

# MEA • VOICE

SERIES: NEW EDUCATORS  
BEGIN THEIR JOURNEY

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TEACHERS WARN OTHERS—  
WE'VE LIVED DEVOS FUTURE

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Awakened  
*by* Water



# Honored to Hear From You

IN THIS FAST-PACED SOCIETY, INDIVIDUALS ARE LONGING TO BE HEARD—ESPECIALLY EDUCATORS. THAT’S WHY OUR FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS AS MEA’S NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM HAS BEEN TO EMBARK ON A “LISTENING TOUR.”

We’ve been honored to meet you and hear why you do this work—the demanding, difficult, exhilarating, rewarding work of educating children—and what supports and changes you think we need to ensure a great public education for every student.

We’ve heard not only from classroom teachers but education support professionals—the “unsung heroes” whose work in offices, on buses, in lunchrooms and buildings throughout the state is invaluable to creating the learning environment our students need to thrive.

Your narratives will inform our work at the Capitol and beyond.

A common frustration is the seemingly insatiable appetite lawmakers have for standardized testing. At a stop in Traverse City, we heard from teachers exasperated by multiple state-mandated standardized tests, which reduce learning time. A common refrain we heard from educators was, “More testing means less teaching.”

In Utica, where teachers are working without a contract, many felt that education funding is a priority ignored by Lansing politicians. This

decade began with a billion-dollar cut to the education budget, and that disinvestment in public education has only continued. A 2016 study by the National Education Policy Center found that Michigan’s per-pupil spending, compared with neighboring Midwestern states has fallen “from the middle of the pack to near the bottom.” If we can’t compete in education, we can’t compete for jobs.

Grand Rapids school employees questioned the exponential growth of for-profit charter schools, which continue to be a huge drain on the public education budget—to the tune of \$1 billion each year. This, despite countless studies that show they continually perform at or below achievement levels of traditional, neighborhood public schools. It is no point of pride that Michigan leads the nation in the number of for-profit charters.

Lack of adequate funding leads to inadequate resources in the classroom. It also leads to stagnant compensation for school employees.

Earlier this year, the Michigan Department of Education released data showing average teacher salaries have declined for the fifth straight

year. Districts around the state are reporting difficulties filling vacancies. We are losing the battle to attract the best and brightest college students to a career in education—evidenced by a 40 percent drop in enrollment in Michigan’s colleges of education over the last decade. Even those who buck this trend and go into teaching are finding it difficult to remain in the classroom—as new teachers are leaving the profession in record numbers.

Funding cuts have stagnated school employee pay and benefits, while over-reliance on standardized testing data hampers teacher and student creativity. Therefore, it should surprise no one to learn the morale of school employees has fallen to an all-time low in recent years. As the new MEA leadership team, we clearly have our work cut out for us.

The institution of public education is sacred, and there is no greater honor than fighting to protect and defend public schools and school employees who do the hard work every day of educating Michigan’s schoolchildren. We are proud to lead the 140,000 members of the Michigan Education Association in that mission. ■

*(Read more about the MEA officers’ statewide Listening Tour on page 15.)*

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**On the Cover:** Jessyca Mathews, English teacher at Carman-Ainsworth High School in Flint.

# MEA Voice

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**10—COVER STORY:** The Flint Water Crisis spurred a local teacher to social justice activism.



**5—NEWS & NOTES:** Education Support Professionals are recognized as "unsung heroes" of our schools.



**20—MEMBERS AT WORK:** Follow two new teachers through one school year in this MEA Voice series, START OF A JOURNEY, continuing through next August.



**24—MEMBERS AT WORK:** An innovative MEA-NEA pilot project offers support to early career educators.



**34—MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:** A school secretary has to play many roles—sometimes all at once.

## Editor's Notebook

OK, class. It's time now for a very important... Question, Jimmy?... No, it's not time for lunch yet... Yes, I know it's chicken nugget day! You won't be late if we start now, alright?

Today we're going to practice for the big, long test that will be used to label you and your school and even our community and the whole of public education in Michigan and across the U.S.—above every truly wonderful thing we do and accomplish in our work together.

Answer this multiple choice question: What is the worst problem with M-STEP, the Common Core-aligned standardized assessment taken by tens of thousands of Michigan students in grades 3-8 and 11 each spring?

- A. The testing time for students drags on torturously for hours at a time over too many days.
- B. The weeks-long testing ties up technology that could be used for education purposes.
- C. The test holds no meaning or value for students, who have no accountability for their performance and will never check answers or see results beyond a number score.
- D. Even adults can't figure out the correct answers to many questions.
- E. A standardized test does not accurately measure creativity, problem solving, analytical skills, or much of anything that parents, educators, and societies value in human beings.
- F. Teachers get little to no useful data back from the test; instead, the scores are used to bludgeon educators and public education as failures.
- G. Short-sighted administrators force teachers and children to undertake mind-numbing test prep in a futile attempt to raise test scores that results in students hating school.
- H. The test measures poverty really well—less so the wonder of teaching and learning.

Now, please choose your answer... Excuse me? I can't hear when everyone shouts... Thank you for raising your hand, Charlie... Yes, choose ONE answer... Question, Billy?... Mm hm. I know it's hard to pick, but life is hard, right? So this is preparing you for life. Just do your best.

Yes, Sally? ... You're correct; the question IS confusing, but it's asking what is the WORST problem, not the biggest... Well, I agree "worst" can mean different things to different people, but so can "biggest." Ha ha. Am I right? Yeah, I got you there. So why don't you figure out what you think the test writers want you to answer, and go with that?... You're welcome.

Is everyone about fin—OK, I'm waiting, Janie. But really, my dear, follow your gut. You can overthink, you know. This answer actually is quite clear.

The answer is D: *Even adults can't figure out the correct answers to many questions.*

Because the fact is if you ask a bunch of educated adults to take a fifth-grade Language Arts M-STEP practice test with no answer key, you're bound to see a fight over who is right on many questions, and that's pretty crazy if you stop and think. I know, because I did it and saw it.

Read more about my experiment administering portions of a keyless fifth-grade M-STEP practice test to some of my MEA colleagues on the new MEA EdWatch blog at [www.mea.org/mea-edwatch](http://www.mea.org/mea-edwatch).

—Brenda Ortega, editor

# \$80 million

Annual budget of the **State Policy Network**, an alliance of 66 right-wing propaganda outlets—including the DeVos-funded Mackinac Center—which has launched a new national campaign to destroy labor unions. The right-wing coalition is planning new assaults on collective bargaining rights, as noted in *The Guardian* newspaper's article, "Rightwing alliance plots assault to 'defund and defang' America's unions."

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### QUOTABLES

**“Here’s the bewildering thing to me about the prevalence of behavioral systems: They don’t seem to work very well. In April, the same kids are still getting their clips moved down and missing 10 minutes of recess every day.”**

**Justin Minkel**, a former Arkansas Teacher of the Year, in his article for EdWeek, “Death to the Behavior Chart! 3 Reasons to Resist the Lure of Punishments and Rewards”—a thoughtful, honest, and realistic look at alternatives.

# ABOVE AND BEYOND



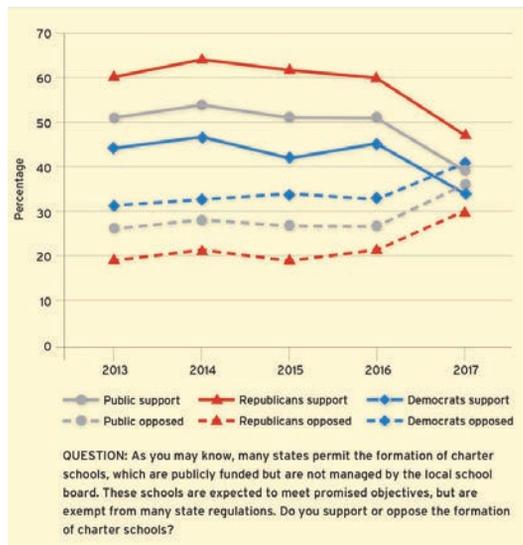
MEA education support professional members are the unsung heroes of public schools, and a recent television, digital, and radio advertising campaign by MEA has been highlighting their importance to our children's education. Paraprofessionals, bus drivers, secretaries, food service workers, custodians, maintenance workers and others do their work behind the scenes to ensure kids in our schools achieve and learn. "Support staff are the backbone of the district, because they couldn't do it without us," says Pam Vandekerkhoff, secretary at Roguewood Elementary in Rockford Public Schools. Watch the full video at [www.tinyurl.com/MEA-ESPVideo](http://www.tinyurl.com/MEA-ESPVideo).

*(Glimpse inside the daily life of a school secretary in this month's Member Spotlight, page 34.)*

## ICYMI

An opinion poll released in August found that **public support for charter schools is eroding**. The number of respondents who said they support charter schools fell 12 percent in the same poll from one year ago, dropping from 51 percent last year to 36 percent in 2017. The survey was conducted by Education Next, a journal published by Stanford University's Hoover Institute.

*(Read about MEA members' experiences working in charter schools, starting on page 16.)*



Source: The 2017 EdNext poll on school reform

## QUOTABLES

**“That’s all it is now— it’s money-making.”**

**Darrel Redrick**, a charter school proponent and administrator, speaking about the Betsy DeVos-pushed business model of education that has led to a glut of low-performing, deregulated for-profit charter schools in Michigan—quoted in a must-read September *New York Times* article, “Michigan Gambled on Charter Schools. Its Children Lost.”

**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](http://www.mea.org/governance) for more information.

**October 20****Higher Education Bargaining Conference****MEA Headquarters, East Lansing**

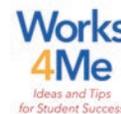
The Conference features sessions designed specifically for higher education members. Sessions covering the trends in online learning, intellectual property, higher education funding, member engagement, and bargaining will provide the information and strategies to help higher education leaders strengthen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

**December 2****Commissions/Committees/Task Forces (CCTFs)****MEA Headquarters, East 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.

