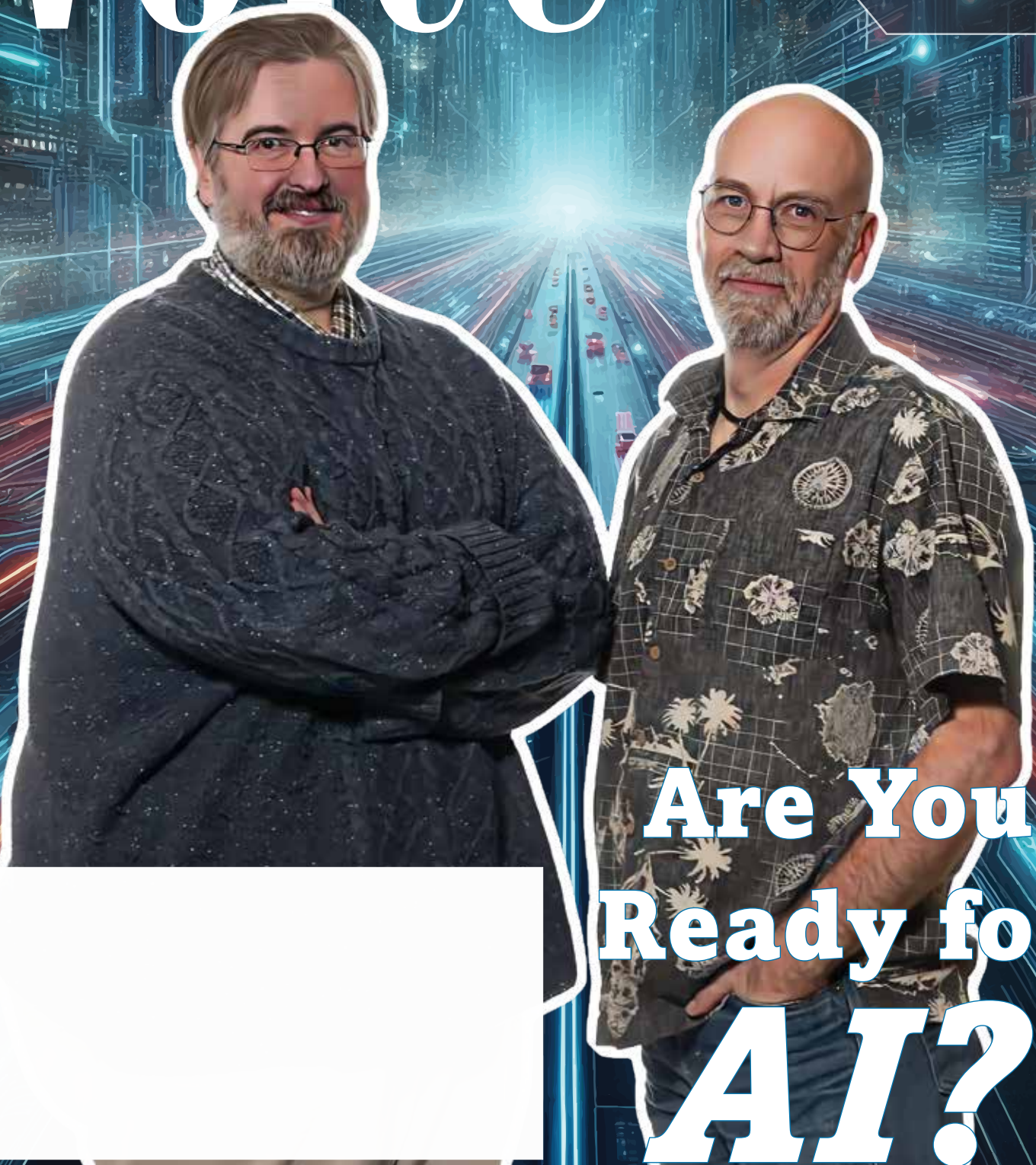


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Are You
Ready for
AI?

Letter to Members: Change is here to stay

One constant in education is change, and we are living in a time of great transition with the increasing impact of artificial intelligence in our lives and work.

As educators, we prepare students for a future we can't envision and jobs that haven't been invented. The field of AI promises exciting new possibilities for teaching and learning, along with challenges that must be addressed.

Concerns about privacy and misuse. Biased or incorrect information. Machines replacing people.

Generative AI is imperfect, evolving — and already changing the world which our children will inherit. We must learn to use this technology to enhance our students' education.

