



# The Value of Belonging

Why Membership Matters



# Advancing Public Education

There are real challenges facing public education – and none of us can face these challenges alone.

When educators stand together as union members, we have strength in numbers and can be more effective when it comes to advocating for the needs of our students.

Through the collective power of nearly 120,000 members throughout Michigan, MEA membership gives us a seat at the table and influence in crafting the policies that affect our students, our classrooms and our schools.

Much of what we negotiate about our working conditions has a direct impact on the students we serve. Take a look at your contract: Whether it's class size limits, adequate supplies, safety issues, prep time, intellectual property, bus safety or countless other issues, our working conditions are our students' learning conditions.

As dedicated teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff, we are the experts in education. Belonging to MEA helps lift our voices so we can be heard, from the halls of our school buildings to the halls of the state Capitol.

With educators' voices raised together, we can help ensure that every student has access to an excellent education — and that we have the resources we need to help our students succeed.

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are our students'  
learning conditions.**



# Collective Bargaining and Action

Being part of a union provides us a voice in our careers, as well as protections against decisions that could harm our ability to do our jobs. That's why MEA's mission is to protect, advocate and advance the rights of all education professionals to promote quality public education for all of our students.

One of the biggest benefits of MEA membership is the service provided directly to members by MEA's local UniServ directors. These local experts can help us bargain and maintain fair contracts with our employers, including better pay, benefits and working conditions.

These highly trained labor relations consultants help us access a wide variety of services available only to MEA members.

## Services from local UniServ staff

- Contract bargaining and interpretation
- Grievance processing
- Job security protection
- Retirement concerns
- Certification
- Development of training programs to meet specific local needs
- Employee counseling for work-related problems
- Presentation of arbitration cases
- Unemployment compensation representation
- Bargaining crisis preparation
- Development of local public relations programs
- Assistance in local association governance matters
- Processing civil rights violations
- Assisting members with accessing member-only benefits



Find your local UniServ office at [mea.org/uniserv](https://mea.org/uniserv).



# Legal Protection and Liability Insurance

Protecting our rights as school employees is at the core of MEA's mission. MEA provides members with numerous safeguards to protect our rights, including legal services and professional liability insurance.

## Protecting our rights: Expert legal help

MEA employs several full-time attorneys and retains prestigious law firms to help protect members' legal rights in matters arising out of our employment. MEA's legal work helps members and local affiliates in matters such as:

- Contract negotiations and enforcement
- Wage and hour laws
- Education funding
- Unfair labor practices
- Layoff and recall
- Discrimination and civil rights
- Retirement
- Health and safety
- Fringe benefits
- Unemployment compensation

## Protecting our livelihood: \$1 million in liability insurance

Whether it's in a classroom, school bus, office or other facility, accidents happen — and they often result in lawsuits. That's why we as educators need professional liability insurance to protect us from workplace civil and criminal claims.

MEA strongly believes that employers should provide school employees with insurance to protect them from personal financial liability stemming from employment-related lawsuits. However, this is not always the case — so MEA provides each one of us with \$1 million in professional liability insurance as a benefit of membership.

This liability insurance protects members from personal financial liability for most incidents arising out of educational employment activities or duties. The insurance also includes attorney's fees, so as members we don't have to pay a dime out of our own pockets to defend ourselves from frivolous civil lawsuits related to our employment.



*To access MEA legal services, contact your UniServ director right away.*



# A Seat at the Table

Think about the people who make decisions about your salary and health benefits, your retirement, the educational requirements for your profession, the amount of money your school will receive, and the standards your students must meet to graduate.

## Legislative advocacy

What do these people have in common? They're all elected officials — from your local school board to the state Capitol and from Congress to the White House. Whether we like it or not, every education decision is a political decision — and these decisions matter when it comes to our careers, our students and our own livelihoods.

Through legislative advocacy, MEA gives us a voice at the state Capitol in Lansing, from the Legislature to the State Board of Education and beyond. Our union has a well-earned reputation as Michigan's leading advocate for public educators and their students.

## Political action and mobilization

In addition to monitoring legislation and advocating for policies that can improve the lives of educators and our students, MEA also tirelessly works to elect friends of public education to local, state and national offices.