**February 8-9****Bargaining, Public Affairs & Professional Development Conference****Cobo Center, Detroit**

MEA's biggest conference of the year provides updated information and sharpens members' skills in organizing, advocacy, communications, member engagement, negotiations, political action and professional development.

**Works4Me!****Quick, Real-World Solutions to Teaching Issues**

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to consult a panel of successful, experienced teachers every time you have a teaching conundrum you haven't been able to solve?

That's the idea behind NEA's **Works4Me**—an online database of short, practical, classroom-tested teacher ideas for issues ranging from how to teach specific content, to managing difficult student behaviors, time management, and more.

Go to [www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html) where you can use a customizable search tool to find what you need, and be sure to sign up to receive the Works4Me email newsletter—a selection of the best tips on an interesting variety of topics.

A recent Works4Me newsletter included hot homework tips, types of "brain breaks" for students who struggle with sitting or being quiet for long stretches of time, and how to "tame talkative students."

The advice covers all grade levels and subject areas. For instance, below is a technique for keeping older math students on task by giving them rewards they actually want. Even bigger kids sometimes need help finding motivation!

**High School Ticket Rewards***From Barb D., a math teacher in Arizona*

I offer rewards to my high school students. I have a "Two Minute Free Tardy Pass," which allows students to arrive two minutes late (or to leave class two minutes early) without penalty. I'm careful not to give too many minutes, so students will not miss direct instruction. And students are not allowed to use passes in combination: they can't redeem four two-minute passes and arrive at class 8 minutes late.

I teach math and assign daily homework and frequent tests, so some of my rewards are tied to these assignments. One of my students' all-time favorites is the "½ = 1 Whole Pass." It allows a student to turn in ½ the assignment and receive full credit. I also have "One Day Late" and "Skip One Question" passes.

# MESSA offers low-cost online doctor visits

ALL MESSA PLANS COVER ONLINE DOCTOR VISITS THROUGH AMWELL FOR CONVENIENT, AFFORDABLE CARE FOR MINOR, NON-EMERGENCY ILLNESSES SUCH AS A COLD, SINUS INFECTION, SPRAIN OR RASH.

With 24/7 online health care, MESSA members can have a live, on-demand visit with a board-certified doctor through Amwell, a leading telehealth provider. The \$49 visit is a covered MESSA benefit and subject to a member's plan deductible and applicable office visit copayment.

The cost of the visit provides significant savings to members—and to MESSA.

Seeing an online provider costs less than in-person doctor visits or emergency room treatment. State-wide, the average office visit costs

\$132 and the average emergency room visit costs \$1,023.

"This service provides easy and convenient access to quality health care for all of our members," says Rhonda Jones, a MESSA health promotion consultant and registered nurse. "It also helps keep costs down."

In 2014-15, for example, it cost \$3.4 million for emergency room and office visit treatment of MESSA members or dependents diagnosed with eye, sinus and urinary tract infections.

Regular maintenance of chronic medical conditions, emergencies, and serious or life-threatening conditions are not appropriate uses of online health care. Those with serious

medical concerns should call 911 or contact their family doctor.

Using online care to meet with a doctor is like using a video chat tool. The patient's information is private and Amwell meets all Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.

The doctor will consult with the patient as long as needed; most online health care sessions last about 10 minutes. The average wait time to see an Amwell doctor is three minutes.

"The convenience of just a three-minute wait can be the answer to those nagging health issues, which can turn into something much bigger if not taken care of early," Jones says. ■

## Enrollment info for MESSA members

**Mobile:** Download the Amwell app

**Web:** Go to [bcbsm.amwell.com](http://bcbsm.amwell.com)

**Phone:** 844.733.3627

- Use service key BCBSM.
- Add your MESSA health plan information.



Good health. Good business. Great schools.



# This is How We Do It

*Welcome to the first edition of “Lobbying Insider,” a new recurring feature in MEA Voice to give members a behind-the-scenes look at MEA’s legislative advocacy.*

*By David Michelson and Christina Canfield  
MEA Lobbyists*



MEMBERS OFTEN SAY TO US, “I COULD NEVER DO WHAT YOU DO.”

They think engaging in political struggle with lawmakers at the state Capitol every day would be too brutal, or depressing, or soul-destroying, or \_\_\_\_\_. You can fill in the blank. It is true—our jobs can be immensely frustrating. On other days, we experience hope, progress, and accomplishment.

But even on the most challenging days, the work we do is vital—and we cannot do it alone.

That is why we are writing this new column. We routinely hear the same questions when we meet members at local association meetings and MEA conferences, and it is gratifying to give them a glimpse inside the often hidden work we do.

One question we frequently hear—“How did you survive the passage of Right to Work?”—always

gets the same answer. Our hardest day as lobbyists was not that day in late 2012, during a rushed lame duck session, when legislators passed RTW in a union-busting attempt. The next day was tougher.

The next morning we had to return to the capitol building and meet with legislators who voted for the RTW bills. We had to be cordial with them, because we needed their “No” votes later that day on two more bills we knew would negatively impact public education.

Yes, that was a difficult day. And yes, we understand why some of our members would not want to be lobbyists. Yet we need our members to be politically active, or public education as we know it will cease to exist.

In fact, as distasteful as it might

seem, we need our army of MEA member lobbyists to walk a mile in our dress shoes through the marble halls of power—to understand the realities we face every day, so they can be most effective as part of our lobbying team advocating for educators and public schools.

One of those challenging realities in our lives is the necessity of interacting with lawmakers whose beliefs and actions may not support our legislative priorities.

Most of us recognize that the world is not black-and-white, all-or-nothing. It is mostly gray. Sure, there are some absolutes, but we can often see two sides of an issue. However, many people lose that insight when it comes to politics.

When passion for the cause gets in the way of rational thinking, it can lead some to write off any legislator as the opposition if he or she does



MEA lobbyists have analyzed data from an MEA member survey regarding teacher evaluations. The lobbyists have worked hard to find common ground with Republican lawmakers willing to push legislation on these priorities:

- ✓ Keeping “student growth” as a percentage of educator evaluations at 25 percent instead of increasing to 40 next year.
- ✓ Funding more and better training for administrators on new evaluation systems.
- ✓ Pushing districts to use alternative or locally developed assessment methods for measuring student growth in the evaluations of educators who teach non-core, non-tested subject areas.

Stay tuned for developments on this issue—and how you can help.

not vote the right way on every issue.

That does not work in lobbying. Instead, when lawmakers vote against us, we need to agree to disagree and work to find an issue where we share a common belief or can engage in constructive dialogue.

One example is a meeting we had in February with a new legislator who was a former teacher. We anticipated there would be many issues we could work on together. As we talked, our hopes turned to disappointment as we disagreed on issue after issue. We were about to give up and politely end the meeting when student testing came into the conversation. Wow. We agree 100 percent on this issue. You can bet we will go back and talk again as we work on that problem.

If you have read this far, we are asking you to do the same thing. Be our allies in the lobbying effort for

public education. Establish relationships with your legislators. Become a resource to them. Do not give up or fall into the all-or-nothing trap. How do you accomplish this?

- Listen carefully.
- Be positive.
- Stay focused.
- Speak concisely.
- Tell your story.
- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
- Remember you are trying to win them over, not win the debate.
- Understand there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies.
- Know when to stop and agree to disagree.

You do not have to be an expert to be effective. You know more than you think you do. Plus, we have tons of resources to help you stay informed and up-to-date on the

legislature. Perhaps the most important step is to sign up to get *Capitol Comments*. If you do not already receive it, go to [www.MEA.org/Signup](http://www.MEA.org/Signup).

Other great resources for staying current on education issues and legislation:

- *MEA Voice* magazine
- Bill Tracker at [www.MEA.org/legislation](http://www.MEA.org/legislation)
- Twitter and Text messaging (Text 40404 with the message FollowDrMichelson)
- Michigan Education Association on Facebook
- [www.MEAmatters.com](http://www.MEAmatters.com)

Public education is under attack. There are very powerful forces out there trying to privatize it. Do not let the politics get you down. Let the strength of all of us working together lift you up. ■



*I am a teacher fighting...  
For the voices of those  
encased in a city  
Still crying for justice,  
a human right, and  
constant attention.*

—from “We Can’t Fight Alone” by Jessyca Mathews,  
pictured above in downtown Flint’s Caf  Rhema

THERE’S A SAYING THAT DATES BACK TO THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER AND PLAYWRIGHT SENECA—*AUT INVENIAM VIAM AUT FACIAM*—I SHALL EITHER FIND A WAY, OR MAKE ONE.

It could be the motto of MEA member Jessyca Mathews, a Flint-area high school teacher and writer who’s channeled anger into action, changed victims to activists, and turned the voiceless powerful. As the best educators do, she has transformed tragedy into opportunity.

She made a way.

“I’m halfway through my career, and my purpose is bigger now,” she said. “When you see a city having to fight and argue to have clean water for children and ourselves, that

# Flint Teacher Finds 'Bigger Purpose' in Water Crisis

by Brenda Ortega  
MEA Voice Editor

makes no sense. I can't sit idly by and watch it happen without, in some way, trying to make it right."

For her collaborative work using art and advocacy to connect and empower young people, the 17-year Carman-Ainsworth High School veteran has been honored among seven national finalists for NEA's 2017 Social Justice Activist of the Year.

## *I'm in search for others*

It's been more than three years since the first time she drew discolored water from her kitchen tap in the south end of Flint—water that "should not come out/ the same color as my skin/ and blend/ into the soil with no notice," she wrote in a haunting poem titled "I'll Call Back Later."

Different telephone numbers comprise several lines in the poem—numbers Mathews and others called to complain about the water's appearance, smell, and taste, only to be told by state officials that no problem existed. One line repeats through the poem: "Something isn't right."

