members who want their money returned, as three separate court rulings have ordered.

"The longer this case drags on, the more that school employees like myself feel even more dissed, demeaned and devalued by those who were elected to represent us," the longtime

educator and union activist said at a press conference in June 2016.

Unfortunately, McMillan did not live to see the final resolution of the case, which has continued for nearly seven years as Snyder filed multiple appeals of trial and appellate court rulings in favor of MEA and AFT-Michigan.

McMillan died in March from complications following a knee replace-

ment surgery.

"She was supposed to be retiring this summer, and everything is upside-down now," said her husband of 43 years, Chuck McMillan.

Like many teachers, bus drivers, custodians, food service workers, and other school employees, Deborah McMillan had a significant amount of money taken by the state—in her case, \$4,050—the kind of money that pays bills and funds college tuition.

"We put two boys through college and paid for dental bills and everything else," Chuck said. "It goes along with being a family; you develop a budget and then you have some-

Case Fought for Fairness

By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

thing come along like this—where the government comes in and takes your money illegally—and everything is out of whack."

McMillan taught for 40 years in Michigan public schools, 28 of those in Lansing. She was beloved by students, parents, and colleagues as "very loving, very open, very inclu-

quipped. "I truly believe teaching others was her calling in life," he said.

When the state began withdrawing 3 percent of school employees' pay to fund retiree health care costs—a benefit those employees were not guaranteed to receive—Deborah was "totally disgusted at the breach of contract," Chuck said.

"She fought for what she believed in... I'm very proud of her."

sive"—and very involved, said Chuck, who spent his career working at MEA and MESSA.

A former vice-president in her local union in Lansing, McMillan also served as an MEA Board member and worked on numerous MEA and NEA committees. She was driven to action when Gov. John Engler began cutting public schools and attacking school employees in the 1990s.

"She fought for what she believed in—that's who she is, or who she was," Chuck said, "When she got involved, it was very intensive."

She was a strong advocate of early childhood education, especially in urban schools. She belonged to a national reading initiative that approached early literacy skills as a social justice concern.

"She felt really, really, really strongly about getting kids off to a great start," Chuck said.

She worked with her students' parents if they needed help in learning how to support their children in school, and she informally mentored numerous colleagues, often taking younger teachers under her wing.

People loved her so much, he would sometimes get jealous, Chuck

"I remember when she came to me and told me she was getting involved in the lawsuit; I asked her when she was going to find the time with all her other activities. She said she could find the time because it was important to her, and that's all I needed to hear."

She became one of five MEA members who were lead plaintiffs in *McMillan et al. v. Michigan Public School Employees' Retirement System*, filed by MEA, alleging Public Act 75 of 2010 represented an unconstitutional impairment of contracts.

Under that law, nearly \$550 million was unilaterally taken from school employee paychecks from 2010-12, money that has been held in escrow pending resolution of the court case. A replacement law from 2012 has passed legal muster, because it allowed school employees to contribute more to retiree health insurance or opt out of retiree health benefits.

In 2011, the trial court found the 2010 law to be unconstitutional, an opinion affirmed by the State Court of Appeals in 2012 after Snyder filed his first appeal. That decision was appealed to the state Supreme court,



Longtime Lansing teacher Deborah McMillan did not live to see the resolution of MEA's 3 percent case. She was lead plaintiff in the suit, which has dragged on for seven years.

which sent the issue back to the lower court for further review.

A year ago last June, the State Court of Appeals again found the law violated multiple provisions in the state and U.S. constitutions involving the taking of private property without compensation, due process, and impairment of contracts.

Snyder appealed for a third time last summer, and the state Supreme Court recently decided to hear the case—meaning more briefs will be filed and oral arguments will be heard before a ruling is issued.

Chuck McMillan worries that politics and the court's conservative makeup will not result in a decision favorable to school employees, but regardless of the outcome he's glad Deborah did what she always did and got involved in fighting for what's right.

"I'm very proud of her," he said. ■

Supporting Innovative Professional Development

By Luke Wilcox



Luke Wilcox is a math teacher at East Kentwood High School and the 2017-18 Michigan Teacher of the Year. See related story, page 26.

I've always dreamed of creating a space and structure for teacher professional development that is different than the current one-size-fits-all approach, where "experts" far removed from the classroom give advice that is difficult to implement. Many of us have struggled through countless hours of "sit-and-get" sessions, left wondering how we can use the information to improve ourselves as teachers.

In my ideal professional development framework, educators choose what they want to learn about, and the "experts" are experienced teachers interested in similar learning. The learning is specific and targeted; the learning environment is innovative, with technology and furniture that promotes collaboration; teachers feel comfortable challenging the ways we've always approached education; teachers are recognized as valuable resources for growing other teachers; and—above all—teachers are treated like professionals.

This year I will partner with the Van Andel Education Institute (VAEI) to begin realizing this vision, part of my overall goal to support teachers as Michigan Teacher of the Year. VAEI, the education division of the Van Andel Institute, promotes a hands-on, inquiry-based model for science instruction, offering a variety of teacher professional development programs and student programming to get students to "think like scientists."

With this partnership, we'll work to expand teacher learning opportunities in three key areas: math education, new teacher development, and growing teacher leaders.

Math education is going through an important shift in philosophy right now. Traditional lecture-style learning formats are being replaced with a more interactive and collaborative environment, where students create the knowledge and teachers act more as facilitators. This challenging but significant transformation needs support systems for

the math teachers embracing this change. Our partnership will explore ways the VAEI inquiry-based model for science instruction can be used within a mathematical context.

The first few years for new teachers are extremely demanding, but unparalleled professional growth occurs during this time. These teachers need social and professional support to maximize their learning in these formative years. We can provide consistent support and resources for these teachers by creating a space for them to share their struggles, and specific training to grow them towards master teachers, along with targeted summer programming to help teachers prepare for each new school year.

Administrators are increasingly empowering teachers to be a part of the decision-making process, the professional learning of colleagues, and the vision creation for the school. For this to be effective, teachers must be trained in leadership qualities and thinking. We can provide programming to develop elite teacher leaders who will grow their influence within their schools and districts.

The opportunity to facilitate teacher collaboration and development is an exciting one, especially in such an innovative workspace. Feel free to email me your thoughts and questions at luke.wilcox@kentwoodps.org, and follow this partnership while learning more about my work as Michigan Teacher of the Year at lukewilcox.org/blog. ■



Many immunizations free for MESSA members

AUGUST IS NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS MONTH, and MESSA would like to remind you that preventive immunizations are a covered benefit for MESSA members.

These common immunizations are covered at no cost to you: influenza; pneumococcal (pneumonia); tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap); tetanus and diphtheria (Td); and zoster (shingles). Age restrictions apply for shingles and pneumonia vaccines.

Immunizations must be administered and billed by a payable provider. The three types of payable providers are:

How to protect your family from pertussis

Infants and children younger than 7 should receive diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (DTaP) vaccine beginning at 2 months of age. They should get subsequent shots at 4 months, 6 months, 15 to 18 months, and a fifth dose at 4 to 6 years before starting school.