That is the focus of this issue's cover story, drawing in part from deep expertise of presenters at MEA's Higher Education Conference to help all educators understand the transformative nature of AI and begin thinking about classroom applications.

From personalized instruction to individualized feedback, tools of AI can enhance our work. We hope this

issue inspires you to explore and discover what this new technology has to offer and to encourage your district to adopt thoughtful guidelines and policies for its use (p. 4).

Technology has a long history of opening doors to learning for students, with tools like Mason County's immersive room (pp.16-17) illustrating just one way that additional school funding is helping Michigan students. Learn more at mea.org/arp.

And, thanks to steps taken by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and her legislative allies, more positive change is coming with the Feb. 13 implementation of recently passed laws restoring collective bargaining rights for educators (p. 7) and rolling back the unfair pension tax (p. 30).

Change isn't easy, but at MEA we're committed to supporting our members to provide a great education for every student. Thank you for your membership!

In Solidarity Always,

Chandra Madafferi, MEA President

Brett Smith, Vice President

Aaron Eling, Secretary-Treasurer



Chandra Madafferi,
MEA President



Brett Smith,
Vice President



Aaron Eling,
Secretary-Treasurer



IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to report the passing of Juwan Willis, whose exceptional contributions to his Oakland County CTE students and colleagues were featured on the December Voice magazine cover. On behalf of the entire MEA, we send deepest condolences to his family, friends, colleagues and students.

QUOTABLES

“From seed to plate, students get to experience the entire produce life-cycle. It’s rewarding for them to grow the produce in class and see it nourish their peers.”

Michael Suchy, MEA member agriscience teacher, on his course teaching Lincoln Park High School students to grow food with an indoor hydroponics system. The program was featured on WXYZ in Detroit after students delivered 19 pounds of lettuce, among other produce, for healthy school meals.



Jackson College professors Mark Ott and Steve Tuckey discuss generative AI in education in a cover package of stories on pages 10-15. (This photo, and original unmodified cover image, by Miriam Garcia. AI-assisted cover edits by Publications Specialist Shantell Crispin. Digital highway concept by Editor Brenda Ortega.)

For more indepth story coverage with links and additional photos, visit mea.org/voice



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On the cover: Graphic created with Bing Image Creator AI, modified with AI tools in Adobe Photoshop.

Restored bargaining, page 7.

Immersive room, page 16.

Mom+daughter lead, page 18.

More inside: Art exhibition call for entries, page 4. Social justice, page 5. SVSU support staff union celebrates late founder's gift, page 20. Region elections, page 22. Pension tax rollback, page 30.



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MEA • VOICE

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Revised! 2024 MEA/MAEA Art Exhibition

Exciting changes are in store for the 2024 MEA/MAEA Art Acquisitions Purchase Exhibition. This year's 60th annual event features digital jury submission and an easier drop-off and pick-up process for selected works. No entry fee is required, and the deadline for submitting entries is March 11. Any member in good standing of MEA or MEA-Retired is eligible to submit artworks for the exhibition which will run from April 27-June 9. Visit mea.org/art for information and the entry form.

(Pictured is a fused glass artwork by MEA-Retired member Carolyn Steenland of Newaygo, which was selected for an MEA Purchase Award in last year's show.)



ICYMI: Free AI resources for districts

MEA member Doug Hartley completed his student teaching and teacher certification amid COVID. Today at 27, in his second year teaching computer science in Utica, a second global upheaval has begun that will affect the rest of his career: the rise of generative artificial intelligence.

A colleague of Hartley's at the opposite end of her career in Utica, 30-year special education teacher Kecia Waddell, demonstrates AI's great promise on page 13 of this issue as part of a cover package of stories on possibilities and challenges in the technology.

Meanwhile, a comprehensive free planning guide for AI has been released by the 25-year-old nonprofit Michigan Virtual, a platform already used by many school districts for student credit recovery and staff professional development. Find the guide at michiganvirtual.org/ai.

Developed with numerous education partners, including the Michigan Department of Education, the Michigan Virtual framework lays out considerations for maximizing benefits and minimizing risks.

Stay tuned to MEA and NEA for ongoing information, SCECH-eligible trainings, and discussions around what's being called the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the new Age of Artificial Intelligence.

"Having a computer with the ability to do cognitive thinking that humans do is a very powerful tool," Hartley said. "It's still in its infancy, and we don't know how it will affect the future. Will it change the way we work and live? The answer is unclear but exciting."