Those suspicions were correct. Independent investigations by pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha and researchers at Virginia Tech University revealed dangerous lead levels in Flint's water—conclusions the state denied until the shocking story made national news in late 2015.

A struggling American city, under emergency state management, poisoned in a money-saving water supply switch—then ignored: It's a story

of mismanagement, neglect, reckless disregard, incompetence. Damage. Death. Despair.

Lead is known to cause permanent neurological injury in children. In addition, the improperly treated water most likely led to an outbreak of deadly Legionnaire's disease in Flint—one of the largest in U.S. history—which sickened nearly 90 people and killed at least 12.

*Time* magazine ran a stunning cover image of a sick Flint toddler in early 2016. Yet many months later residents still are cautioned to filter tap water today, even as the number of bottled water distribution sites around the city has shrunk by half.

Recent testing in Flint has found lead contamination below federal

action levels, although state officials have warned that aging pipes could cause sporadic spikes. Replacement of lead-tainted water lines could take two additional years or more.

Last February, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission issued a report that concluded “deeply embedded institutional, systemic, and historical racism” were partly to blame for the scandal. More than half of Flint’s residents are black, and 40 percent live below the poverty line.

Many traumatized Flint residents will never trust their tap water again, Mathews says, and it’s no wonder as she wrote in “I’ll Call Back Later”: “My child is crying!/ My people are dying!/ We keep asking,/ ‘Why?’/ We keep screaming/ ‘HELP!’/ And there are no answers.”

Remaining helpless in the face of glaring injustice was not an option for the published poet. “When kids are being poisoned, I say, ‘No.’”

### *I’m asking you to stand*

Mathews, 40, did not happen upon social justice activism as a result of the water crisis. She credits her parents—a father who educated her in the Civil Rights Movement and a mother who modeled the importance of reading—with planting the seeds of engagement in her childhood.

“When you put together my dad saying, ‘You need to stand up for what’s right,’ and my mom saying, ‘You need to read to find out what’s right,’ you get an activist teacher.”

Flint’s tragedy merely deepened her commitment, while she stayed true to a long-held core principle: “Social justice is simply when you know that something is wrong, you use your God-given strengths to make it right,” she says.

That is the message she has taken to heart and extended to students.

Two years ago, Mathews complet-

ed an institute for writing teachers at Michigan State University, the Red Cedar Writing Project, where a book called to her, *The Activist Learner*.

Inspired, Mathews returned to her school in the summer of 2016 ready to take on two enormous new projects that would change her life and the lives of her students. A third project would happen along the way.

First, she approached her principal about revamping the senior English course she taught for years from “the same humdrum, forget-what-you’re-doing high school English class” to an activism and research focus.

Students in the class choose a problem or injustice to research and write about, culminating in “Activism Day” where findings are displayed and discussed that include key take-aways for a huge audience of school peers and folks from the community.

More than anything, the students



Jessyca Mathews’ students from Carman-Ainsworth High School visited the Capitol with counterparts from Lansing’s Everett High School in a project to call attention to the Flint Water Crisis.

learn from each other—and even teach Mathews a few things, she said. With a diverse population that includes kids who are black, white, Muslim, Latino and others, the class incorporates many viewpoints.

“I tell them, in this class we’re a family,” she said. “We come from different areas, and we’re going to learn from one another. There are things someone may ask about that you go, ‘They should know that answer.’ They don’t know. There are things I might ask that you’re like, ‘Ms. Mathews, you’re educated. You should know.’ No, I don’t know!”

“We should be able to question and ask for help and dialogue in order for us all to build into activists.”

Through the ups and downs of a new class, Mathews felt re-energized by her students’ excitement, dedication, and successes. She watched in class as students shared information and validated each other. She learned issues she knew nothing about.

She swelled with pride seeing all of her students publicly advocate on issues—ranging from police brutality to animal abuse and sex trafficking—but especially the quiet ones, dressed in their finest clothes, who found their voices and elicited emotional responses from audiences. The benefits were too numerous to count, she said.

“We were feeding the community with information, and my kids were completely empowered, saying, ‘I can do this. I can be an activist. I can research. I can inform, and I can talk to people.’”

### *Show belief in the children*

Most teachers would have their hands full launching a new class that required a significant shift in approach, but the activism course was not even the biggest project Mathews took on last year.

During the same period, she was part of a unique creative collaboration involving an art teacher from Lansing’s Everett High School, Pam Collins; a Chicago-based artist, Jan

Tichy; and 80 students from the two schools—part of the MSU Federal Credit Union Artist Studio Series.

The art installation that resulted from the six-month project was a breathtaking “sound mural” made of 1,430 feet of copper pipes that traversed the length and vaulted heights of the education wing of the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at MSU from January through August.

In the most striking feature of “Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint”—museum visitors turned spigots, and student voices flowed from the pipes: the voices of Mathews’ students, sharing their pain, anger, frustrations, hopes.

“That was the most fun I’ve ever had in teaching, because my kids were like, ‘People listen to us. People are paying attention. That’s cool!’ And I’m saying, ‘You deserve it. You have a voice that people should hear.’”

Part of the work on the project involved Everett students traveling to Flint, and Flint students going to Lansing. The exchanges paired two students from each school to share perspectives on the water crisis and the purposes of art, exposing the students to new surroundings and ideas.

Mathews served as official tour guide during the students’ visit in Flint, and no one—not high school students or the city’s highest elected leaders—could ask for a better booster to highlight the city than this lifelong resident.

Walking along the sidewalks in the city’s downtown, Mathews points out hipster cafes and coffee shops, satellite university campuses, new hospital wings, an historic movie theater under renovation, and the relocated indoor-outdoor Farmer’s Market loaded with shops and eateries.

People who’ve never seen Flint, or haven’t been there in a while, are often surprised at the redevelopment happening in the city, she said. That was true of many Lansing Everett students, who expected the city to be abandoned or rundown, based on their preconceptions.

## *Voices Flowed Like Water*

For seven months this year, the words of Flint-area students poured from copper pipes whenever spigots were turned in an innovative “sound mural” commissioned by the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University.

Visitors to the museum placed their ears next to faucets to hear digital recordings of the students’ poems, letters, and laments about the Flint Water Crisis: *Water/ It’s supposed to be healthy, right?/ Maybe good?/ What about safe?/ I wish I had safe water...*

Teacher Jessyca Mathews’ Carman-Ainsworth High School classes collaborated with students from Lansing’s Everett High School on the project involving Chicago-based artist Jan Tichy. “Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint” exhibited from January-August at the museum.

One girl wrote about her aunt dying of Legionnaire’s disease. Another wrote an angry letter to Gov. Rick Snyder demanding to know why pipes haven’t been replaced yet. One boy recorded sounds from a plastic water bottle along with his poem.

The students visited each other’s cities, the state Capitol, and the MSU campus during planning for the exhibit. Lansing students created visual art to go with the writings of the Carman-Ainsworth kids, and all of the work was collected in a book.

Mathews and others are trying to bring the exhibit to the Flint Institute of Arts next spring. Beyond that, she hopes to find grant money to send the sound mural traveling the country.

“It was just an amazing experience that I really hope doesn’t go into storage,” Mathews said. “A lot of times with this crisis and other crises like it, it’s in the media, then goes away, and that’s it. One way of keeping attention is thinking of creative ways to keep people focused, like with art.”

To learn more about the exhibit, including photos and videos, visit [www.beyondstreaming.org](http://www.beyondstreaming.org).



**Visitors to MSU's Broad Art Museum turned water spigots to hear the voices of Jessyca Mathews' students in the exhibit "Beyond Streaming: A Sound Mural for Flint." (See sidebar, page 13.)**

"I had one Everett girl who said to me, 'I want to come back here,' and I said, 'Good, I want you to come back,'" Mathews said.

### *Support the trailblazers*

They say good things come in threes.

Somehow, amid the new class and the multi-city art project, Mathews accepted a third challenge last school year. Joined by teacher Carrie Matern and former student DeQuindra Renea, Mathews co-wrote a play that was performed by students in her school's theater department.

Each of the three wrote a different act of the play, titled "Appointments: An Account of the Flint Water Crisis," weaving a narrative around doctor visits and featuring a character based on Dr. Hanna-Attisha, the local pediatrician hailed as a hero for exposing the crisis.

"I've never wrote a play, so I didn't know if I was on the right track or not, but it all went together," she said. "The theater teacher, Delynne Miller, said 'Let's put the play on,' and it was wonderful."

The authors have signed a contract to have the drama published and dis-

tributed to other schools who want to perform it, including a post-performance discussion guide about clean water and human rights.

Mathews understands some educators and school administrators do not see it as their place to address societal injustices in the classroom. She believes training is needed to help educators learn how to address current issues and controversies, because avoidance doesn't prepare kids.

"When you don't discuss it, kids are going to talk about it without you," she said. "No matter what subject we teach, we are supposed to be making productive citizens. How do you make productive citizens by not talking about what's going on in the world?"

### *It's time to show unity*

Mathews doesn't have to look far to see a big inequality in American society: the education system—divided by race and socioeconomic status into haves and have-nots. Her awareness has grown since she attended an NEA conference on social and racial justice in Boston this summer.

The conference, part of her selection as a national activist of the year finalist, exposed her to educators

doing work around the Black Lives Matter movement, the school-to-prison pipeline, immigrant rights, environmental justice, and LGBTQ issues, among other civil rights.

"I've come to learn from interacting with other teachers and other people, I want to use my God-given talents to be more of an activist—not only for the water crisis but other social issues where things aren't right."

One reason she became an educator is because growing up she never had a black teacher from K-12. African-American under-representation in the profession means she carries an extra load, she says, one she wasn't prepared for in the early years of her teaching career.

The role model spotlight on her is brighter. For some kids, she defines the meaning of education and its life-changing power—or lack of it. She's a go-to resource for white colleagues seeking insight on racial or cultural questions.