Adolescents should be given a dose of the tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine booster at age 10 or soon after. Children ages 7 to 10 who are incompletely immunized against pertussis should also receive a Tdap booster.

Adults who have not received a Tdap booster should get one as soon as possible—and should not be around infants until they do.

Your in-network health care provider:

Your family doctor who's in the MESSA/BCBSM network.

Select retail pharmacies:

Most Michigan pharmacies will give you an immunization for free and bill your MESSA health plan. Don't pay the pharmacy up front for a vaccination. If a pharmacy asks you to pay up front, go to a different pharmacy or contact MESSA's Member Service Center at 800.336.0013 so we can ensure you receive the immunization free. Tdap is only available at select retail pharmacies. Contact MESSA for assistance.

Public health departments:

Most public health departments are non-participating with MESSA and BCBSM and will require you to pay up front at the time of the service. If you received your vaccination from a public health department and paid up front, you can send a copy of your receipt, the name of the MESSA member and your contract number to MESSA for reimbursement.

Call MESSA's Member Service Center at 800.336.0013 with any questions. ■



New Leaders Assume Office

*Stories by Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor*

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES, AN ENTIRELY NEW SLATE OF STATEWIDE OFFICERS WILL TAKE THE REINS AT MEA NEXT MONTH—AND THEIR FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WILL BE TO EMBARK ON A LISTENING TOUR ACROSS MICHIGAN.

Incoming President Paula Herbart, Vice President Chandra Madafferri, and Secretary-Treasurer Brett Smith want to hear the stories of members—to learn about why they do what they do and what supports and changes they need to ensure a great public education for every student.

"We all ran for office with a vision of what we'd like to see the MEA become," Herbart said. "Marrying our vision with the hopes of our local leaders and members will make MEA its most strong, its most vibrant, its most relevant going forward."

The three new leaders were elected at the spring Representative Assembly in April and will assume their offices on Sept. 1. The Listening Tour will kick off in late August, and additional dates will be added throughout the fall.

Herbart compared the trio's role in the listening events to being the lead

geese in the triangle, encouraged to keep steady by the honks of those following behind them.

"People right now are honking and encouraging us to keep going, and we have to listen to keep our strength up," Herbart said. "Without their words, without their knowledge base, without their ability to articulate what they see for us, we cannot lead."

For his part, Smith said he plans to use Tour stops to brainstorm with local presidents, veteran educators, and newer hires about the best ways to interest prospective members in joining the union.

"Obviously we can't solve every problem right away, but listening to people is absolutely key to making the union stronger," Smith said.

However, while listening to members will take center stage, Madafferri said she hopes the members who attend Tour stops will be learning as

well as sharing.

"I hope that people will see Paula as their leader, and they get to know her heart and her spirit," Madafferri said.

The leadership team agrees that the morale of school employees has fallen to an all-time low in recent years as funding cuts have stagnated pay and benefits, while over-testing and over-reliance on standardized testing data have hampered teacher and student creativity.

Privatization and corporate takeovers loom as major threats, but public sentiment has remained strong for neighborhood public schools, operated by elected local boards and fully transparent and accountable in their operation—unlike for-profit charter schools.

Also on our side? The passion of our people, Herbart said. "I know very few public school educators who wanted to do anything else with their lives but what they're doing. They love their work, and they love their students, and that's why they're in this fight." ■

Attend a local Listening Tour stop!

Your participation in the Listening Tour is critical to ensure MEA's new officers hear directly from the experts on the front lines of public education in Michigan! As of press time, the following Listening Tour stops by the new MEA officers have been confirmed. For details on these stops (including how to RSVP) as well as other dates that will be added throughout the fall, visit www.mea.org/listeningtour.

Traverse City—Wednesday, Aug. 23, from 3-4 p.m. at the NEW Traverse City office (Open House from 2-5 p.m.)

East Lansing—Wednesday, Sept. 20, from 6-7 p.m. at MEA Headquarters (Region 8 meeting)

Waterford—Thursday, Sept. 21, from 6-7 p.m. at Oakland Schools (Region 7 meeting)

Mt. Pleasant—Saturday, Sept. 30, from 12-1 p.m. at Soaring Eagle Casino (Stop will have a Higher Ed focus)

Midland—Thursday, Dec. 7, from 6-7 p.m. at MEA Midland office (Region 12 meeting)

Plus more dates currently being planned in every area of the state—check www.mea.org/listeningtour for the latest stops!

Interested in seeing a Listening Tour stop in your area? Contact your local MEA UniServ office and ask about getting one set up near you.



Paula Herbart served in numerous leadership roles in the Fraser Education Association before being elected president of Local 1, serving 16 districts in Macomb and Wayne counties, in 2012. She has served on the MEA and NEA Board of Directors and as chair of the 6-E Coordinating Council, in addition to a number of committees, coalitions, and task forces.

If corporate profiteers succeed in destroying public education for private gain, our children will pay the price, says incoming MEA President Paula Herbart. We've already seen the profits-over-people scenario play out—in Flint.

President-Elect Hopes to Lift Members' Voices

What Paula Herbart lacks in physical stature, she makes up for in gusto. The 5-foot music teacher can command a stage, a classroom, and a union hall. Think *Norma Rae* with a touch of *Mr. Holland's Opus*, sprinkled with *Glee*.

Her personality formed early on all of those fronts.

Both of her parents were educators—her father in Fraser where Herbart would eventually start a teaching career and become president of the local union; and her mother in Fraser and Chippewa Valley, where Herbart attended school as a child.

In elementary school, a “magical” music teacher first noticed Herbart’s flair for dramatic performance and encouraged her to keep at it—leading her down a path toward a semi-professional vocal career as an adult, in addition to teaching music.

“Everything was a grand gesture,” she said. “Nothing was tiny about me—except my height.”

In fourth grade, the future MEA president staged her first protest outside of a classroom where a teacher failed to intervene in a bullying situation. A few years later, she watched her mother work as a strike captain during a 1979 teacher strike involving more than 30 districts statewide.

“I grew up with the understanding that the institution of public education is sacred, and there’s no greater honor than to be involved in the fight for that,” she said.

She was drafted into union activism in her very first year of teaching in 1992, serving as co-chair of her local’s Political Action Committee for three years and climbing her association’s leadership ladder rung by rung to become president of the Fraser Education Association in 2009.

Her experience at the local level taught her that fairness requires transparency and negotiation. “You find out pretty quickly how unkind the bargaining table can be, because not everyone is standing up for what is right.”

And leadership means being willing to answer tough questions and own difficult decisions. “The line of people who want to make decisions is a lot longer than the line of people who want to take responsibility for it,” she said.

One of Herbart’s primary goals as the new MEA president will be to base decisions at the state level in the realities of locals, while simultaneously encouraging members and leaders at the local level to see a bigger role for themselves in union work.

MEA is the last line of defense for full education funding and against privatization—to preserve community schools that serve the public good and not a corporation’s bottom line.