The candidates recommended by MEA are chosen by everyday members who sit on local and statewide screening committees. After the local committees make their candidate recommendations, MEA's skilled in-house consultants work to mobilize MEA members and our allies, so we can take action and make our voices heard — loud and clear.



Learn how you can get involved by contacting MEA Public Affairs at [publicaffairs@mea.org](mailto:publicaffairs@mea.org) or (517) 337-5508.

# Professional Development and Advancement

MEA members have access to high-quality programs needed to maintain and improve our job skills through our Center for Leadership & Learning, including online professional development, certification guidance, and numerous conferences and trainings.

## Online Professional Development

MEA members receive free access to numerous online professional development opportunities that can help advance our careers. Courses are offered in an easy-to-use, self-paced format and are arranged in libraries specially designed for members based on their specific role and level of experience.

Graduate credits are available for those who complete applicable online courses. SCECHs (formerly known as SBCEUs) and ESP certifications are also available.

## Certification Guidance

MEA provides members with up-to-date information on state requirements for maintaining a teaching certificate in Michigan, as well as one-on-one help whenever it's needed.

## National Board Certification

In addition to providing assistance to members for state certification, MEA can help guide teachers through the process of achieving National Board Certification.

## Conferences and Trainings

MEA sponsors several conferences throughout the year with trainings designed for teachers, education support professionals, higher education employees and others.

MEA also offers small-group professional development seminars, either in-person or online. If you'd like to build your skills in a certain area or would like to know the kinds of trainings available, contact your UniServ director.

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MEA  
CENTER FOR  
Leadership & Learning

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*Professional Development Reimagined*



To learn more about online professional development, visit [ccl.mea.org](https://ccl.mea.org) or log in to the Members Only section of [mea.org](https://mea.org).

# Members-Only Discounts

MEA membership provides us with significant savings on the products and services we use daily, such as dining, shopping, entertainment, health and beauty products, home and garden supplies, travel and more.

As MEA members, we can also get “Access to Savings” discounts on the go using the MyDeals mobile app. Use the app to find discounts near you and use your phone as a coupon at more than 75,000 locations, including national chains and local favorites.



To get started, visit the Members Only section of [mea.org](http://mea.org).

## NEA Member Benefits

On top of MEA savings, members also have access to NEA Member Benefits, which includes:

- A free life insurance policy through the NEA Complimentary Life Insurance program.
- Members-only rates for mortgages as well as student, auto and personal loans.
- Online shopping discounts and other money-saving programs for everything from magazines to cars.

 **nea** Member Benefits



Visit [neamb.com](http://neamb.com) to learn more and get started.

## MEA Financial Services

You can save hundreds of dollars each year on auto and homeowners' insurance through MEA Financial Services, a full-service insurance agency that is owned by MEA members and provides policies exclusively to us. MEAFS also provides numerous other insurance coverages and financial products.



Learn more at [meafs.com](http://meafs.com) or by calling (800) 292-1950.

 **mea** Financial Services

## Staples

Educators can receive deep discounts on school and office supplies at Staples, thanks to an exclusive deal provided only to MEA members. Whether you shop in person or online, you can receive an average discount of 30%.



Learn more and register at [mea.org/staples](http://mea.org/staples).

 **Staples**





"Belonging to MEA means being part of something bigger than myself. I'm part of a movement of educators who are committed to creating a better future for our students."

**Brittney Tylenda**

Teacher  
Southgate Community Schools



"By being an MEA member, I have access to a statewide network of educators who are ready to help at a moment's notice. This can be a stressful profession, and it's a great feeling to know I'm never alone."

**Anthony Barnes**

Special Education Teacher  
Kalamazoo Public Schools



"Being a member of my union gives me a voice at work, and it provides me and my colleagues with the collective strength to push for positive change, both within our buildings and across the district."

**Roy Freeman**

Custodian  
Dowagiac Union Schools



"In times when there's contention between the faculty and the administration, it can really help to have the union behind you. We have this whole organization behind us that can come in and advocate and go to battle on our behalf."

**Dr. Janice Hall Tomasik**

Associate Professor of Chemistry  
Central Michigan University

Learn more at [mea.org/ValueofBelonging](https://mea.org/ValueofBelonging)

# Michigan Education Association

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The mission of the MEA is to protect, advocate and advance the rights of all education professionals to promote quality public education for all students.