"It's like different layers of responsibility," she said. "It's kind of like a blessing and a curse, because I love being in the classroom, and I love being an African-American teacher, but it's hard being under a microscope."

She draws her strength from her students. This generation is criticized as lazy, spoiled, and self-centered, but she sees them as serious about making the world better. She believes they will change the world, and she will have played a part.

"Everyone has some talent that they can do something to make a change happen," she said. "It can be small, it can be large, whatever it may be. But it's got to be people taking action and saying 'I'm going to do it to the best of my ability.'"

### *We cannot wait*

**Subheads excerpted from "We Can't Fight Alone." To read more about Mathews, visit her website at [www.JesTakeAStand.weebly.com](http://www.JesTakeAStand.weebly.com). ■**

# Listening Tour Captures Voices From the Field

BRANWYN JONES HAS TAUGHT ENGLISH AT MICHIGAN'S OLDEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS, BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL SHE AND HER COLLEAGUES JOINED MEA AND NEGOTIATED THEIR FIRST CONTRACT THAT SHE SAYS SHE EARNED HER PH.D.—IN CONTRACT BARGAINING.

The Northwestern Michigan College instructor attended a Traverse City Listening Tour stop with two of MEA's new officers. Jones told President Paula Herbart the union provided invaluable expertise during 18 months of difficult talks following the faculty's vote to join MEA in 2015.

"We were in a bare-knuckle, bleeding brawl with our administration," Jones said of the long negotiating process, "and as a group we were very inexperienced and naïve. If not for the unbelievable support we received from MEA's team of experts, we never would have gotten this contract."

Dozens of MEA members and retirees have visited with President Paula Herbart, Vice President Chandra Madafferi, and Secretary-Treasurer Brett Smith at Listening Tour events across the state as the new leadership team seeks to chart a future course with member input.

Leland teacher and association president Keven Pershinske attended the Traverse City tour stop where he discussed the uneven and inadequate funding of schools, which he said is "hurting schools, hurting kids and families, and hurting the economy."

He said his local members are tapping a renewed sense of purpose as a teacher shortage has taken hold in Michigan. In recent years stagnating wages and lowered benefits, along with unwarranted criticism of educators, are driving people away from the profession.

"We're energized in terms of fighting back for our younger teachers," he said.

Being part of decision-making was the topic Glen Lake bus driver Barry Mazurek wanted to discuss in Traverse City. The president of his local transportation association said his members get frustrated when school administrators debate schedule changes without consulting drivers.

snow-covered in the winter.

Thanks to his attention to lifting the voices of his fellow drivers, Mazurek maintains 100 percent membership in his unit, he said. "I tell them MEA has always got our backs."

Communicating the true story of public education to parents and advocates is a vital role that MEA must play in pushing back against so-called "choice" policies that undermine traditional neighborhood schools by diverting tax dollars to for-profit



**MEA President Paula Herbart speaks with Kathy Gardner, a kindergarten teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary School in Walled Lake, during a Listening Tour stop in Commerce Township.**

Starting the school day 15 minutes earlier might not seem a big deal to some school employees, he said, but for drivers it could be the difference between roads being plowed or

businesses, according to Seth Furlow, a chemistry and biology teacher at Novi High School.

"We need to educate the public and expose the for-profit education



**Northville Education Association President Tom Silak says state funding cuts have made school administrators more worried about their districts' external image, while educators focus on what's best for students—a frustrating disconnect between the two.**

system,” said Furlow, president of the Novi association, during a tour stop in Oakland County. “My neighbors wouldn’t be OK with it if they knew that their tax dollars were going to corporate bottom lines instead of their children.”

At a tour stop in Utica, the officers and members talked about what inspires them to continue doing their job despite challenges—and what educators and their union can do together to help.

UEA member Lisa DiPirro shared a story about a parent who wrote a letter 20 years ago praising DiPirro’s work improving her child’s reading skills. Recently, that student—now grown with a child of her own—caught up with her on Facebook.

“The message she sent me wasn’t about, ‘Thank you for helping me read.’ It was, ‘Thank you for believ-

ing in me and helping me feel good about myself at a time when I needed it the most.’ It reminds me how much we make a difference in the lives of our students in so many ways.”

The group also discussed frustrations with attacks on the teaching profession and the lack of respect for educators—including ways to push back when skeptics question why educators need to be compen-

sated as professionals. They also decried the “Hunger Games” mentality bred by new evaluation systems, while recognizing that the changes MEA helped advocate for recently in state law around evaluations helped significantly.

Herbart said she’s proud to hear from members thankful for all MEA does to advocate for public education, but the new officers want to do more.

“We want to do more that really stretches what you think MEA can do—and stretches even what we think we can do,” she said.

The officers are hearing the frustrations of educators asked to do more with less—coping with large class sizes while supplying their own resources and providing their own professional development. Meanwhile, pay and benefits have slid downward in the past several years.

“We need to honor the sacred commitment that educators have kept to their students, their districts, their state and country,” Herbart said.

In addition to conducting the Listening Tour, MEA’s new officers have been criss-crossing the state attending local union meetings and school events wherever they can—logging hundreds of miles, starting even before their new jobs officially began on Sept. 1.

“It’s absolutely what I want to be doing right now,” Smith said. “I’ll go anywhere to talk with members.” ■

**Find tour dates near you and RSVP to attend a tour stop at [www.MEA.org/ListeningTour](http://www.MEA.org/ListeningTour).**

**The schedule of events includes stops through December ranging from Metro Detroit to Southwest Michigan to the Upper Peninsula. Contact your Local President and MEA UniServ Director about getting one set up near you—officers will continue the Listening Tour into the New Year!**

# We Worked Without a Union

**We asked MEA members who previously worked in non-union charter schools, or in states without collective bargaining, to share their experiences and takeaways. Here are excerpts of how they responded to four questions.**

**Read full answers at [www.tinyurl.com/NonUnionExperience](http://www.tinyurl.com/NonUnionExperience)**

**Katie Condon:** 5th-grade Teacher, Saginaw Public School District

**Years in education:** 5

**Type of non-union experience:** 3 years at a charter school



While working for the charter school, I didn't feel valued. I had a voice that wanted to be heard for those students, and it wasn't—because (operators/managers) had other plans. Their plans are more personally related to them than what is best for the students. Now in my second year at a public school, I feel that my voice is being heard and that we are doing what is right and just for the students we serve. Where I am now, my students are not just my students; they are our students. That is what I did not feel at the charter school, the family atmosphere. It was a job.

**Rob Atwood:** P/E and Health Teacher, Baldwin Community Schools

**Years in education:** 8

**Type of non-union experience:** 5 years at a brick-and-mortar charter school and 2.5 years in virtual charter schools



At the traditional charter schools, employees would not get compensated for substitute teaching during their conference hour or supervising lunch. At the virtual academy, teachers were not fairly compensated for the amount of students enrolled in their classes. For example, I had over 300 students in my classes. It made it very difficult for educators to build rapport with students and families—which is one of many reasons why virtual schools across the nation are failing.

**Michael Adams:** 3rd-grade Teacher, Holt Public Schools

**Years in education:** 6

**Type of non-union experience:** Michigan charter school



I would ask anyone who is considering opting out or choosing not pay their union dues to please come to a meeting. Our union is one of the most democratically organized institutions that I have ever been a part of, and good ideas are always welcomed. We want your voice, and everyone has the responsibility to get involved. The sad part is I don't think anyone fully understands the day-to-day importance of a union or collectively bargained contract until it isn't there. I have become an active member of the Holt Education Association, working on our

bargaining team and helping members with contractual issues. Through our collective unity, I have seen our staff successfully advocate for the children and community we serve and public education as a whole.

**Shannon Ager:** Kindergarten Teacher, Novi Community Schools

**Years in education:** 6

**Type of non-union experience:** 2 charter schools



I feel so much safer and more comfortable working in a district where I have a union. I know that the administration cannot arbitrarily fire me. I know that I have someone to talk to should my working conditions become unsafe or hostile. I know that I have a team of people who are on my side and want me to feel comfortable coming forward should something happen that is not appropriate or not allowed. It is an amazing feeling in comparison to the constant anxiety of my previous workplaces. It is also wonderful that the union makes sure we are informed of

issues that affect teachers and also gives us a way to mobilize or a means to act on our own behalf.

**Michael Adamisin:** 9th-grade Science Teacher, Oak Park Schools

**Years in education:** 6

**Type of non-union experience:** 1 year at a Detroit-area charter school



The year I was there saw > 50% staff turnover from the previous year, all replaced with low-wage Teach For America candidates with little to no actual experience in education (all to keep salary costs down and profits up). Benefits were paltry. There was no codified "pay scale," employees were paid as little as possible (especially when compared to public school counterparts). Teachers were often strong-armed or berated about under-performing on assessments and, at the end of the one year I spent, ranked and promptly "non-renewed" if they fell

below a certain threshold for performance. There was no process for redress, no codified grievance procedure if there were issues with on-the-job actions or normal "contractual" issues or the like, and really no ability to advocate for oneself if any problems arose.

**Curtis Kelenske:** 5th/6th-grade Multi-age Teacher, Leland Public Schools

**Years in education:** 13

**Type of non-union experience:** 1 year in private school, 6 in a charter school



Charter schools are not good for teachers! They are also not good for students. The words "for profit" do not belong in education. The charter school I worked for worked hard to get kids out of special education services and to not qualify kids with—in my opinion—significant learning disabilities. This saved them money and made owners of the school a lot of money. This school also did not offer a lot of choice for classes in the middle school and high school so they could keep class sizes higher... for reasons we all know. It made the school more money.

# Why I Pay

**Brian Milliron:** AP US History teacher,  
South Haven High School

Let me tell you why I pay my union dues—because I've lived the future that Betsy DeVos envisions for our children and the school employees who educate and care for kids.