“If we don’t have the voices and the people helping us lead the charge for preserving public education, the result will be devastating,” she said. “Because it won’t just be our jobs on the line. It will be our children that we offer up, and we saw that in Flint.”

Herbart believes in this fast-paced, information-overloaded society, individuals are longing to be heard. That’s when her instincts as singer, music teacher, and union advocate all kick in together.

She wants to inspire others to lift their voices. She wants to sing the story of members in her big, dramatic way. And she wants to harness the collective power of school employees to keep public education strong.

“You know, I used to say when I was a choir director, and now it’s the same with MEA: ‘The only instrument I have now is you. The collective voices of this choir—you’re my instrument now, and I make my music through you.’” ■



Madafferri first joined MEA as a student at Central Michigan University. She began her involvement with the Novi association as co-chair of the Political Action Committee, later assuming other leadership roles. She has served on the MEA Communications and Public Relations committee and the Membership Advantage campaign.

Tough negotiators. Stalwart defenders. Forward thinkers. They are leaders whose skills were forged in this era of attacks on unions, public schools, and school employees. They don't take 'No' for an answer, and they're fighting to win.

Vice President-Elect a No-Nonsense ‘Worker Bee’

Chandra Madafferri is one of those people who seem blessed with extra energy the rest of us dream of having—a self-described “worker bee” who sees something that needs doing and dives in to get it done.

And there’s a lot that needs doing.

First and foremost on the incoming vice president’s agenda is to build MEA’s visibility with parents and other potential community partners who believe in the transformative power of public education but don’t understand MEA’s reason for being—our purpose and goals.

“I would like the average parent of—let’s say, a third grader—to know that MEA is fighting for smaller class sizes, or that MEA is fighting for high teacher standards to have the best and brightest in front of the kids,” she said. “It’s not just about duty-free lunch, for example.”

At a recent public education advocacy conference, Madafferri made a presentation to a room full of superintendents—using wartime as an analogy. Her first slide showed the image of a battlefield with soldiers on the front lines and tanks and commanders behind them.

“I said to them, all these foot soldiers down here—this is MEA,” she said. “The MEA soldiers have been fighting all these battles to save public education, but now we need to fight together.”

The forces of privatization that wish to turn public schools into corporate profit centers will “pick us off one by one” if the many and various supporters of public education remain isolated and separate, she told her conference audience.

“I said in a nice, assertive, strong way—‘If we go away, you’re next’”—and the Novi health teacher left the conference with names, phone numbers, and offers of cooperation, she added.

Madafferri took over as president of the Novi Education Association after the Republican-controlled Legislature passed anti-union measures, including so-called “Right to Work” legislation and other laws barring payroll dues deduction and prohibiting certain bargaining topics.

The tough times honed her negotiation and collaboration skills, and sharpened her determination to fight for educators’ rights, she said. “I’ve learned you can’t take ‘No’ for an answer and that with hard work you can usually find common ground.”

She describes herself politically as independent with some conservative leanings, a mindset she says helps her communicate with members who do not choose political candidates based on education issues first. She encourages those members to “split their tickets”—and vote in the interest of their profession at the local and state levels.

A former special education teacher, Madafferri eventually hopes to improve the types and breadth of professional development offerings MEA provides—especially to newer educators, who must meet ongoing PD requirements and need quality supports to remain in the profession.

“I have a lot to learn, but I’m excited about the possibilities,” she said. ■



Brett Smith has been an MEA member since 2000. In addition to holding office in the Linden Education Association, Smith has served as treasurer of the 10G Coordinating Council—drawing on his degree in Business Finance and previous experience working for General Motors and Ameritech.

New Secretary-Treasurer a ‘Natural Leader’

Brett Smith says he was the “unknown” on the ballot this spring, but he didn’t come out of nowhere. He emerged from the battlefield.

Constant attacks on educators by out-of-touch politicians did not fit the reality he saw every day working as a teacher: school employees caring for kids, providing a safe place to learn, working weekends to deliver quality education.

When Republican lawmakers passed so-called “Right to Work” legislation in 2012, the Flint-area native reflected on experiences growing up in a UAW family. He knew educators’ voices were being silenced—and that silencing would be devastating to kids.

“I decided one day I needed to get more involved,” the Linden fifth-grade teacher said. “I’m a natural leader; I’m not the kind of person who can just sit around and talk about frustrations without saying what do we do to fix it, and how can I be part of the solution?”

He attended MEA’s Local Presidents Academy (LPA) after working up the ranks to become head of the Linden association. Last year, he and Kalamazoo’s local president—Amanda Miller—visited leaders in Minnesota and Illinois to share information about battling against anti-public education and anti-union laws and policies.

“It was so powerful to me that when I came back—I didn’t want to fight to stop the bleeding; I wanted to fight to win back the rights that public education has lost in Michigan,” he said.

As incoming Secretary-Treasurer, he hopes to work with the MEA Board of Directors to simplify the dues payment process, offer incentives to high-performing locals, make information more accessible to leaders, and create avenues for member and leader feedback.

“My hope is in the members, that people see the MEA is not going to give up and we’re not going to give in; we’re going to continue to fight, and we will turn this thing around. All we have is each other.” ■

MEA’s new leadership team enters office facing many challenges with a hopeful and indomitable spirit. They want to hear the stories of members and share ideas for charting the path forward at Listening Tour events across the state.



A Gift ‘Beyond Measure’



IT WAS A FRIDAY IN APRIL, 2016, WHEN ANNIE HOWARD GOT THE NEWS.

The Adrian art teacher expected the ultrasound at a Toledo hospital would confirm an issue with the umbilical cord in her 24-week pregnancy. Instead she struggled to process a deluge of information about the fetus: Absent nasal bone. Calcium spot on the heart. Thick nuchal fold on the back of the neck. Two heart conditions.

In all, tests showed six indicators of Down’s Syndrome in her baby. And interspersed among the litany of medical terms, she remembers the doctor saying, “I’m sorry; I’m so sorry; oh, I’m so sorry.”

Not long after that, Howard sent an

email to her colleagues and friends in the close-knit Adrian Education Association, letting them know what she and her husband had learned about the baby and asking them not to feel sad and not to say “sorry.”

“That’s Annie, right there, just very open with everyone,” said Jeff Condon, AEA president and elementary school teacher. “She said in the email—‘Don’t look at me any differently. This baby is a gift from God.’”

Not that Howard easily shouldered the diagnosis, she said. “I sat in my car in the parking lot of the hospital in Toledo and cried for a good—oh, two hours, I’d say.”

Adrian art teacher Annie Howard and daughter Hazel received vital support from members and leaders in her local association.

*By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor*

Even harder to accept, however, was the assistance she would soon need from her union local. “I hate asking for help from people,” she said. “It’s really hard.”

‘We’re going to be fine’

The day after getting the news on that Friday in Toledo, Howard’s friend invited her to go picking for beach glass at a Lake Erie beach. Scouring the sand in silence, her friend yards ahead, she was overcome with emotion and sat down on a log to cry.

