

**L-8**

**MICHIGAN EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION**

**Long Range Plan**

**2021-2026**

## **MEA: ITS PURPOSE AND HOW IT FUNCTIONS**

### **MEA MISSION STATEMENT**

To protect, advocate, and advance the rights of all education professionals to promote quality public education for all students.

The Michigan Education Association serves members in two vital roles: as a strong and aggressive union representing and protecting member rights and as a professional association working to better the education profession and the public educational system. Its highest priorities are to:

- Advocate for quality public education for all students.
- Improve salaries, benefits and working conditions by providing bargaining representation and contract maintenance for members.
- Protect the legal rights of its members and local associations.
- Effect changes in the state's political climate in order to secure favorable reform of the system for financing public education.
- Improve education by strengthening the education profession and professional development opportunities.
- Increase growth and strength by continuing to organize nonaffiliated education employees.

MEA priorities are met through programs and infrastructure designed to meet the needs and goals of its members.

The MEA represents approximately 120,000 education employees. Its headquarters is located at 1216 Kendale Boulevard in East Lansing. Through 34 field offices, the MEA serves its members via a strong, democratic governance system. The MEA's state officers—president, vice president and secretary-treasurer—are elected to three-year terms. The MEA employs 220 staff members (including headquarters and field staff) to represent and service members throughout the state.

A Representative Assembly (RA) of more than 600 delegates serves as the MEA's chief policy-making body. The RA meets yearly to set and review policy, adopt a program budget and set dues. Between meetings of the RA, the MEA's officers meet at least five times a year with both the MEA Executive Committee and MEA Board of Directors to set policy and make decisions critical to the state's educational system.

The president, as the chief operating and executive officer, is responsible for directing the overall functions of the MEA. The executive director's primary responsibility is the management of staff and implementation of MEA policy, as directed by the MEA president.

The plan outlined herein is established to guide the MEA and its governing bodies in meeting the needs and achieving the goals of the membership and to strengthen the relationship between local affiliates and the state organization.

## **MEA GOVERNANCE DIRECTION**

### **Goal One: Develop Strong Leaders**

Because the MEA exists to meet the needs of its members, it will strive to provide the direction and opportunities necessary to ensure the ongoing training of current leaders, as well as provide paths for the development of a continuous cadre of new leaders.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Educate members and the public on the strength and value of union membership.
- Recognize and address the changing needs of members.
- Use all available avenues, including training grants, print, electronic and social media, to provide training and leadership development.
- Maximize the participation of local presidents and leaders in a variety of local, state, regional and national conferences.
- Develop the means to identify potential local presidents and leaders.
- Identify and mentor future leaders.
- Improve and maintain communication with and among leaders through a variety of methods.
- Assist individual members in becoming active participants who understand the roles and responsibilities each member plays in the association.
- Assess the MEA's current governance structure to determine its consistency with this long range plan.
- Expand the MEA's involvement with college and university students pursuing careers in education.
- Maintain training opportunities for leaders as part of the MEA's Building Full Capacity Locals initiative.

## **Goal Two: Strengthen Local Associations**

Because the local association is the face of the MEA for its members, it is imperative that the local association be strong in both bargaining and infrastructure.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Develop and implement local guidelines to encourage the use of appropriate financial procedures and internal controls.
- Develop and implement a step-by-step program to build newly organized units into strong, local associations.
- Continue to encourage and provide support for local coalitions, single-table bargaining and wall-to-wall units within each educational institution.
- Continue to review and strengthen organizing efforts in all areas of membership.
- Develop and deliver appropriate training programs and technical assistance to local associations.
- Continue to inform and educate leaders and members about MEA programs and resources.
- Develop early commitment to the MEA through the establishment and support of local student chapters and through the recruiting of students into the Aspiring Educators of MEA program.
- Develop and maintain programs to revitalize existing locals into full capacity locals.
- Develop and implement programs to best respond to the changing needs and expectations of members.
- Expand benefits of membership.

### **Goal Three: Integration of Membership Concerns**

Because the MEA is composed of members with diverse interests, concerns and needs, the MEA will encourage mutual understanding and support among members to ensure the highest quality environments for students and school employees throughout the state.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Educate and involve all membership groups while building more integration of membership concerns and collaboration at the educational institution, coordinating council, region and state levels.
- Continue efforts to educate and involve all members including Education Support Professional members, Higher Education members and Intermediate School District (ISD)/Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) members by:
  - Developing programs and training opportunities targeted to ensure that all members seek elected leadership positions.
  - Continuing separate EA and ESP clustering.
  - Maintaining Region 50 for election of ESP NEA-at-large delegates.
  - Educate and assist all members in using all available current means to achieve full representation at the MEA Representative Assembly.
  - Continuing to provide specialized training and conference experience for all members.
- Continue efforts to educate and involve MEA-Retired members by:
  - Maintaining and expanding current involvement of MEA-Retired members in the structure of the MEA.
  - Lobbying to maintain and improve retiree benefits and spending power.
  - Continuing to provide specialized training and conference experience for MEA-Retired members.
  - Informing MEA-Retired members of MEA members' concerns.
- Continue efforts to educate and involve ethnic minority 3-1(g) members by:

- Monitoring implementation of our guarantee of representation of ethnic minority persons.<sup>1</sup>
- Informing ethnic minority members, local elections chairpersons and region elections chairpersons of the need to elect delegates who reflect our diverse membership.
- Identifying and mentoring ethnic minority members for leadership positions.
- Facilitating the creation of a 3-1(g) Minority Affairs Committee in every region of the Association for the implementation of these goals.
- Continue to develop and provide specialized training in leadership development for ethnic minority members.
- Continue efforts to educate and involve women in leadership roles by:
  - Identifying and mentoring women members for leadership positions.
  - Continuing to create and provide specialized training in leadership development for women members.
- Continue efforts to educate and involve student members by:
  - Recruiting and maintaining student program members in all teacher preparation programs.
  - Continuing to provide specialized training and conference experience for student members.
  - Identifying and mentoring student members for leadership positions within the Aspiring Educators of MEA program.
  - Integrating student members into the MEA's organizational structure at the region and state levels.
- Continue to involve and integrate newly accreted groups of members into existing bargaining units.

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<sup>1</sup> 3-1(g) refers to the NEA bylaw to achieve ethnic minority representation of delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. That proportion should be at least equal to the percentage of identified ethnic minorities within the state. Identified ethnic minority categories are: Asian, Black, Hispanic, Multi-Ethnic, Native American/Eskimo, Pacific Islander.

- Continue efforts to promote and create conditions for the full participation and integration of the diverse member groups in the governance of the MEA.



## **MEA PROGRAM DIRECTION**

### **Goal One: Pursue an Aggressive, Pro-Public Education Legislative Action Agenda**

Because the MEA's success in achieving its goals will be determined, in part, by external forces over which influence may be exerted, the MEA will use well-defined strategies to pursue its goals in the legislative arena and will actively solicit member support of those goals.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Work to repeal amendments to the Public Employment Relations Act of 1963 (PERA) and other laws that negatively impact the rights of members.
- Restore fully employer-paid benefit packages for members.
- Increase the state and federal government's financial commitment to assume a higher proportion of local education costs.
- Substantially increase state funding to public schools by eliminating pay inequities and providing quality curricula and resources in every school district.
- Actively influence proposed changes in education issues such as certification and standards for all members; teacher, paraprofessional, early childhood, adult and community education; appropriations for lifelong learning programs; improvements in working conditions in the areas of safety and liability protection and school employee evaluation and student testing.
- Educate, energize and mobilize all members to achieve MEA legislative priorities.
- Continue to develop coalitions to support legislative issues.
- Expand communication to members on legislative issues.
- Support structures to encourage and enhance member involvement in the lobbying process.
- Continue to implement programs to involve Higher Education members in higher education budget and legislative issues.
- Continue to implement programs to involve education support members in education support legislative issues.

## **Goal Two: Promote Organizational Growth, Member Retention and Involvement**

Because the MEA's strength lies in the solidarity and resolve of its members, the MEA will continue to pursue its mandate to represent all public education employees.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Monitor and evaluate the MEA dues structure and all related policies.
- Increase the commitment to MEA's organizing goals and provide leaders with the information, communication and support necessary to facilitate organizing.
- Increase the efforts to fight privatization through educating communities, school boards and members in its threats to public education.
- Educate members of the need for and value of union membership.
- Increase programs for member retention.
- Increase union pride.
- Improve and increase the utilization of new-member orientation and involvement programs at the local and/or coordinating council level.
- Use a targeted approach to organizing ESP, pre-K-12, ISD/RESA, charters, cyber schools and Higher Education employees in order to unify all education employees under a single organization—the MEA.
- Use a targeted approach to organize contingent Higher Education faculty.
- Continue to accrete employees into existing bargaining units where appropriate (Adult Ed, Substitutes, Preschool, Latchkey, alternative education and Community Ed).
- Increase efforts to form wall-to-wall units and make every effort to accrete new ESP members into existing ESP units.
- Continue to improve and implement a comprehensive training program to increase membership involvement in, understanding of and commitment to the MEA, its goals, benefits, services and responsibilities.