I worked at for-profit charter schools during my first nine years teaching in the West Michigan area after graduating with my Bachelor's degree in the early 2000s. Nobody wants to work for less money, so accepting a position at a charter school was not based on preference, but on availability. Any job was better than no job, and having a common teaching certification during a time of teacher surplus limited my employment options.

Now I've worked at a great public school for a number of years, but I can't shake off what I saw in non-union charter schools and how teachers and students were treated in the name of profit.

After graduating college, I substitute taught for almost a year before finding a job in a charter school. Over the next nine years, I worked for some great principals and some horrible ones. I worked in a system where the staff turnover rate was above 50 percent nearly every year. Imagine that shocking figure—half the staff leaving every year. Yet it's no surprise people fled—the staff was volun-told to work the parking lot for arrival and dismissal, monitor lunch, complete forms for "collaboration" meetings with other schools in the company, tutor after school, and teach after-school electives. We had no guaranteed prep time.

All these extra duties were expected to be done with zero compensation. Combine that with significantly lower salary compared to traditional public schools, and it's easy to understand the high burn-out and turnover rates. Employees were a cog in the wheel, nothing more. Staff morale and high turnover did not worry the company. Profit was the number-one priority.

The camaraderie among colleagues was great—we clung together through what all of us knew was a lousy situation.

The environment I taught in and my students tried to learn in was not conducive

# My Dues

to learning. Lack of heat, electrical issues, sewer leaks, and antiquated facilities were the norm, as we tried to “do more with less”—all in the name of profit. I worked with some phenomenal teachers and had some first-rate students who were able to overcome these obstacles, but that didn’t make it right.

I didn’t realize how wrong the for-profit charter system was until I moved to a traditional public school. Now I work with administrators whose first goal is student achievement, not making profits. I have administrators and union representatives who focus on the well-being of the teachers in their building and what they can do to keep educators from leaving. They know the importance of having long-term school employees who provide consistency for students who may have little or no consistency at home.

It disturbs me when I see teachers opt out of joining the union to save some money. I know the five-digit pay increase I received upon switching to a union-represented teaching position happened because a collective bargaining team negotiated professional pay for us. I know the job protections that allow me to enjoy a healthier work-life balance exist because of my union.

I wish non-dues payers would spend just one week in a for-profit charter school to witness what happens when profits matter more than kids—because here’s the sickening truth: If we don’t stick

together and fight the billionaires who want corporations to take over our schools, my past will become the future for all of us.

This is why I pay my union dues—and I do it without hesitation. ■

**Bill Boerman:** STEM Teacher/K-7, Holland Public Schools

**Years in education:** 22

**Type of non-union experience:** 7½ years at charter schools in Michigan; 10 years in public schools in Colorado that had no collective bargaining rights

Some examples of experiences...a) Administration gave us maps of how to walk around the playground on recess duty supervising students. There were cameras on the playground, and we did receive a reprimand if we didn't follow the prescribed paths. b) In a charter school setting I was evaluated on parent satisfaction surveys. Sometimes, an educator needs to speak truth to parents/families, and that is hard. Having part of my evaluation be based on “satisfaction surveys” didn't seem right. c) In a charter school setting I was reprimanded for not letting a female student into the building prior to school starting even though I was the only staff member in the building at the time.



**Brett Hudson:** P/E and Health Teacher, East Jackson Community Schools

**Years in education:** 2

**Type of non-union experience:** Charter school

The biggest benefit I have now is the ability to join a union. I am now able to have the protections that I didn't have while working at a charter school. The health benefits that I have from MESSA are incredible. The only previous option I had for a retirement was to invest into a 401K through a company they sent to the school. I now have the option to choose between a couple different plans and pick one that will benefit me most in the long run. It just feels like I have a lot more control over things vs. the lack of control I had while working at a charter.



**Amy Lawrence:** 7th-grade Math Teacher, Schoolcraft Community Schools

**Years in education:** 9

**Type of non-union experience:** Charter school

I almost never got a planning time nor a lunch time. Planning time was often taken up by meetings, IEPs, or behavior issues. During lunch, teachers were required to take turns monitoring the lunchroom, recess, and lunch detention room. With only three teachers per grade level this meant that I got a lunch about once a month. No compensation was given for these extra duties. Any work that I would have been able to get done during planning or lunch would be done after school hours or at home. I almost never left school before 5:00. In fact, if you were to walk through our building at 5:00 on any given day, you would see about half of the teachers still in their rooms working. Because the union makes sure that teachers have planning and lunch times, now I usually leave work by 3:30 and spend far less time at home working.



# START OF A JOURNEY

*Stories by Brenda Ortega  
MEA Voice Editor*

**Follow two young teachers through one school year in this series chronicling the ups and downs of life as a new educator in stories continuing through next August.**

In this issue, we launch the START OF A JOURNEY series with an introduction to Brittney Norman and Zack Griffin. One is brand new to the job, the other two years in to the profession. One teaches in Cadillac, the other in a sprawling rural region south of there.

Both are passionate, idealistic, talented—and juggling a heavy workload while trying to master the intricacies of classroom management, curriculum, pacing, and instructional delivery. They are part of MiNewEd, an MEA-NEA pilot program providing support to early career educators.

## Brittney Norman: Focusing on What Matters

AS A NEWER TEACHER STILL LEARNING THE ROPES, BRITTNEY NORMAN HAD A LOT TO THINK ABOUT GOING INTO THIS SCHOOL YEAR—BUT SHE WORRIED MOST ABOUT ONE THING: HOW TO FIT HER FAVORITE PART OF THE SCHOOL DAY INTO A NEW SCHEDULE THAT DIDN'T LEAVE MUCH SPACE FOR “MORNING MEETING” TIME.

The fifth-grade teacher likes to run a sort of check-in first thing each day to provide a chance for kids—and herself—to unload worries they're carrying around.

“I love that kids who maybe don't want to come to school because they're having a bad day know they can come and have somebody there to help them through it,” she said. “That's my favorite part of teaching is building relationships.”

However, systemic changes at her

school threatened to bump that priority right off the schedule.

Before the year started, Norman looked forward to sharing teaching responsibilities with a few more experienced teaching partners by rotating students across different classrooms a few times a day. But she expressed her fears during a summer planning session with the others.

“I said, ‘You guys cannot take out that time for my meeting in the morning, because that is everything

I love about teaching.’”

On the Tuesday after Labor Day, Norman began her third year in the classroom—but in many ways she started over again. New school district. New curriculum. New students. Norman, 29, is re-navigating first-year overwhelm at Pine River Middle School after spending her first two years as an educator at Mackinaw Trail Middle School in Cadillac.

The switch in districts meant she had to construct a classroom from scratch (on the fly, since her building was closed from construction until late in August), while learning a reading curriculum she'd never taught before.



**Third-year teacher Brittney Norman belongs to MEA for the extra support—it's nice to know there's always someone there to help when she needs it, she says.**

One thing is familiar: many of the teachers she's working with at Pine River Area Schools she knew growing up in the rural region south of Cadillac. That's why she applied when a job came open. She wanted to come home, where her young daughter attends school and her family lives.

"It's nice that I do know everyone—I can ask those questions and not be the new kid that doesn't know anything and doesn't want to ask anybody," she said.

Still, there's no getting around the challenges faced by early career educators like Norman. At one point in her second year of teaching, she started tracking the hours she worked—routinely 70 hours a week, sometimes more.

"Then I divided it by my paycheck," she said. "I'll never do that again!"

A math and science whiz in high school, she's carrying nearly \$70,000 in student loan debt for her Bachelor's degree from Baker College, after she tried and rejected multiple career majors before deciding to pursue her childhood dream of teaching.

"When I graduated high school, everyone told me there's not enough money in teaching, so I tried a lot of other things first," she said.

Early on she wanted to work with the youngest elementary kids, but now she loves spending her days with fifth graders who are finding themselves, she says: "Every day, they're different. Some days they're kids, and they want kid attention. Some days they think they're teenagers."

She didn't expect to encounter the sorts of social and economic troubles she's seen among students struggling with homelessness, water service shut-offs, and hunger. Like many school employees, she goes home and worries about those kids.

"It's hard to go to sleep at night sometimes, knowing what you know about your kids and what's going on at home with them," she said.

And she has trouble finding a way to disconnect from school and decompress from the tensions and long hours. "Once I walk into school in the fall, I can't shut it off until next summer."

An innovator who loves trying new tools and strategies—the flipped classroom, Google classroom, individualized instruction—Norman tries to keep failures in perspective ("After it's done, it's done; I try not to get too worked up about it").

But she struggles—as many educators do—to cope with some parents who make unrealistic demands or lash out irrationally to place blame on the teacher instead of working together to find solutions to their students' problems.

She laments the three weeks of learning time her fifth graders lose to standardized testing as "terrible" and questions expectations that some 10-year-olds aren't developmentally ready to meet. For example, a child who hasn't mastered multiplication facts will struggle to add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators.

"They're being tested on things I didn't learn until seventh grade," she said.

Her biggest struggle, however, remains in finding a classroom management plan that works for her. Last

year, she heard about various systems from her NEA-MEA project mentor and tried a tally system with rewards. The problem was she sometimes forgot to mark tallies in the mix of all the other tasks she had to do and monitor at any given moment.

“If I forgot to give a tally, my head was bitten off. You have to be so consistent, and if you tell them you’re going to do something, you have to follow through all the time.”

Her goal is to create strong relationships with her students that create a bond of respect, so reward systems aren’t necessary. For now,

though, she’s trying out a “clip-up, clip-down” system used by her partner teachers in Pine River.

Her school year started a little rough. She couldn’t find time for her morning meetings in the opening days, worrying about falling off pace. Lessons that worked in her old school were flopping in the new one. The kids seemed squirrely. She was working every night until 9 p.m. trying to make changes.

Then she decided to do what she knew would work, even if it meant she fell a little behind. She paused to check in, took a few moments to hear

from kids carrying worries around or to notice the ones not speaking up—and things got better.