“I prayed like you wouldn’t believe,” she said, tearing again at the memory. “Then later, on my way off the beach, this plastic toy lemon was in my path—the same path I’d just walked in on—and I was like ‘Got it.’”

Remembering her moment of acceptance, she stared at a picture of the toy lemon on her phone—smiling and sniffling at once: “When life hands you lemons, you say *Thank you*, because there’s a reason for everything. That was the day I realized we’re fine. We’re going to be fine. And I got confident about it.”

Howard, who has taught K-12 art in Adrian for 14 years, is quick with a joke and laughs an infectious giggle that bursts forth in the middle of sentences. She points out her

daughter, Hazel, was born on July 11, 2016—"7-11—and coincidentally my favorite treat is a Slurpee!"

She jokes that she and her husband are "the Slowskis"—taking their time and deliberating about everything. They dated more than eight years before marrying, and they waited another nine years before having a child to make sure they were financially set to raise a family.

She quips that her husband now calls her "the old gray mare" and then breaks into lyrics from the song—"The old gray mare just ain't what she used to be..."—followed by more giggles.

In truth the past year has been a gravely serious time for the 36-year-old and her husband, Chris, a Truancy Prevention Specialist at the Lenawee Intermediate School District—but support from her union helped to lessen the weight of heavy challenges.

'So many questions'

After her premature birth, tiny Hazel stayed two months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with tubes helping her eat, breathe, ingest medications, and fight off illness. When she came home, the family awaited three possible surgeries—including an open heart procedure—while keeping Hazel isolated from the world to protect her from infections that would be life-threatening.

Because her heart condition made her fragile, the baby couldn't go

out—not to daycare, church or the grocery store. And Howard realized she not only couldn't go back to work as planned in November—she didn't even have a timeline to return. Doctors said they might need to wait two or three years to perform the riskiest operation.

She debated options with the help of AEA's Condon and his knowledge of the Adrian teachers' contract. Howard had saved enough sick days to take off work through February. She had to retain health insurance. She couldn't apply for a disability leave, because the medical issue wasn't hers. She didn't know how long she might need to stay home.

"There were so many questions that I couldn't answer," she said.

That's when Condon and two of her friends stepped in. Knowing she

would find it difficult to ask for help herself, they solicited sick day donations on Howard's behalf from AEA members—many of whom know and love her, since she's worked in every building in the district.

She needed 67 days to stay home for the school year with full pay and benefits. Within two days of the request going out, 76 days were donated and more were turned away. Many of those members gave up summer cash payments they could have received for not using the days.

Sick day donations are not entirely unusual. Many local bargaining teams have negotiated into their contracts some form of sick day banks, administered by local union leaders, where members can give to each other in moments of need.

"Our members continually step



**"When life
hands you
lemons, say
Thank you."**

A Union Story: Special but not Unique

ANNIE HOWARD'S STORY IS NOT UNIQUE—AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY SHE WANTED TO TELL IT.

Across Michigan every school year, MEA members help others cope with debilitating illnesses and accidents by donating sick days to those in need. In Howard's case, Adrian Education Association members helped the 14-year veteran art teacher tend to a newborn daughter who needed open heart surgery.

It's easy to take the union for granted, she said, but the past year has made Howard appreciate the behind-the-scenes work of local association leaders: bargaining a sick day bank into the contract; administering donations of sick days; ensuring members have quality health care.

Howard qualified for medical case management through her MESSA health care plan, which provided help navigating the labyrinth of medical appointments. Her case manager, a nurse, attended appointments, cleared up billing errors, and explained insurance forms.

"I knew I always had back-up," Howard said.

Pulling out a two-inch stack of bills from the closet, she expressed relief that her "million-dollar baby" had not financially destroyed her family. She and husband Chris, a Truancy Prevention Specialist at the Lenawee ISD, so far have paid their deductible and some minor costs.

In addition, the Howards received weekly home visits from a MESSA nurse to monitor the baby's health and assist the new parents in caring for the special needs of a high-risk infant during a months-long period when the baby was too fragile to go out in public.

"The support of the union has just been amazing in so many ways," Howard said. "I can't say enough." ■

MESSA's Medical Case Management Program (MCM) provides the personal support of a registered nurse to members who experience catastrophic illness or injury. For more information about MCM, please contact the MESSA Health Care Resources department at 800.441.4626 or visit Health Resources at www.MESSA.org.

up for each other," Condon said of his local, which boasts a 98 percent membership rate. "There's definitely a closeness in our association where we look out for each other."

What was unusual was the speed and amount of the donations in Howard's case. "I've never seen it happen so fast," he added. "This was especially heartwarming."

Howard called it an "incredible" outpouring that she appreciates "beyond measure."

'Everyone falls in love'

The Howard family turned a corner in March after doctors

determined it was safe for Hazel to undergo the risky open heart surgery to repair a congenital heart defect—and the procedure was successful, leaving only about a three-inch scar on her chest.

A second surgery to repair a gastric problem in May also went smoothly. Hazel is now fed via a gastronomy tube (G-tube) inserted through her abdomen, rather than a nose tube. The G-tube will remain until she starts eating on her own in the next year or two.

Immediately her color improved, she became increasingly mobile and curious, and she was cleared to inter-

act with the world—no more fear of germs and infection. In June, Hazel enjoyed her first camping trip, first swing in a baby swing, first playpen interaction with another baby.

"Now she'll be sitting up or on all fours, and she looks around as if to say—*You guys are seeing this, right?*" Howard said. "I can't believe her strength—her resilience through two surgeries, her NICU stay. She's strong."

Strong but sweet. "She's such a lover; she loves to cuddle," Howard said. "Everyone who meets her falls in love."

Like mother, like daughter. Throughout the Adrian education community, Howard is admired for her hard work and leadership and loved for her creativity and caring.

In addition to her K-12 duties, Howard works as an adjunct instructor in the Adrian College Department of Art and Design and serves on the Executive Board of the Michigan Art Education Association. In the summer she helps to run an elementary day camp, Art Rocks Kids (ARK), connected to Adrian College.

This fall she will return to work, teaching sixth-grade and high school art classes and serving as the district's arts coordinator, planning professional development, seeking grant money, and organizing events such as field trips.

She's the kind of teacher who lives her subject. A working mixed media artist herself, she said she loves to teach kids techniques but set them free to use them in personal ways that communicate their unique ideas.

"I love when students walk in the door; you can't tell who has difficulty with reading or who has cognitive impairment or who's in special ed," she said. "It's an area of school they can find success in, and they don't have to feel nervous." ■

ABrightFUTURE

For NEA Members

**SCHOLARSHIP
DRAWING**
\$5,000*

**ENTER NOW
AT NEAMB.COM
FOR A CHANCE
TO WIN**



NEA Member Benefits has teamed up with Sallie Mae®, provider of the NEA® Smart Option Student Loan® Program, to offer NEA members a chance to win \$5,000 cash! It's our way of rewarding you for your dedication and helping you further your own educational pursuits. Now through August 31, 2017, enter each month at www.neamb.com. If you're the lucky \$5,000 winner, you could choose to fund professional development courses for yourself, cover some of your expenses toward National Board Certification, or even help family members with their college tuition!