- Provide appropriate leadership training that fosters positive working relationships among member interest groups.
- Implement and maintain strong local programs that foster a commitment to the MEA.
- Strengthen each local association's ability to advocate for its members.
- Strengthen member understanding of economic policy and its relationship to school funding and student success.
- Expand the MEA's presence and impact in urban areas.
- Continue discussions and coalitions with other educational unions, associations and teacher preparation programs working to find areas of mutual interest.
- Continue efforts to form coalitions with other unions at the local and state level.
- Continue to organize retired MEA members to support the MEA's goals through the MEA-Retired program.
- Continue to organize student members to support the MEA's goals through the Aspiring Educators of MEA program.
- Establish, maintain and assess relationships with the media.
- Work to reduce the number of for-profit charter schools.
- Hold charter schools to the same requirements of public schools.

### **Goal Three: Provide Effective Internal and External Communication**

Success in achieving the MEA's goals depends on the commitment and actions of its members and the understanding and support of the general public. To ensure success, effective and timely communication will be used to increase both member participation in the MEA and public understanding of the challenges and concerns of members.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Develop and expand programs that promote the positive professional image of members.
- Increase public understanding of and support for a quality public education for all students.
- Educate members and communities about the successes of public schools.
- Support member communication and collaboration and assist local leaders to improve and increase leader-member communication.
- Explore new ways of connecting with members and improving the education of members and the public through timely, targeted and coordinated internal and external communications.
- Develop and implement strategies that will increase member participation in political action.
- Connect members to high quality online professional development opportunities and promote proven best practices.
- Use all forms of media to its fullest capacity to enhance the image of education employees and to build public support for the MEA's mission.
- Educate current and potential members of the benefits of membership and the services available.
- Continue improving methods of disseminating information to members about dues levels, budgets and Representative Assembly actions.
- Develop and utilize partnerships such as the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice to drive the debate about how to improve public education.
- Encourage local associations to foster and develop relationships with local media.

- Promote and support public forums which help to educate local communities on the impact of political decisions on public education policy.

## **Goal Four: Significantly Improve Compensation and Working Conditions of Members Through the Bargaining Process**

Through strong, aggressive collective bargaining, MEA members will improve their wages, benefits and the working conditions that affect the student learning environment. In particular, bargaining will address the challenges of achieving pay equity and eliminating gender-based wage discrimination.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Eliminate pay inequities by using all available research and methods for redressing those inequities.
- Bargain improved working/learning conditions that are crucial to professional employment.
- Pursue strong binding arbitration for grievances as priorities in bargaining.
- Intensify efforts to bargain and maintain release time for local leaders.
- Provide the bargaining training necessary to develop and maintain a strong cadre of local leaders, and to build consensus among members regarding bargaining goals.
- Provide a comprehensive database that can disseminate contract information in a timely manner in order to support local bargaining.
- Intensify efforts to create coalitions, single-table bargaining and wall-to-wall units.
- Prepare and assist local leaders to assume more responsibility in the bargaining process.
- Intensify efforts to support and strengthen Multi-Association Bargaining Organization (MABO) structures.
- Use bargaining successes to build internal and external (public) support for the collective bargaining process.
- Continue to develop the cost proposal analysis program to create multiple scenarios other than the single step movement.

- Continue to monitor and increase efforts to educate members, develop and initiate programs and strategies to address privatization.
- Monitor and develop aggressive strategies to target those issues that have the potential of weakening MEA's bargaining efforts.

## **Goal Five: Develop, Increase and Support Political Action**

Because the grassroots involvement of members in the political arena is crucial to achieving legislative goals, the MEA will educate its members of the link between political action and legislative goals.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Improve programs to solicit voluntary contributions from every member to the MEA and NEA political action committees.
- Improve member involvement in state, local and national political activities that include political party structure positions, precinct delegations, county/state convention delegations and campaign volunteer cadres.
- Encourage and educate members on how to become politically active both in the communities in which they work and where they live.
- Maintain an intensive training program to prepare members to participate in the MEA's political action program.
- Improve communication to members on issues and individual voting records to our legislative goals such as recommendations and provide the rationale for and link between political action and legislative goals.
- Organize and involve members to elect MEA-recommended pro-public education candidates.
- Develop a program to encourage, support and train members interested in running for political office.
- Improve relationships and hold frequent meetings with policy makers including state representatives, individual Board of Education members and Board of Trustee/region members in all districts and institutions.
- Provide fact check information for members regarding candidates.



## **Goal Six: Continue to Provide Strong Member Protection**

The strong legal protection provided to MEA members in good standing will continue to ensure that school employees can work without fear of unfair reprisals and can be assured of adherence to their negotiated working conditions and benefits.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Continue to enforce contracts through established grievance procedures.
- Continue representation of members in good standing through the MEA legal services program.
- Continue to implement training for leaders and members on grievance procedures, contract maintenance and duty of fair representation.
- Continue to communicate information to members about legal issues and the MEA legal services program.