“I like to take the time to figure out who needs extra love, who needs extra hugs during the day,” she said. “I realized that I’d lost focus on the things that mattered.”

It helps that she knows the value of leaning on a friend: “I had a really great mentor in Cadillac who used to say she never knew from one day to the next if I would open her door and be crying, screaming, or laughing,” Norman said. “It’s a rollercoaster.” ■

## Zack Griffin: Building ‘Better People’

THE 29 SIXTH GRADERS FILLING THE ROOM WERE COMPLETELY SILENT—PRACTICALLY MOTIONLESS—AS THE NEW TEACHER PACED IN FRONT OF THEM. HE CLUTCHED A WHITE CANDLE IN ONE FIST AND USED A LIGHTER IN HIS OTHER HAND TO LIGHT THE WICK.

“Without speaking, think about what you’re seeing,” the bearded 24-year-old commanded as he held the burning candle. “Observe. What are you witnessing? Don’t say it—think it.”

He leaned forward dramatically to give students in the front a closer look. When the candle blew out, he relit it. Then he popped it in his mouth. Chewed. Swallowed. Amid gasps and shrieks, he opened his mouth and wiggled his tongue to show the object was gone.

Meet Zack Griffin.

In the first week of his first year as a permanent teacher at Mackinaw Trail Middle School in Cadillac, the sixth-grade science teacher began laying a foundation. He knows what he wants to build—kids who love school, motivated students who grow

and discover, and something else:

His reputation for having so much fun that kids don’t realize they’re learning.

“I just get so fired up doing what I do that I’ll be known as the crazy science teacher,” he said. “I want them beating down the doors to get in and get to work.”

That is not to say he’s a pushover. After school, he assumes his other persona—offensive and defensive line coach for the Cadillac High School varsity football team—where he barks directions at his players running drills and reading plays.

It’s tough coaching football in the first year of teaching, but he didn’t get the extra work because he’s low man on the totem pole. This is Griffin’s dream job. He’s a football true believer, who doesn’t see a line of

demarcation between the classroom and the athletic field.

“Football is just a channel,” he said. “The classroom is a channel. They’re one and the same to me. The habits you learn on the field and the habits you learn in the classroom are the same. It’s 10 percent what happens and 90 percent what you do with it.”

He grew up in Reed City about 25 miles from where he’s now teaching, a multi-sport athlete who started at age nine as a water boy for the high school football team led by Coach Monty Price, a man he would later play for, whom he considers a second father.

“I learned so much from him—a lot about football but a lot about what it takes to be successful—that no matter what you do, you never stop working.”

Griffin played football at Alma College after graduating high school but transferred for his sophomore year to Ferris State University to save money. Even so he’s carrying more than \$30,000 in student loan debt.

Griffin always loved science and



**First-year teacher Zack Griffin belongs to MEA for the support system—having a group of people there to help and support him legally, mentally, and emotionally is important, he says.**

pursued other college majors before earning a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with certification in 6-8 science, finishing in 6½ years.

"I'm in student loans up to my ankles," he said. "My parents have a lot, too."

Both of Griffin's parents are educators—his dad is technology director in Reed City Area Public Schools, and his mom is assistant principal and athletic director at the high school. Although they work long hours, his parents inspired him with their commitment to public education.

His parents, teachers, college professors warned him about a teaching career: "They said, 'You're going to work ungodly hours. You're going to be under-appreciated and underpaid.'"

He also was aware of concerns about top-down policymaking from politicians in Lansing, particularly the over-emphasis on standardized test results that can drain joy from the classroom and obscure the true picture of teaching and learning.

That's why he's so happy to be working in Cadillac Area Public

Schools, where the priority district-wide is student engagement—not the pursuit of one test score. The focus frees Griffin to concentrate on the totality of students as human beings, he said.

The science curriculum stresses hands-on learning, collaboration, and discovery—all in keeping with his focus on hard work and improvement: "I've been stressing that to my kids; we're going to become better people. The most important thing is to have a growth mindset."

Opening students' minds was the point of the candle demonstration he ran in that early day of the year. The white candle was actually string cheese, and the wick was an almond sliver. His point? Observe carefully, like a scientist. Use all of your senses. Things aren't always what they seem.

When kids veer toward over-excitement in class, Griffin uses tried-and-true methods to signal them: standing in close proximity, inserting the student's name into a sentence, directing a teacher "look" their way (which he has practiced in the mirror).

He tries to use "the path of least resistance" in redirecting student behavior, he said. He's a huge music fan and keeps tunes playing while kids walk in to class, varying the genres from indy to pop and even swing—sometimes dancing. He hopes students will follow his lead.

"If I'm super-duper pumped about something, I hope others get super-duper pumped. If I'm serious, then they know we need to take care of business. The power of influence is big with me."

Last year, he experienced a trial-by-fire that tested his philosophy. He was hired at an area district mid-year as a long-term sub in a challenging third grade classroom that had been through a series of teachers. An administrator told him, "If you can stick with this class and make a difference, you can probably handle any situation."

The work was exhausting. Four of the 18 children were at grade level in any subject. Nearly 90 percent of students at the school lived in poverty. He worried they didn't have a stable



## MEA Pilot Program Supports New Educators

It's not easy finding solid footing in the early years of teaching. The job is demanding and difficult—if not impossible—to entirely master. Solving problems can feel like playing that Whack-a-Mole game. The classroom can be isolating, and it's hard to find a work-life balance.

That's the rationale behind MiNewEd—an innovative pilot project that brings on-the-spot support to early career educators. Both subjects in the START OF A JOURNEY series, Brittney Norman and Zack Griffin, are part of the joint MEA-NEA program this year.

Participants receive one-on-one virtual coaching from a mentor teacher, along with group meetings designed to create a support network of individuals who can lean on each other. The teachers set goals for improvement, try out new strategies, and reflect on their performance.

“My interest was to help more

with classroom practice and improving teacher confidence,” said MEA UniServ Director Chad Williams, who launched the program in Michigan. “With work demands increasing, school resources diminishing, and evaluation looming, teachers are experiencing higher degrees of stress, doubt and disconnection throughout their careers.”

The program started last year in Cadillac and now includes Petoskey and Alpena. Williams, who worked as a teacher and assistant principal in Grand Rapids, said the project appeals to young teachers who want tools and feedback but also desire a sense of community.

“Folks really want to feel connected to something,” he said. “As an organization, it's important that we make opportunities for our members to connect to a larger purpose and to one another.” ■



home, food or heat in the winter. “My sleep was definitely rough during that whole time,” he said.

What kept him coming back for four months was support from the administration, he said. Extra para-professionals were assigned to help, and Title I resources were steered his way. Ultimately, the students showed growth on NWEA post-testing.

“I must have done something

worth a little bit if they made progress,” he said. “That's why I like the growth aspect of everything. They have to learn how to learn.”

Now Griffin has set himself a lofty goal for his first year in a permanent job. He wants to meet the needs of all of his students, not just most. But day-to-day he stays focused on one thing: “If they don't take anything else home from a lesson, I want them

to have fun.”

Fun is a word he says often, because he's having a blast, too.

“It's awesome. I get to have a direct impact on the future by helping to shape people. It's true that you don't remember what you learned in sixth-grade science when you're 35, but you might remember—hey, that teacher cared about me and wanted me to become a better person.” ■

# MEA Targets Unfair Layoff in Federal Lawsuit

Stories by Brenda Ortega  
MEA Voice Editor

JENNIFER SCHWEIN TAUGHT KINDERGARTEN FOR 14 YEARS IN RIVERVIEW COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WHERE SHE EARNED AN “EFFECTIVE” RATING ON EVERY YEAR-END EVALUATION SHE RECEIVED. YET SHE WAS PINK-SLIPPED IN 2015 AHEAD OF OTHERS—including a less experienced teacher who also scored “EFFECTIVE” BUT WITH LOWER NUMERIC SCORES.

Schwein, 51, still has not been recalled to a full-time position—even though she was qualified and certified for several elementary teaching positions filled since her layoff. Instead, she was offered part-time positions at the hourly pay rate for paraeducators—\$10 an hour.

Since her layoff, among other openings she was qualified to fill, a first-year teacher was hired for a first-grade teaching job—and a vacant third grade teaching position was taken by a sister of one of the district’s administrators.

“It’s just not fair,” Schwein said.

In a federal lawsuit MEA is filing on Schwein’s behalf, MEA lawyers contend the district’s interpretation of Michigan’s Teachers’ Tenure Act represents an unconstitutional infringement of teachers’ rights. Tenure is a property right that MEA lawyers contend the state and school districts can’t take away through legislative changes or their application.

“A tenured teacher has a right to be ‘employed continuously by the controlling board’ under the Teachers’ Tenure Act, and we believe that creates a federal contractual right that can’t be impaired by the state or the district,” said MEA General Counsel Mike Shoudy.

“Additionally, the failure to recall Ms. Schwein to the vacant positions that she is certified and qualified to hold amounts to a de facto discharge without due process of law,” Shoudy contends.

Changes to Michigan’s tenure law in 2011 mandated that length of service or tenure status could not be the primary determining factor in school personnel decisions. School district policies for hiring, layoffs, and recalls must be based on retaining effective teachers, under the law.

The law contains provisions for taking away a teacher’s tenure, but some districts are ignoring those procedures and using the evaluation law to layoff tenured teachers—while subverting the protections of the Teachers’ Tenure Act—and refusing to recall effective teachers like Schwein to vacant positions. “It’s wrong, and we are going to try to do something about it,” Shoudy said.

“We are filing this federal complaint to challenge the state law and how districts have been applying it. Districts have been using the law in ways that create fear and distrust for our members.”

Other states have followed the

same path as Michigan in attempting to weaken teacher tenure by connecting layoffs and recalls more closely to evaluations. In 2015, a federal judge in Indiana ruled portions of that state’s revisions to its tenure law unconstitutional.