Sign up ► join us ► MEA conferences

March 7-8

MEA Winter Conference

March 13

Educators Rising Conference

March 23

Aspiring and Early Career Educators Conference

June 21-22

Education Support Professionals (ESP) Conference

July 16-18

MEA Summer Conference

Look for details at mea.org/conferences.

QUOTABLES

"The Flint school board's shocking move to renege on this settlement agreement and meddle in the negotiation process will worsen the educator shortage crisis already facing Flint schools."

Karen Christian, president of United Teachers of Flint (UTF), on the school board's bizarre decision to abdicate its duty to local parents, students and educators by unexpectedly rejecting a contract settlement between UTF and school district administrators.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

Supporting MEA's Strategic Direction

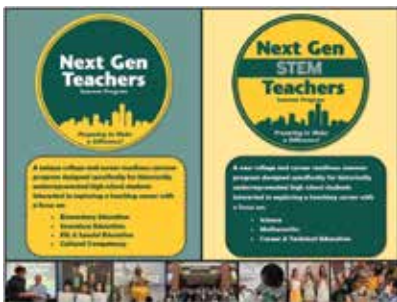
MEA staff and members are advancing racial and social justice in education as part of the MEA Strategic Plan. For future events, watch your email inbox for the Center for Leadership & Learning's new monthly newsletter: *AT THE CENTER*.

To register for or learn more about events listed below, go to mea.org/justice-in-ed.

Goal: Help recruit, engage, and retain a diverse population of educators that are reflective of the students we serve.

Educators Rising

Our first annual conference and competition for middle and high school-age aspiring educators will be March 13 at Wayne State University. Register now or learn how your class or club can compete.



Next Gen

We will again partner with WSU to host a summer residency program for aspiring educators in high school to experience campus life; learn about college readiness, cultural competency, and instructional practice; and teach a lesson to students. Register now.

Windows and Mirrors Grant

This grant supports current and aspiring educators around the four Aspiring Educator Pillars: Educator Excellence, Racial Justice, Political Action, and Community Engagement. We are seeking current practitioners from diverse backgrounds to help. Contact us.

HBCU Recruitment Event

CLL staff are working with districts to recruit education majors from historically Black colleges and universities to teach in Michigan. If your district is interested, please reach out.

Goal: Offer training opportunities for members and staff to increase cultural competency.

Book Studies and Professional Learning

As part of our popular CLL book study series, a spring offering focusing on *The Laramie Project* and *Suspended* will involve training on restorative practices and mental health first aid.

GPS Grant

Part of the CLL Great Public Schools grant involves members developing cultural competency workshops in local districts. Watch for opportunities as we expand these workshops.

Goal: Develop partnerships to advance racial and social justice for all students and educators.

Social Justice Convening

Save the Date — April 27 — at MEA Headquarters for a CLL Social Justice Convening hosted by the Social Justice Committee and Aspiring Educators of Michigan.

Restorative Justice

CLL is partnering with the Restorative Justice Coalition to incorporate effective practices in schools and communities.

Michigan ACE Initiative

CLL is partnering with Michigan ACE Initiative to support those impacted by trauma. [v](#)



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MESSA makes it easy to get heart health support

Virtual program from Teladoc Health is free for qualifying members

The old news: Heart disease has been the No. 1 killer in the United States since 1950, with the single most significant contributor being high blood pressure. Someone in the United States dies every 33 seconds from heart disease, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

The new news: The future of heart health care has arrived in the form of a virtual solution from Teladoc Health.

Qualifying MESSA members and their covered dependents can use the Teladoc Health hypertension management program to get support for managing high blood pressure and to stay on top of their heart health.

This program is available at no cost to MESSA members who have health coverage via the Teladoc Health app.

“The Teladoc hypertension program is a great opportunity for our members and their loved ones who have heart health issues,” said MESSA Member Services Director Karen Schulz. “Teladoc is easy to access through the app, is available whenever you need it, and goes with you anywhere. MESSA is committed to making sure our members have the kind of health care support they deserve.”

Teladoc’s hypertension management program helps members develop healthier lifestyles through one-on-one personal coaching, while providing effective tools to make long-lasting changes.

If you qualify for the program, you will receive:

- An advanced blood pressure monitor that you can use at home.
- Step-by-step action plans based on your personalized goals.
- One-on-one coaching.
- Tips on nutrition and activity.
- Guidance on healthy habits.

