

“Fund our schools! Fund our schools!”

Thousands of public school supporters from across the state repeatedly broke into thunderous chants accompanied by banging noise makers and waving homemade signs at two June

#RedForEd rallies at the Capitol to press for adequate state funding of public education.

In these pages, soak up some inspiration and resolve to join the fight!

At press time for this magazine, it appeared the battle was not over—the Republican-led Legislature took a summer break without passing a budget despite a looming Oct. 1 deadline. ▼

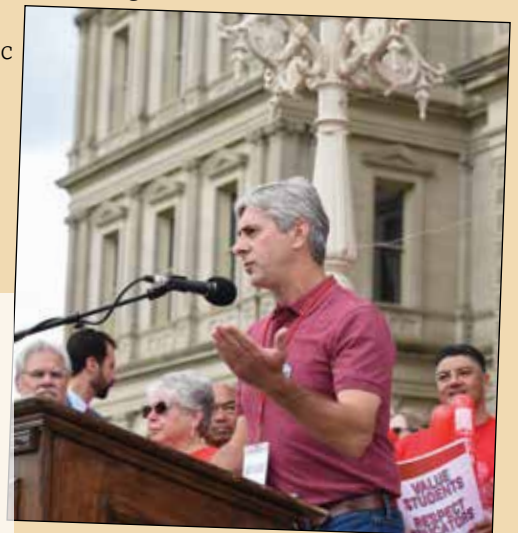


#RedForEd: A Movement, Not a Moment

The theme of his speech was “lessons I’ve learned from my students,” so it was fitting that MEA member Greg Talberg grabbed a selfie before addressing nearly 2,000 attendees at the June 18 MEA and AFT Michigan rally for public education funding.

Then the 22-year veteran of Howell Public Schools made one simple request of the crowd which serves as an answer to the question, “What’s next?” Here is an excerpt:

“Our students face so many challenges today. Attending fully funded public schools should not be one of them.
“We ask kids to learn complex concepts even while hungry, so we should fund our schools.
“We ask them to be kind to one another even in a world that’s full of discrimination and prejudice, so we should fund our schools.
“We ask them to plan carefully for the future in a world that we know is changing on them moment by moment, so we should fund our schools.
“We ask them to practice running, hiding, and fighting from a potential threat, so we should fund our schools.
“I’m going to close with one brief request... that you go back to your home districts, and you talk to your neighbors, and you encourage them—just like you’re doing—to demand that our schools are fully funded.”



Recently appointed to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s Educator Advisory Council, Talberg teaches AP psychology, U.S. government, social issues, and sociology.



“This Red for Ed wave is catching fire because the public knows we’re telling the truth. They know that we love their kids and that this is about more than a little raise in our paychecks, though Lord knows we deserve it. This is about saying we need the paraprofessionals, we need the bus drivers, we need the counselors, we need the school nurse, we need the librarian! We need the family of educators who love our children.”
NEA President Lily Eskelsen García



“This state still has not recovered from the \$1.4 billion in cuts to education from 2010. It’s beyond urgent. We passed urgent a while ago.”
Ann Arbor teacher Jennifer Garcia



“Educators are struggling to make ends meet. Yet without them we have no doctors, lawyers, electricians, etcetera.”
Farmington paraeducator and local president Robert Gaines III



“You’re asking firefighters to fight a fire without a truck, without hoses. When you ask teachers to teach without tools, they burn out.”
Newly retired Center Line teacher Robert Boccomino



“Our outcomes and our challenges are because of a failure in this building behind me—not because of our children and not because of our educators.”
Gov. Gretchen Whitmer



"I work with first-generation college students who are hungry both for food and for educational opportunities that will help them fulfill their dreams."

Lansing Community College counselor Curlada Eure-Harris

"As educators, to support our students, we've been continually told to do more with less, do stuff for free. Our kids are suffering, I'm working harder and harder every year, and I just want help."

Plymouth-Canton teacher Lindsey Pignatiello



"Four studies in three years by some of the best researchers in the country have come to the same conclusion: We underfund our children's education. That's fact."

Michigan State Superintendent Michael Rice

"You know the mountain is going to be high and it's going to be steep, but we're ready. We're going to climb."

Haslett teacher Ben Pineda, appointee to governor's Educator Advisory Council



"I care so much about public education, but it's hard coming in because I don't know if I can make enough money to live independently."

Recent Central Michigan University graduate Gabriel Buttazzoni





“It might be easy to ignore one voice, but it’s very difficult to ignore hundreds of voices. How many kids do we interact with? How many families know who we are? Our voices matter.”

Midland science teacher and president Mark Hackbarth



“I haven’t come to Lansing before, but I’m definitely coming back if that’s what it takes. We do one of the single most important jobs in the country, and we’re looking for respect for our profession.”

Gull Lake teacher and co-president Randy Walbridge

Contact your lawmakers, encourage others in your community to do the same, and stay tuned to mea.org/redford for updates. Better yet—sign up to receive MEA’s legislative e-newsletter, *Capitol Comments*, at mea.org/signup, and get updates delivered to your mailbox. ▼