When the Riverview district in southwestern Wayne County laid off Schwein, parents and grown former students turned out to support her at a school board meeting to no effect, she said. She has since worked as a substitute teacher, but the emotional and financial effects of her layoff have been devastating.

“My son was with me when I signed up for unemployment, and it was very emotional for me because I’d never had to do that before,” said Schwein, a married mother of one 13-year-old boy.

Foremost, she wanted to participate in the lawsuit in defense of her own reputation as a strong educator, she said. But she also hoped to be a voice for teachers too frightened to speak up about issues because their administrators wield evaluations and layoffs like a club to silence people.

“Win or lose, at least I tried to do something about it,” she said. ■

RELATED STORY, next page:

**“Evaluations are supposed to be developmental. I’m concerned that some administrators are using teacher evaluations to punish rather than assist.”**

—MEA General Counsel Mike Shoudy





# Evaluation System Raises Tensions, not Quality

Changes to evaluations and tenure in Michigan over the past several years—supposedly intended to get rid of ineffective teachers—have created a culture of fear that discourages teachers from taking risks, advocating for students, and collaborating together.

That is one point of consensus gleaned from thousands of MEA member responses to a survey about the evaluation system. The online MEA survey was distributed last spring, after teachers had experienced the first two years of major evaluation changes connected to an overhaul of Michigan's Teachers' Tenure Act.

"Imagine the stress of feeling like you need to be PERFECT all the time, because at any moment you

may be observed and, if the district ties lay-offs and recalls to evaluation rankings, you could get pink-slipped just because you were a '3' one day," one survey respondent wrote.

"I've been in the district over 20 years," the teacher continued. "I have never had an administrator who was unhappy with my performance, and consistently rank 'highly effective' on my evaluations; yet this evaluation system has had a very negative effect on my teaching... I am always on edge now."

One-size-fits-all evaluation tools required by the state beginning in 2015 are time-consuming and cumbersome, and they don't adequately measure good teaching, many educators say. The meaning of number scores in numerous categories is subjective.

Meanwhile "student growth" and standardized test scores will account for 40 percent of educators' year-end evaluations beginning in 2018-19—unless MEA lobbyists succeed in their efforts to push legislation keeping the percentage at 25. (*See related story, page 8-9.*)

Michigan's Republican-controlled Legislature in 2011 overhauled teacher tenure to allow more senior educators to be laid off before less experienced teachers with higher evaluation scores—a move that tips the balance

of power too far in the direction of administrators, critics say.

In one egregious case of abuse of power in Allegan County, a principal was convicted of three counts of criminal sexual conduct after he demanded sexual favors from two female teachers he threatened with poor evaluations and loss of their jobs.

The two teachers eventually revealed the threats and coercion to MEA UniServ Director Christine Anderson. The principal, Jonathan Garcia, of Hillside Learning and Behavior Center, eventually admitted the conduct and was sentenced to four years in prison in August 2016.

"If the MEA hadn't been there, they never would have told," Anderson said.

Chipping away at teachers' job protections discourages educators from advocating for students and challenging the status quo in their classrooms, MEA General Counsel Mike Shoudy said. Pitting teachers against each other in the evaluation process discourages collegiality in the profession, he added.

"Evaluations are supposed to be developmental. I'm concerned that some administrators are using teacher evaluations to punish rather than assist," Shoudy said.

Shoudy often reminds members that legal representation outside of the collective bargaining agreement is only available to members that are in good standing at all stages in the process.

"It is a tremendous benefit of membership, but it is costly. We do not represent nonmembers in court actions involving evaluation, layoff, or failure to recall." ■

**MEA General Counsel Mike Shoudy contends that some districts are using the state's evaluation law to terminate effective teachers without due process, a violation of constitutional rights.**



# REGION ELECTION INFORMATION



Below are election procedures to be followed in the regions in compliance with relevant federal laws. (See positions to be elected following this section.)

**Attention ESP members:**

**2018 Region 50 statewide election for ESP only**

ESP members of MEA are entitled to send delegates to the National Education Association Representative Assembly. Expenses to attend are reimbursed in accordance with the adopted state delegate expense policy.

All Michigan ESP candidates for NEA statewide at-large delegate seats run as delegates for Region 50. All Michigan ESP members vote as part of Region 50 to elect statewide at-large delegates to the NEA RA. The NEA procedures require a secret ballot. Elections will be conducted at the region level and the results forwarded to MEA for a final count.

Nominated candidates may submit a biographical statement of 150 words or less to be printed with ballots. Statements must be in paragraph form and will be printed as received by Dec. 31, 2017. Photos and lists will not be printed for regions using paper ballots. However, pictures are allowed in regions conducting online elections. Email statements to [mostertag@mea.org](mailto:mostertag@mea.org), or mail to MEA Executive Office c/o Mike Ostertag, PO Box 2573, East Lansing, MI 48826-2573.

Any MEA ESP member in good standing is eligible to be nominated or to self-nominate at the region nominations meeting or by using the form (next page). Get additional forms from your region president or region election chairperson. A candidate's consent is required to place a name on any ballot.

If you have any questions, contact your region elections chairperson, or call Mike Ostertag at MEA Headquarters 800-292-1934, ext. 5411, before Dec. 15, 2017.

**Election dates for regions using online voting:**

8 a.m. Monday, March 5, 2018, through 4 p.m. Monday, March 12, 2018.

**Election dates for regions using paper ballots:**

1. The region at-large election shall be conducted on March 6, 7, and 8, 2018.
2. If your unit is not scheduled to work during the above days, the election shall be conducted on March 13, 14, and 15, 2018.
3. If inclement weather or another emergency interrupts the election listed above, it shall be completed on the next consecutive work-day(s), but no later than March 24.

Candidates for region at-large positions shall be printed in the February MEA Voice. Persons interested in running for a position should contact their region elections chairperson or nominations chair. If a Region does not have a December meeting, acclamation cannot be used.

**Absentee balloting**

(From the Region Council Constitution, Article VIII, Sec. 3.f.) The region at-large election is an on-site election. However, eligible voters who are not able to vote on site during the election period may notify their local association president of their need to vote by absentee ballot. The request must be in writing, include the specific reason necessitating an absentee ballot, and be received no later than Feb. 21 by the local association president. Eligible voters requesting an absentee ballot and complying with the above requirements shall be mailed an absentee ballot by the local association election committee. An absentee ballot must be returned by U.S. mail and received by the local association no later than the last day of the election. Late absentee ballots shall be unopened and set aside as void ballots.

**Eligible voters**

Voter eligibility listings will be created from information received by the MEA Membership Department from the local associations by Dec. 31, 2017.

# Region 50 NEA Representative Assembly, ESP Delegate At Large NOMINATION FORM

Supply the following information regarding the nominee. The consent of a candidate must be secured before that name is placed on any ballot.

The named candidate is nominated for the following position(s):

- ESP NEA RA at-large delegate:** 1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18
- ESP NEA RA at-large delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g):** 3 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

Nomination form must be received no later than Dec. 31, 2017.  
Mail to: Mike Ostertag, MEA PO Box 2573, East Lansing, MI 48826-2573. Nomination forms received after Dec. 31, 2017 will not be accepted.

Biographical statements of no more than 150 words may be submitted. Statement must be in paragraph form. Lists are not accepted. Pictures will not be accepted for regions using paper ballots. Pictures will be accepted for regions participating in the online elections. Bios must be received by Dec. 31, 2017.

## PLEASE PRINT:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

Local ESP association \_\_\_\_\_

## POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED

### REGION 2

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, 2 yr. term begins 9/1/18  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 2**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

4 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 5**-EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

3 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18  
3 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Tov Pauling, tov0727@gmail.com

### REGION 3

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

5 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** D'Andra Clark, dandra.clark23@gmail.com

### REGION 4

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Not Available

### REGION 5

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

## POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

3 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

2 positions\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immed. thru 3/31/19

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/19

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/19

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/19

**Elections Chair:** Mary Cooper,

mcooper@mynea.org

### REGION 6

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

**Position 5**-EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Heather Schulz,

hschulz28@gmail.com

### REGION 7

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 2**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

3 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

5 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

4 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Thomas Silak,

northvilleea@gmail.com

### REGION 8

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 2**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

4 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

3 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

5 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

4 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

4 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18,

same seat as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

3 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

2 positions\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18,

same seats as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

5 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Lance Little, llittle@mea.org

### REGION 9

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, 2 yr. term begins 9/1/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

5 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 5**-EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

## POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
5 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
5 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18  
5 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/18  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 4/1/18, same seats as above

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
5 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18  
5 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
5 positions, immed. thru 3/31/18  
5 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 4/1/18, same seats as above  
2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/18  
2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 4/1/18, same seats as above

**Elections Chair:** Michelle Munoz,  
mickeyteach@gmail.com

### REGION 10

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 1 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 5**-EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18  
2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\* 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Karen Christian,  
kchristian@mea.org

### REGION 11

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
4 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Jason Ostrander,  
jostrander@mymea.org

### REGION 12

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
2 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)  
2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 7**-EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate  
2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 4/1/18  
1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate  
2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above  
1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18  
1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate  
3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20  
1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Jenny Van Duinen,  
jjvandui@svsu.edu

### REGION 13

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate  
1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

## POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/19

3 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

3 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Jim Webber, jwebber@mea.org

### REGION 14

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

2 positions\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/18

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18, same seats as above

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Region 14 MAHE** EA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Region 14 MAHE** EA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Not Available

### REGION 15

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18, same seat as above

**Elections Chair:** Harvey Miller,

hmiller@netonecom.net

### REGION 16

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 4**-MEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Al Beamish,

abeamish@mymea.org

### REGION 17

**Position 1**-MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/19

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 10**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Region 17 MAHE** Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Region 17 MAHE** Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3 yr. terms begin 4/1/18

**Elections Chair:** Lisa Carubini,

lisacarubini@gmail.com

### REGION 18

**Position 3**-MEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 6**-EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 8**-EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 9**-EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 11**-ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 12**-EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position\*, immed. thru 8/31/19

1 position, immed. thru 8/31/20

**Position 13**-EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

1 position\*, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Position 14**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

**Position 15**-ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Region 18 MAHE** Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. thru 3/31/20

**Elections Chair:** Steve Elenich,

selenich@copperisid.org

### REGION 50

Region 50-ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/18

Region 50-ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g)

3 positions\*, 3 yr. terms begin 9/1/18

**KEY: \* is used to represent a Representative of Minority 3-1(g) seat**

# Encourage loved ones to get breast cancer screenings

BREAST CANCER HAS TOUCHED MANY LIVES, INCLUDING MINE: MY WIFE'S BEST FRIEND, KARI, LOST HER BATTLE IN 2013.