## **Goal Seven: Develop and Use Supportive, Timely Research**

Because the MEA's efforts and arguments must be based on and supported by sound, irrefutable and relevant data, the MEA will take advantage of current technology and expand its use of research data to develop strategies and define goals that can be communicated to key audiences, which include school boards, citizens in local communities and decision makers in business, industry and government.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Expand analytical capabilities to support bargaining and contract maintenance.
- Expand research support for legislative and political activities.
- Expand research support for instruction and professional development.
- Expand research support for internal and external communication.
- Develop efficient systems for data to be accessed by staff in field offices.
- Develop efficient systems for data to be accessed by members.
- Maintain a database on MEA member demographics and education topics in Michigan.
- Inform members about how research aids the success of MEA programs.
- Educate members to be informed consumers of educational research and propaganda.
- Expand research support for anti-privatization activities.
- Provide to members research to refute attacks on MEA and its membership.

## **Goal Eight: Improve Working Conditions and Professional Issues**

The MEA's superiority to other education employee organizations is based not only on its outstanding bargaining programs and skills, but also on its commitment to professional issues and human rights issues.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Build support for and obtain the necessary resources and time to achieve school environment improvements.
- Pursue improvements and high standards in educational programs, as outlined in MEA guidelines.
- Monitor the enforcement of certification standards, licensure and accreditation.
- Develop and maintain a system for evaluating and providing continuing education credit for professional development activities and certificate renewal.
- Address professional issues through the bargaining process.
- Provide resources and expertise necessary to address the professional concerns of members; i.e. changes to statewide curriculum, changes to certification requirements and standards, etc.
- Provide assistance, upon request, to selected school sites:
  - to correctly implement building-level decision making districtwide.
  - to address in an integrated manner the diverse service needs of students and their families.
  - to continue to address the professional/skill development needs of the members.
- Help members to develop or select and infuse gender-fair, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) and multicultural curricula into their instructional programs.
- Educate and sensitize employers, school staffs and students about the importance of protecting social justice issues in the working and learning environments.

- Monitor proposed educational policy changes in order to determine their impact on student achievement and the working and learning environments.
- Develop and support programs to address aggressive student behavior in the general education and special education classrooms.

## **Goal Nine: Promote and Protect Human and Civil Rights**

The MEA has always been a leader in protecting the rights of all people and will continue to take a leadership role in obtaining and guarding these rights.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Continue to support legislation that would advance and protect the rights of all people.
- Continue to actively protect the rights of every person to have equal access to education, employment and rights of citizenship.
- Expand training to identify and eliminate racism, sexism and bullying behaviors and practices.
- Utilize and support programs designed to prevent and eliminate harassment, bullying, child abuse, domestic abuse, hate-motivated violence and teen pregnancies.
- Help members to develop or select and infuse gender-fair, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) and multicultural curricula into their instructional programs.
- Educate and sensitize employers, school staffs and students about the importance of protecting human and civil rights in the working and learning environments.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND SPECIAL SERVICES DIRECTION**

### **Goal One: Maintain Efficient and Effective Work Environments**

The MEA will protect its substantial investment in its facilities and properties for the benefit of leaders and staff by maintaining them to run efficiently and effectively in support of organizational demands.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Continue an effective maintenance program for all facilities and properties.
- Improve and operate field offices as efficiently as possible in order to meet demands.
- Provide adequate technical support and resources necessary for the staff.

## **Goal Two: Expand and Improve Group Insurance Benefits and Services**

Because the Michigan Education Special Services Association (MESSA) has been providing comprehensive benefits to members since 1960, the MEA will remain committed to protecting and expanding the organization's products and services in order to reinforce members' ties to both MESSA and the MEA.

The objectives for achieving this goal are to:

- Obtain and market the finest health care programs available, at the lowest cost.
- Recognize and support MESSA products and services as the standard for all MEA members.
- Obtain and market the finest group benefits available—such as life and disability insurance—at the lowest cost.
- Continue service and communication to members as priorities of MESSA.
- Increase the number of MEA members covered by MESSA.
- Continue to explore and implement health care programs that benefit MEA members.
- Continue to educate members on cost savings measures available with their plan(s).

### **Goal Three: Expand and Improve Member Financial Services and Insurance Programs**

MEA will embark upon an active campaign to establish comprehensive member benefits through MEA Financial Services, which recognizes the changing pension and compensation structure of today's economy. MEA will work with MEA Financial Services as it continues to expand and market quality insurance products and investment services for the benefit of members.

The objectives for achieving these goals are:

- Improve members' retirement income through bargaining employer-paid defined contribution and/or investment matching programs.
- Market aggressively and bargain MEA Financial Services investment programs and administrative services.
- Maintain MEA Financial Services as an investment provider in all MEA represented school districts.
- Develop and implement innovative investment, insurance and financial services programs that are advantageous to MEA members.
- Expand programs and services for MEA-Retired members.