To enter, visit www.neamb.com
or call the NEA Member Service Center at 1-800-637-4636

The NEA® Smart Option Student Loan® by Sallie Mae® offers competitive rates and the flexibility of three repayment options to help you finance education costs not covered by scholarships, grants and federal loans.

To learn more, visit us at neamb.com/sl or call 1-866-898-5198.



*No purchase necessary. Void where prohibited. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. Ends August 31, 2017. See official rules: neamb.com/prize. NEA's Member Benefits Corporation receives compensation from Sallie Mae for this program. NEA's Member Benefits Corporation does not receive any dues dollars from NEA to support Member Benefits programs. Smart Option Student Loan information is for borrowers attending degree-granting institutions only. Applications are subject to a requested minimum loan amount of \$1,000. Current credit and other eligibility criteria apply. Smart Option Student Loans are made by Sallie Mae Bank or a lender partner. SLM Corporation and its subsidiaries, including Sallie Mae Bank, are not sponsored by or agencies of the United States of America. Sallie Mae, the Sallie Mae logo, and other Sallie Mae names and logos are service marks or registered service marks of Sallie Mae Bank or its subsidiaries. © 2017 Sallie Mae Bank. All rights reserved.

NEA, NEA Member Benefits and the NEA Member Benefits logo are registered service marks of NEA's Member Benefits Corporation.

MKT12727 0617 SL250817

New MEA Trainings Address Key

Teacher Evaluations



According to MEA member survey results, drastic changes to the teacher evaluation system in Michigan over the past several years have drained educator morale already battered by stagnant pay and declining benefits.

Now a new MEA training cadre aims to empower teachers to make any evaluation tool used by their district clearer, fairer, and more effective in spurring meaningful reflection and growth in practice.

Thousands of MEA members who responded to a recent online survey reported that new evaluation tools required by the state waste time and don't improve classroom practice—amounting to time-consuming “hoop jumping” instead of providing val-

able insight or feedback.

Across all four evaluation tools the state now requires districts to choose from, 70 percent of survey respondents said the system used by their district has not improved their teaching. The *5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning* tool had the lowest dissatisfaction rate at 64 percent.

More than 77 percent of teachers who took the survey said the new tool used by their district takes more time away from teaching. One commented: “It adds an incredible amount of unnecessary busy work to both teachers and administrators.”

The *Thoughtful Classroom* and *Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching* had the lowest percent-

age of time-wasting complaints at a still-whopping 72 and 74 percent respectively.

Survey respondents complained that the rating system for determining a teacher's effectiveness level often feels arbitrary: “There is no way whatsoever that any teacher in my district will ever receive a score of ‘highly effective,’” one teacher said. “Everyone has been told that this will be impossible to attain from the highest level of our district administrators.”

The survey confirms what MEA staff are hearing in the field, said Tammy Daenzer, a UniServ director in Tuscola County. Daenzer says teachers sometimes get marked down in areas that cannot be observed during a short classroom visit by an administrator. Others don't know why they received a score in a particular area.

“One of the questions is—how does someone prove they're actually doing what they're supposed to be doing?” she said.

In response to member concerns, Daenzer and a number of other MEA UniServ directors have formed a training cadre that partnered this summer with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to develop tools and strategies for teachers to have a stronger voice in evaluations.

The information will be presented at various meetings with MDE officials to be held around the state

New trainings on the educator evaluation system will focus on drafting Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), utilizing tools to effectively demonstrate student growth, and providing evidence of student engagement. MEA is partnering with MDE and other school groups to offer the information intended to empower teachers and improve the evaluation process.

Educator Concerns



in late summer and early fall, and local associations also will be able to request a training to be scheduled in their area.

While MDE did not create the teacher evaluation laws, the department's job now is to provide the best support possible to educators, said Rebekah Emmerling, who heads up the Educator Evaluation Unit at MDE.

Many steps can be taken at the individual and building level to improve the process, including strategic conversations with administrators in advance of observations. Teachers should also know how to build evidence of their effectiveness so they can advocate for themselves.

Perhaps most importantly, as educators across the state struggle to adapt to new and imperfect evaluation tools, it is possible for teams of educators to add clarifying

information to their evaluation tools if administrators agree to do so, Emmerling said.

Such an addendum could spell out what teacher and student behavior looks like in a highly effective classroom, broken down by grade levels, content areas, or specific subsets of learners as needed to create clarity in a building, Emmerling said.

"The goal is to make sure that evaluation isn't something being done to you, but it's being done *with* you," she said.

To learn about training sessions scheduled near you, sign up to receive MEA's *Voice Online* e-newsletter by going to www.MEA.org/signup and entering your email address—and be sure to like our Facebook page to stay up-to-date on the latest news and events. ■

K-3 Reading Law

Less than one year after it was signed into law, a sweeping new K-3 reading law will begin to be implemented in classrooms this school year, and many educators still have not received detailed information from the state or their districts about what's required.

A new MEA training is available to help teachers understand the law's components and what will be required of educators beginning this year and beyond.

Summer training sessions in the Eastern Zone attracted dozens of teachers who wanted to learn more about Reading Intervention Programs required under the new law, in addition to testing mandates that begin in the first month of school, said UniServ Director Terese Fitzpatrick.

Beginning this school year, K-3 students must be tested three times a year, and students with reading deficiencies must be given an Individual Reading Plan. Districts will be required to provide additional training and literacy coaches for K-3 teachers.

Retention of readers testing a year or more behind grade level on the state's annual reading test is not scheduled to begin until the 2019-20 school year. MEA's lobbyists continue to pursue improvements to the law and to work for full funding of mandated programs. ■

Contact your local UniServ field office to schedule a training session on the K-3 reading law.

MEA Toolkit Addresses 'Silent National Crisis'



By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

"SARA" NEVER IMAGINED SHE COULD FEAR A KINDERGARTEN STUDENT, BUT THE PARAEDUCATOR FROM AN AFFLUENT, HIGH-ACHIEVING SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE STATE SAYS SHE WAS TRAUMATIZED BY ROUTINELY BEING BITTEN, KICKED, AND PUNCHED BY A FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILD IN CLASS.

The classroom aide, who asked not to be identified by her real name or school district, said she and others

repeatedly asked school administrators for help and training to prevent and manage the student's difficult

behavior—to no avail.

Instead, the boy's behavior escalated enough that he was removed from the room and returned to class 12 times before ultimately being referred to an "alternative setting" for students with emotional impairments and behavioral issues, Sara said.

MEA School Violence Toolkit

Contact your local field office to schedule training on this new set of materials for dealing with workplace violence, threats and harassment, which includes:

- ✓ Sample contract language for collective bargaining agreements
- ✓ Professional development and other supports and interventions to bargain

- ✓ Legal frameworks, student and school employee rights, and reporting requirements
- ✓ Checklist of precautionary measures to follow
- ✓ Strategies for protecting your rights and safety

"After the principal got bit, he was finally on board that something needed to be done," she said.