The state Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 8,160 Michigan women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

Early detection is critical to surviving breast cancer, so in Kari's memory, I'd like to encourage readers to get screened for breast cancer as soon as possible. The Mayo Clinic recommends women 40 and older get a mammogram every year. In addition, state health officials recommend women ages 20 and older get a clinical breast exam at least every three years.

MESSA members and their dependents don't have to pay a dime out of pocket to receive a breast exam from an in-network provider, as part of their free annual health maintenance exam. Members can also receive one preventive mammogram per year with no out-of-pocket cost when seeing an in-network provider. Call MESSA's Member Service Center at 800.336.0013 to find out which types of mammograms are covered.

Please encourage the women in your life to get their preventive cancer screenings. ■



*Ross Wilson*  
MESSA Executive Director



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## CLASSIFIEDS

Our ad policy, rates and schedule can be found online at [www.mea.org/voice](http://www.mea.org/voice). The classifieds deadline for the December 2017 issue is Nov. 3.

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### SERVICES

**ALWAYS BUYING COINS!** US & foreign. I have a private office in Lansing and make house calls in Mid Michigan. I am a Retired Teacher and give free appraisals for Retired & Current School Employees. Call Bill 517-648-9640.

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### TOURS

**Visit the Homesites of Laura Ingalls Wilder.** 2018 brochure available. Phone 810-633-9973. Email [lhsitetours@email.com](mailto:lhsitetours@email.com). Visit our website [www.lhsitetours.homestead.com](http://www.lhsitetours.homestead.com)

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### VACATION/RESORTS

**Fairhope, Alabama on Mobile Bay-** Beautiful renovated and completely furnished Cottage, short walk to bluff and beach, Municipal Pier, shopping and restaurants. One bedroom, living-dining, fully-equipped kitchen, tiled bath, washer/dryer, and TV. Utilities included, non-smoking. \$1050 a month. Available 2018, Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr. Brochure. 251-928-3991. Peg Weatherly 103 South Bayview St., Fairhope AL 36532.

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### 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](http://www.goodepsych.com). MESSA, Community Blue, BCBS, Aetna, Medicare. 734-223-4202.



# NEA members are entitled to **Complimentary life insurance.** Have you named your beneficiary?

If you're an eligible NEA member,\* you're covered. You have NEA Complimentary Life Insurance issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America (Prudential). It's active right now and you don't have to take a nickel out of your pocket to keep it active.

But you will want to take a minute or so to name your beneficiary. Or reconfirm the choice you already made. Making your choice can speed up benefit payments to loved ones who need them.

Don't wait! Name your beneficiary today and get this **FREE** tote bag from NEA Members Insurance Trust.

Go to [neamb.com/free-tote](https://neamb.com/free-tote)

or call 1-855-NEA-LIFE and mention offer code: TOTEBAG  
(632-5433)

\*Visit us online or call for eligibility requirements.  
NEA Members Insurance Trust is a registered trademark of the NEA Members Insurance Trust.  
NEA Complimentary Life Insurance coverage is issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ.



# Secretary Joan Crampton wears many hats.

She's worked at Greenfield Elementary in Birmingham schools for 18 years since transitioning from her first career as a mom—a role that served as great preparation for her current job, she says.

## What does your job entail?

My job is taking care of people. Everything else is secondary, although my responsibilities are great. I take care of enrollment, helping parents, working for the principal, budget, payroll, ordering supplies, dealing with substitutes, making sure there's coverage in every classroom. Whatever the teachers' needs are during the day, I'm a phone call or email away. I'm the school nurse, too. We've had to give insulin injections, medications, breathing treatments for children who have asthma. I'm a security officer, because I open the building and make sure that our visitors are reasonably secure to be in our building. My desk is my real working hub.

## You have an amazing skill set. What prepared you for it?

When I was a child, I wanted to grow up and be a mom. And I joke now, "Be careful what you wish for," because I'm really mothering. I mother the children. Sometimes the parents need gentle guidance with a voice of experience, like I remember when I was a first-time mom with my kindergarten-er coming to school. Of course, the teachers sometimes need an ear to bend, and you are there for everybody. You've got the district expecting things also. But, you know, it can be simple things, like a kind return note on email, that make a person's day. Everyone is dealing with so much stress, it's important to step back and understand that what really matters is people.

## What do the children come to you needing?

Someone to listen. Sometimes just a hug. Or if they're sick and vomiting, we take care of them, we contact their parents, we tell them everything's going to be okay. I get to know the children, so I know who really has the stomachache. If this child never comes to the office, and they come and have that tummy-ache, I know they

really are not feeling well. There are others who I know are just anxious, and something happened at home. I have a blanket and cot for them to rest. If parents can't come and pick up their child, they might spend a lot of their sick time here with me.

## What's a situation where you're juggling multiple priorities at the same time?

When a substitute doesn't show up and we're trying to cover a classroom, and I have a parent at my desk with a concern, and a child just fell and needs an ice pack.

The calmer I am, the better. I have a side ear, too. Somebody can be having a conversation over here, and not that I'm trying to be nosy, but I can interject and say, "Well, I don't think that's a good idea. Let's try this instead." I'm almost like an octopus with arms in eight different directions at the same time.

## Isn't there a little magic involved sometimes?

I have to be creative. Let's say they're going on a field trip and a child forgot to pack a lunch, I start running around. I always have something hidden, like snacks or water, a juice box, something. So we create a lunch for this kid to miraculously eat on the field trip. Or if they mess themselves and the bus is waiting for them, I have a drawer full of extra pants and shirts. A little girl once said to me, "Don't you have pink jeans?" And I said, "Look, I'm not JCPenney."

## Isn't it true—a great secretary is worth her weight in gold?

My daughter teaches in Arizona, and I always say to her, "How are the secretaries in your building? Be nice to them, because they will help you whenever you have a problem. Don't overlook how important they are." That goes for all support staff, the paraprofessionals, the noon aides, everybody who comes in contact with the children. They all give extra every single day. ■



# The Power of Friendship and Compound Interest

$$f(x) = \int_0^{\infty} (acy) \cos yx + (bcy) \sin yx \, dy$$

$$acy = 1 = 1/\pi \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) \cos yx \, dx$$

$$bcy = 1/\pi \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) \sin yx \, dx$$

$$f(x) = 1/\pi \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} f(x) \cos yx \, dy$$



**Our story focuses on three friends, Patty, James, and Alisha who started working together on the same day.**

## Retirement Savings to Age 60\*

Age	Patty	James	Alisha
25	<b>\$2,140</b>	\$0	<b>\$2,140</b>
30	\$15,308	\$0	\$15,308
34	<b>\$29,567</b>	\$0	\$29,567
35	\$31,637	<b>\$2,140</b>	\$33,777
40	\$44,372	\$15,308	\$59,680
45	\$62,234	\$33,777	\$96,011
50	\$87,287	\$59,680	\$146,968
55	\$122,424	\$96,011	\$218,436
60	<b>\$171,706</b>	<b>\$146,968</b>	<b>\$318,675</b>

\*Assuming a 7% rate of return compounded annually.



**Patty** set out early. At age 25 she began investing **\$2,000 a year\*** and continued to do so for the **first 10 years** of her career. **Then she stopped.** Patty's entire **savings contribution was \$20,000.**



Meanwhile, **James** decided to **wait to save.** 10 years after Patty, James started saving, on his **35th birthday.** James realized the wisdom of his friend Patty's ways and **began investing \$2,000 a year.\*** Although he continued to save the same amount year after year, James wasn't able to surpass Patty's total investment for all 26 years he was saving. James' **total contribution over this time amounted to \$52,000.**



But, **Alisha** was the wisest of all. Like Patty, Alisha **began saving \$2,000 a year\* at age 25.** However, unlike Patty, Alisha maintained her saving style **throughout her 36-year career.** At their joint retirement party, Alisha looked forward to the best time of all. **Alisha's total contribution was \$72,000.**

While Patty, James and Alisha all were able to save money for retirement, their story shows the power of a consistent savings strategy and compound interest. It also shows how important it may be to have others who help guide you on your journey to retirement. James learned from Patty. Our MEA Financial Services representatives would be proud to be your friend into retirement and assist you with your financial goals.

**mea**  
**Financial**  
**Services**

**Find your representative on our website at [www.meafs.com](http://www.meafs.com) or call us at (800) 292-1950, option 1**

This hypothetical illustration is not intended to be indicative of any specific investment. Hypothetical results are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to represent any specific securities. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that shares, when redeemed may be worth more or less than their original cost.

Securities are offered through Paradigm Equities, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. Investment advice is offered through Fairway Investment Group, LLC. Both are wholly owned subsidiaries of MEA Financial Services, 1216 Kendale Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48823. 517-351-2122 or 800-292-1950



# It's good to have options.

MESSA has launched several new plan options designed to reduce the amount of money that comes out of your paycheck for health insurance—while keeping the largest doctor network in Michigan and the legendary member service MESSA is known for.

No matter your bargaining unit's circumstances, there's likely a MESSA health plan that will work for you.

If you'd like to talk to someone about ways to reduce your health care costs, call your MESSA field representative at 800.292.4910. He or she can provide specific details for your group.



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