Using your at-home blood pressure monitor, you can easily track your blood pressure on the Teladoc app, and send reports directly to your provider and coach.

To sign up, download the Teladoc Health app from the App Store or Google Play. You’ll need your MESSA Enrollee ID, which you can find on your MESSA card or in the MESSA app. Answer the screening questions, and get started on your way to better heart health. ▼

More from Teladoc Health

Teladoc offers two additional programs that are free for qualifying members and dependents to help manage chronic conditions:

- **Diabetes management program**
- **Diabetes prevention and weight loss program**

Teladoc Health also provides:

- **24/7 Care** for minor illnesses or injuries to help you skip a trip to urgent care.
- **Teladoc Mental Health** to connect you with a licensed therapist or U.S. board-certified psychiatrist virtually.

Virtual Primary Care allows those 18 and older to visit with a U.S. board-certified primary care provider.

Deductible, copayment and/or coinsurance apply for these three Teladoc Health services.

To learn more, visit messa.org/Teladoc.

Clawson bargain lights the way: pact settles all newly restored topics

In her nearly 14 years as president of the Clawson Education Association, Kelly Pearson has not bargained a better contract than the one she recently signed. Overwhelmingly approved by membership, the deal struck different responses between early-career and longer-term educators.

“Overall, people were happy,” Pearson said of reactions during a meeting to review the tentative agreement. “But for those veterans who remember what it was like before, all of a sudden they’re like, ‘It’s back the way it used to be.’ Whereas the newer people are saying, ‘This is a whole new world.’”

It wasn’t primarily the deal’s strong financial aspects which drew sustained applause at the end of the 90-minute review session, she said: “I was watching smiles break out in the room as (MEA Executive Director Chris Pratt) went over it. People are excited about what we got back in the restored topics.”

With a contract expiring at the end of last December, the Clawson unit was among the first in the state to begin negotiating over important topics that had been barred from tables for a dozen years or more by politicians who sought to weaken unions’ collective bargaining strength.

Last year a new Legislature joined with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to restore the rights of educators, whose voices had been silenced around several subjects they had previously bargained for decades — relating to evaluation, placement, layoff and recall, and discipline and discharge.

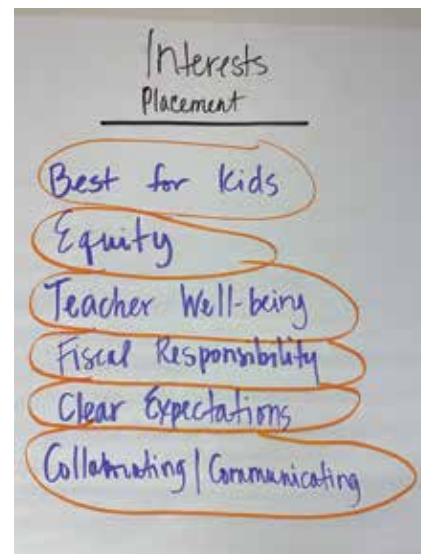
Other changes passed last year eliminated one-sided penalties against educators when contracts expired without a successor agreement in place — thereby balancing what had been unequal power granted to school districts — and returned the ability of locals to choose payroll deduction for union dues.

“Honestly what the state Legislature did was amazing,” said Pearson, a first-grade teacher and 25-year classroom veteran. “Take just one example: evaluation. There wasn’t much that we really had to do to get the changes we needed, because the law is so great.”

Championed by former MEA-member educators in the House and Senate who now chair Education Committees in their respective chambers — Sen. Dayna Polehanki (D-Livonia) and Rep. Matt Koleszar (D-Plymouth) — the new evaluation law removes state standardized test scores from teacher ratings beginning next school year.

Educators had doggedly advocated over several years for fixes to problems of fairness and accuracy in the teacher evaluation system overhauled by Republican lawmakers and Gov. Rick Snyder in 2011.

Part of larger efforts to make it easier to fire teachers, the evaluation system designed in 2011 discouraged collaboration, downgraded those working with the neediest students, ratcheted up the importance of standardized test scores, and sought to penalize rather than develop educators.



The use of Interest-Based Bargaining identified common ground on newly restored topics, such as teacher placement (pictured).

“It was a bad system, and I’m so glad the Legislature was able to do what they did,” Pearson said.