Violence against school employees is a problem experts say is under-reported and overlooked across the U.S., resulting in a wide range of costs: lost wages, medical and psychological care, increased workers' compensation claims, employee attrition, and incarceration of perpetrators.

Little research has been conducted on the issue, but a 2012 study from the American Psychological Association (APA) labeled violence against educators "a silent national crisis" and "a growing phenomenon... that demands the immediate attention of researchers, school administrators, community leaders, and policymakers."

Although that clarion call has not been heeded, MEA is tackling the issue with a new School Violence Toolkit. Local union leaders can use the Toolkit's resources to educate members, bargain new language and policies into contracts, and help individuals affected by violence.

MEA is working with several prosecutors and sheriff's departments across the state on proper procedures for addressing problematic situations.

Teachers and education support professionals interviewed for this story agree the problem is growing and needs to be addressed. All of them requested anonymity because of student privacy concerns and fear of retribution from school district officials.

"It's happening across all classrooms," said one mid-career teacher who's taught in both general and special education settings. "I don't know if it's technology or the society and culture we live in, but kids are more angry and they have less ability to communicate why they're angry."

The APA study found up to 80 percent of American teachers are victimized each year—including harassment, property theft or damage,



Top 12 job categories most at risk for workplace violence:

- ✓ Law enforcement officers
- ✓ Corrections officers
- ✓ Taxicab drivers
- ✓ Bartenders
- ✓ Mental health custodians
- ✓ **Special education teachers**
- ✓ Gas station attendants
- ✓ Mental health professionals
- ✓ **Junior high school teachers**
- ✓ Convenience store workers
- ✓ **Bus drivers**
- ✓ **High school teachers**

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics





MEA UniServ Director Deb Lotan is one of several trainers available to share the MEA School Violence Toolkit with local associations. The resources help educators and support staff realize they're not alone, she says.

473,000 nonfatal violent crimes were committed against America's educators in one five-year period.

One elementary special education teacher—"Mary"—said she struggled to handle a self-contained classroom of students with cognitive and physical impairments, developmental delays, and autism after the arrival of one young boy who had emotional instead of cognitive issues. He slapped and punched her "all the time," she said.

The boy's explosive temper caused him to knock over furniture and attempt to throw chairs, requiring Mary and her classroom aide to evacuate other students for their safety. Yet the veteran of more than 20 years said, "My administration is not supportive. We're left on our own."

verbal threats, obscene gestures, and physical attacks. Attacks ranged from objects being thrown to assaults that resulted in injury.

Approximately 6 percent of K-12 teachers are physically attacked each year in schools. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that

She was considering filing a grievance against the district for failing to provide a safe work environment—specifically for not following stated policies that require administrators to follow up in writing with what actions were taken after a teacher files a formal report of violence.

"I don't want to be the teacher that's filing grievances, but I don't know what else to do," she said.

Mary says she continued to fill out incident reports, despite her principal's lack of follow-up, because she knows documentation is important. MEA staff agree—filing building and district reports helps individuals keep a record of what's happening and also can reveal larger patterns.

"If someone has been documenting every incident, then we have information we can take back to the principal and say 'We have a problem here,'" said MEA UniServ Director Deb Lotan, a Toolkit Trainer around the state. "Your (MEA) building rep is the first line of defense."

Many educators worry that reporting threats or physical attacks will result in negative evaluations or firing, one local leader said at a Toolkit training session. "People are afraid. If you call for help, the office says, 'Why are you calling me? What did you do to set Johnny off?'"

But MEA UniServ Director Jen Miller, one of the Toolkit's creators, countered: "As long as you're willing to quietly take it, they are more than happy to not protect you."

When building or district administrators fail to adequately respond to incidents of student aggression, victims can become isolated, Lotan said.

Lotan has been working with the staff in one school building where

New state laws taking effect this school year will shift the landscape for school employees and administrators dealing with challenging student behavior.

- ✓ A package of laws governing the use of seclusion and restraint mandates the interventions be used only in emergency circumstances necessary to prevent the student from harming self or others—a policy many districts already follow; requires school districts to provide employee training on the policy; and outlines reporting and documentation requirements if seclusion or restraint is used, among other provisions.
- ✓ Changes to the state's "Zero Tolerance" law require school districts to consider other options before suspending or expelling a student. Meant to give administrators flexibility in judging student infractions on a case-by-case basis, the changes to the law also encourage restorative practices, such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, and repairing harms to the victim and community—with suspension and expulsion used as a last resort.

student behavior has become a problem, and an activity early in the process opened everyone's eyes. She had people write their school's biggest problems on a sticky note and then hang it where everyone could see.

Many of the answers related to student behavior in one way or another, Lotan said, "and when people stepped back, you could hear one message resonating around the room: 'OK, so it's not just me. I'm not alone.'"

Staff collaboration can help school districts develop quality plans to address student behavior, but a frequent complaint among educators is the lack of consistency and follow-through in how administrators handle discipline.

One local union leader in southwest Michigan said disruptive, aggressive student behavior and lack of administrative support are driving away new educators in hard-to-fill positions.

"If a teacher is unable to manage a very difficult classroom, they are told that they are ineffective," the teacher said. "For the past two years, we have burned out new teachers in the same high-needs math position. Last school year, two teachers quit because they simply couldn't make it to summer."

The greatest difficulty for all sides arises from the loss of school counselors and social workers to state funding cuts, says "Jennifer," a teacher of emotionally impaired students in a suburban Detroit district, who has dealt with challenging student behavior "in every way, shape or form."

Students exhibiting troublesome behavior in any setting at school often are coping with poverty, trauma, or dysfunction at home. They need services that teachers, paraeducators, secretaries and bus drivers aren't always equipped to provide, Jennifer says.

She recommends that educators and support staff work together to develop a crisis intervention team—

Classroom and School Resources: Behavior Prevention and Management

- ✓ The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs offers a 25-page list of evidence-based strategies for preventing and responding to disruptive behavior, broken down by grade level, with examples and case studies at www.tinyurl.com/IDEAstrategy.
- ✓ NEA developed a 35-page guide with the National Association of School Psychologists and the American Psychological Association including resources for classroom management, school- and district-wide behavioral supports, social skills instruction, and responses to violence. Go to www.tinyurl.com/NEAprevention.
- ✓ The What Works Clearinghouse has an online guide designed for elementary school educators and school- and district-level administrators, offering strategies to reduce problematic behavior that interferes with the ability of students to attend to and engage fully in instructional activities. Go to www.tinyurl.com/WorksGuide.



volunteers that drop everything and respond when a student's behavior is out-of-control.

Ideally those people would be familiar with the student and able to take him or her to a quiet place to cool off, but they also would touch base with the child outside of crisis moments to establish a relationship, she said. The team would include or advise administrators.

"I try to get people to reframe how they're thinking about students, and not just see them for their behavior but to see them for who they are as people," Jennifer said. "We need to

wrap them in support, and it really has to come from a place that we're all behind these kids."

According to research, those kinds of improvements happen when administrators and staff work together to establish a positive school climate, educators are supplied with quality training, and support from administrators is strong and consistent.

"The types of decisions and responses that administrators make are pivotal in preventive efforts and far-reaching with respect to teacher recruitment and retention," the APA noted in its 2012 report. ■

“Inspiring”

MI Teacher of the Year

MEA member Luke Wilcox struggled after his parents divorced when he was in fourth grade. Living with his single mom, Wilcox received free and reduced lunches through his years at Northville High School.

It was public school teachers who pushed him to reach his potential, helping him rise to become valedictorian of his graduating class, he says. Now Wilcox is that teacher—and for his work inspiring students and staff as a math teacher at East Kentwood High School, Wilcox was named Michigan's 2017-18 Teacher of the Year.

Wilcox has worked for 15 years at the 1,800-student Grand Rapids-area school, where 56 percent of students are low-income and 60 percent are minorities.

“He expects a lot, but he gives so much back,” said senior Amari Brown, a student in his AP Statistics class. “He cares about students on a one-on-one basis, which makes a huge difference. He turns students around. I know I can’t let him down, because he’s put so much trust in me.”

Wilcox is also praised for his leadership. Last school year he started a Rising Teacher Leaders group comprised of all the newly hired educators. A second cohort was added this year. In addition, he organized teachers to be their own providers of quality professional development at staff workshops.



His philosophy of teaching is simple: “I always love my content; I’m a math teacher. But I think what is far more important is to help students prepare to be successful in life and to reach their potential, and we may just use the context of mathematics as a way to teach students the skills and abilities that they need to create goals, go after those goals, and reach for those goals.”

Read more at www.tinyurl.com/MITOYWilcox. ■

Hesperia Discipline Coordinator wins Brunner Award

If you only looked at Janet Fairchild’s job title at Hesperia Community Schools, you might think she spends her days issuing punishments for bad behavior. After all, she’s the Discipline Coordinator at the middle and high schools. But she’s much more than that.

Fairchild works with students who’ve gotten into trouble, but her caring approach is what helps them turn things around. For her dedication to students and staff, Fairchild was presented with MEA’s 2017 Leon A. Brunner Award.

“Some people say, ‘I don’t know how you do that job,’ but I love it,” Fairchild said. “It’s the highlight of my life, between that and my family. These kids mean an awful lot to me.” ■



Manistique Bus Driver wins Brunner Award

Go to a school board meeting in Manistique, and you’ll most likely see John Barry—no matter if the agenda includes anything related to his duties as president of his ESP local or not.

Barry monitors the latest board activities to stay up-to-date and to make sure earlier promises are kept. He and his local in 2015 fought off attempts to fully privatize custodial services, but certain positions are filled by privately contracted employees after union workers leave.

When the board began hiring more non-union ESP staff, Barry was there to question, protest, and point out how privatizing support staff positions led to lower quality services for students. For his commitment to advocacy, Barry was presented with MEA’s 2017 Leon A. Brunner Award.

“It’s all worth it to know I’ve made a difference to one student or to one school,” Barry said. ■



Human Rights Award Winners

David McMahon Human Rights Award

During his second year teaching, Frank Burger spoke up in support of other new teachers facing unfair criticism from their district superintendent. After voicing his concerns at a school board meeting, colleagues encouraged him to run for an open seat as association vice-president. Burger won, and he's been a social justice advocate since. "I don't let fear rule me," he says.

The president of Carman-Ainsworth Education Association, Burger now serves as the Male Co-Chair for NEA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Caucus. He is part of NEA training cadres in Social Justice, LGBTQ Issues in Education, and Cultural Competency.

"I won't be treated like a second-class citizen," he says. "I'm a citizen of the United States of America, and I expect to have equal rights under the law."

Maurine Wyatt Feminist Award

When Jane Cassady began teaching in 1968, female educators couldn't wear pants. One woman served in the U.S. Senate. Since then, Cassady has joined in civil rights struggles including racial and LGBTQ equality, anti-war demonstrations, environmental justice, and women's rights.

Her defining moment came at the age of 18, during protest marches in Alabama that sometimes turned violent. "I was 18, and so naïve that I had no idea people could actually hate each other. It set me in a direction I was already going in, but it made the commitment that much deeper."

Cassady served as a school social worker in St. Clair Shores and MEA UniServ director in Local 1. Now retired, she continues fighting for justice and civil rights. "We are so far from being finished with all of these movements," she says. "I'll keep going as long as I have energy."

Anne Sullivan Education and Support of Persons with Disabilities Award

A simple philosophy has driven Mary Anne Campbell's work as an elementary special education teacher since 1982: "All kids are kids first," she says. "Some don't have a straight path to learning, but all kids can learn." According to colleagues, she lives that philosophy with contagious passion, heart, and positivity.

She organizes the Royal Oak school district's Disability Awareness Workshop—allowing general education students to experience learning and physical differences. She also mentors colleagues who draw on her years of expertise in teaching, managing severe behavior problems, and addressing the needs of students with cognitive impairments.

"I love working with kids and helping them succeed and grow and learn," she says.



Multicultural Education Award

Whether she's publishing research, presenting findings at a conference, or teaching educational leadership courses at Central Michigan University, Dr. Wafa Hozien infuses her work with individuals' compelling stories that bring to light the struggles and value of diversity.

Narratives are empowering, she says: "Social change begins with the educator creating a better world for all students."

Dr. Hozien has researched the public schooling experiences of Muslim girls and the leadership styles of African American principals. Her upcoming book focuses on under-represented students. She says, "As an educational leader you have to be able to talk about subtle discrimination, and you have to be an advocate for every student in your building." ■

Plymouth-Canton School Library a ‘21st Century Model’

MEA MEMBER KATHY LESTER HAS BEEN WORKING TO REVERSE A DRAMATIC SLIDE IN MICHIGAN’S COMMITMENT TO FUNDING QUALITY SCHOOL LIBRARIES. NOW SHE HAS AN ADDITIONAL WAY TO RAISE AWARENESS THAT LIBRARIANS ARE VITAL TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN THE INFORMATION AGE.

The middle school where Lester works as a media specialist and technology coach has won a state award that comes with the opportunity to mentor and consult with other school districts across Michigan.

Lester’s East Middle School Library Media Center in Plymouth-Canton schools won the state’s 2017-18 Model 21st Century School Library (SL 21) award for excellence from the Library of Michigan, part of the Michigan Department of Education.

“I am very passionate about the need for equal access to effective school library programs for all students in our state,” she said. “Michigan currently ranks 47th in terms of student access to effective school library programs. We must improve this ranking to improve student achievement in our state.”

Also known as media specialists, librarians in Michigan have seen their numbers slashed by 62 percent since 2003, compared to a nationwide drop of 17 percent during the same period.

As a media specialist, Lester supports reading achievement, technology integration, and career and college readiness through teaching digital citizenship and research skills. The award acknowledges her accomplishments in three roles: building, teaching, and leading for learning.

Lester curates the library’s print and digital collection; collaborates with teachers to integrate technology and digital literacy into lessons and projects; and leads among peers through professional learning communities and advocacy in state organizations and committees.

In addition, Lester works with a partner teacher and community members to offer “maker” clubs during lunch and after school, which involve more than 100 students in “making” activities, including programming, robotics, graphic design, crafting, and more.

Last spring, Lester invited staff from the offices of Michigan’s U.S. Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters to attend East Middle School’s eight-day Science Innovation Maker Station project—to witness how a library can play a role in providing hand-on STEM learning experiences.



As part of her library’s excellence award, Plymouth-Canton media specialist and technology coach Kathy Lester is available this year for mentoring and consultation.

During the visit, “I advocated for all ed funding, as well as for school libraries,” said Lester, who serves as advocacy chair of the Michigan Association for Media in Education. “More MEA members should reach out to legislators—both state and federal—to visit our schools!”

For the next school year, Lester is available for consultation and visits with districts looking to add media specialists or improve school library programs. For information, contact Lester at Katherine.Lester@pccsk12.com or Karren Reish at ReishK@michigan.gov. ■

MESSA program helps expectant mothers

I'M PROUD OF ALL OF MESSA'S MEMBER-FOCUSED PROGRAMS, INCLUDING HEALTHY EXPECTATIONS, OUR PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES FREE SUPPORT FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS.

When members enroll in Healthy Expectations, they receive a short health assessment that's simple to complete. If any pregnancy risk factors are identified, a MESSA nurse will contact the member and offer additional assistance.

Depending on the trimester that a member enrolls, MESSA sends enrollees a reference book on pregnancy and/or a book containing health guidelines to help them care for their baby. Enrollees also receive a MESSA tote bag with some useful baby gear.

Our follow-up surveys show members love the program and really appreciate the support. MESSA's Healthy Expectations provides families with invaluable peace of mind during what can be a stressful stage of life.

MESSA members can call 800.336.0013 to enroll. ■



By Ross Wilson,
MESSA Executive Director



CLASSIFIEDS

Our ad policy, rates and schedule can be found online at www.mea.org/voice. The classifieds deadline for the October 2017 issue is Sept. 15.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

MACKINAC ISLAND GIFT SHOP
business for sale by two retired MEA members. A turn key business, international destination, no cars, established 1983 with a strong repeat customer base. Upscale products and a serene atmosphere creates an unforgettable experience. Ideally located on tree-lined Market Street. Apartment above with AC, a 6 month season, May to October. Perfect retirement business. 906-847-6483.

WELLNESS

Help with anxiety, depression, teaching stress, and relationship issues. Robert Goode, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist. Office in Eastside Ann Arbor. Visit www.goodepsych.com. MESSA, Community Blue, BCBS, Aetna, Medicare. 734-223-4202.

MEA ONLINE STORE

Get your gear here. Visit mea.org/Merchandise to order gifts, apparel, promotional, conference, and event materials. All items are union imprinted in the USA and can include the MEA logo or your custom imprint.

Melissa Kempski is the 2017 PBS Digital Innovator for Michigan. The K-5 technology and library specialist in Lake Orion was recognized for integrating digital media and resources into classrooms in a “bold and fresh” way to spark students’ love of learning.

What's an example of connecting technology to the curriculum?

We've been using Bloxels on the iPad with a fourth-grade class where they created a video game that connected all of the different characters to the food chain, and then the kids could play each other's games. That project blended digital learning with the fourth-grade science curriculum.

What opportunities does digital learning bring to the classroom?

Every student gets a voice. They express themselves through music with apps like GarageBand, or through creative drama with things like stop-motion animation. And they can share it for an audience. Sometimes kids who are too afraid to speak out can say, “Hey, I'm really good at being creative, and here's a way I can show you.”

What advice do you give to educators who are learning how to incorporate digital tools?

Technology is ever-evolving, but you don't need to be an expert at everything. My advice for teachers is to find one tool they like and then find multiple ways to use it. That way they get a grasp on that piece of technology and things start to come a bit more second-nature.

That's good advice because it's less intimidating to wade in to a pond than an ocean, right?

Yes, and I want them to be successful. I want teachers and kids to use technology for a purpose, not just for the sake of saying, “Look, I'm using an iPad.”

Isn't there a certain amount of experimentation required?

Absolutely. A couple years ago, a fifth-grade teacher, myself, and a first-grade teacher decided to do a project

with Minecraft. We knew nothing about Minecraft, so we played with it, but then we called an expert: a fourteen-year-old boy. We had the students build a mini economy in Minecraft that hit all kinds of social studies curriculum standards, but we had to be willing to ask the kids for help. That was an incredible experience, and the kids have never forgotten it.

What are some of the best digital tools you recommend that teachers try?

Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive are great ways for teachers to collaborate with students—even in another school or another state. So these documents or presentations can have multiple authors across the globe, and that's so powerful. For formative assessment, I like Plickers and Kahoot—just quick tools teachers can use to gauge where kids are at in their learning. Plickers uses cards that students hold up, which the teacher scans with an iPad, so it's a solution for schools where there's not enough technology. You just need one iPad.

Do you think technology increases student engagement?

I rarely have behavior issues when we're using technology because they want to do their best. We've been using Seesaw, which is a digital portfolio, so whatever we do at school on the iPad or computer can be uploaded, and our parents can see their kids' work and make comments.

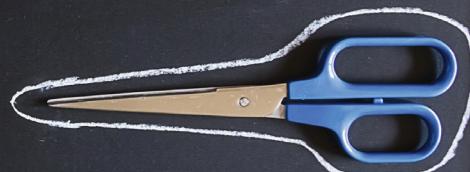
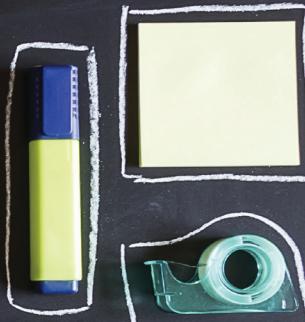
Do you hear back from parents?

I do. I like that Seesaw archives things, so if you continue to use it from kindergarten up, you've got this wonderful documentation of a student's progress. I hear back from parents who love that they were able to share it with grandparents who live in Florida. It makes the world smaller. ■



- BACK TO SCHOOL -

- Buy school supplies
- Request an auto and home quote –
800-292-1950, option 2
- Meet with an MEA Financial Services Representative
- Learn more about long term care insurance at
www.meafsltc.com
- Check into Life insurance



8/17

mea
Financial
Services

**Let us help you complete
your back to school list!**

Contact us today at **800.292.1950** or visit us at
www.meafs.com to find your representative.

Securities offered through Paradigm Equities, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of MEA Financial Services.

1216 Kendale Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48823



Kelli Careathers
Member Service Specialist

LEGENDARY SERVICE

MESSA's East Lansing Member Service Center is staffed by real people who go out of their way to solve members' issues — big or small.

Call us at 800.336.0013. We're here to help!