Among other evaluation changes passed last year, student growth lowers from 40 to 20% of an educator’s score, meaningful measurements of student performance are determined locally, a process returns for challenging unfair ratings, and educators deemed effective can move to less frequent evaluations.

While keeping state-approved evaluation tools required since 2015, such as the Charlotte Danielson Framework and 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning, the new law allows bargainers to adapt the tools to meet local needs.

Such an editing of the 5-D+ tool used in Clawson will happen through



Supt. Billy Shellenbarger suggested IBB as a bargaining method because his style of leading is collaborative, says Clawson EA President Kelly Pearson, pictured with him after agreement was reached on teacher evaluation.

a committee forming as part of the contract settlement. Made up of equal numbers from administration and teaching ranks, the committee will look at potential modifications to make the tool more appropriate and less cumbersome.

“Maybe we look at the requirement to post learning targets on the board every day and decide to pull that out as an indicator that doesn’t need to be there for good teaching to happen one way or the other,” Pearson said.

“Or with my first graders — requiring they demonstrate deeper-level questioning. I’m teaching them the difference between a question and a statement, and some kids still struggle. Those are the types of things the

committee will discuss, but the point is teachers will have a say in deciding what makes sense.”

The goal is to have the work done on the tool by spring and bring recommendations back to the bargaining team for approval.

Key to settling the large number of open issues in the contract, including salary and benefits in addition to the newly restored topics, was the negotiation method used to bring the two sides together, according to Chris Pratt, the MEA staffer who assisted the Clawson team.

Both sides agreed to undertake Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB), a model that encourages collaboration through a formal process for

advancing facts and perspectives, listening, developing shared interests, and brainstorming to seek common ground, Pratt said.

“I first used IBB a year and a half ago, and it was not my first choice, but now I’m a believer,” Pratt said. “It’s beneficial to build a culture where administrators and teachers listen to each other. They may not agree, but to listen and understand where the other party is coming from really does help.”

The union president agreed IBB was key to success — though not easy or fast; the bargain took 88 hours — and she added the impetus to try it came from second-year Superintendent Billy Shellenbarger. “It’s his style to work collaboratively,” Pearson said.

“In IBB, instead of the traditional approach where you pass proposals back and forth across the table, you work together collectively as a team. We even mixed up where we sat.”

Bargainers completed a two-day training to build trust and learn the process, led by South Oakland MEA/NEA Executive Director Grat Dalton. Determining shared values and listening to each other on each topic helped the group work through dozens of ideas — amid real struggles — to find agreement on all restored subjects.

“It was interesting to be a part of it,” Pratt said. “You saw teachers having meaningful conversation over these very important subjects for the first time in over a decade, and the result is a small bargaining unit of about 100 teachers figured it out and will hopefully end up being a lighthouse district.”

However, not every district has a leader interested in working collaboratively, which makes it important for local unions to organize and build solidarity so they can present a strong message and unified front at the table, said Craig Culver, MEA’s Statewide Bargaining Consultant.

“Teachers were once singled out from other employee groups to have their employment rights removed by law, but they no longer have to be second-class citizens,” Culver said. “Next comes the need for an organized membership to help support what will be an extra heavy lift in districts resistant to restoring basic workplace rights for teachers.”

Pearson recognized the significance of the bills to return teachers their collective bargaining rights as the measures were being debated in the Legislature. She was among several leaders from MEA locals who spoke before the House Labor Committee last spring.

In her testimony, Pearson told of a teacher in her unit whose job assignment changed involuntarily nine times in eight years — once shifting her from middle school to developmental kindergarten — a practice unfair to both educators and students but which the union was not allowed to address.

With those bills signed into law, the Clawson bargainers established staff placement rules which retain administrators’ flexibility to assign people where needed but also limit involuntary placements of tenured teachers to once every five years.

“We got back almost all of the language we had before they took away our right to bargain placement, so what happened to that poor teacher — moving nine times in eight years — couldn’t happen now,” Pearson said. “As it should be.”

Despite bumps in the road, the deal forged in Clawson also re-established “just cause” as the rightful standard for disciplining a teacher instead of the extremely low bar of “not arbitrary and capricious,” which has empowered school districts to more aggressively target and discipline or discharge teachers.

As importantly, the contract spells out procedures for progressive discipline so everyone — administrators and staff alike — understands the steps and progression of repeated discipline; problem areas are communicated; and coaching gives individuals opportunity to improve.

“Progressive discipline didn’t exist in our contract even before it was taken away, so now we have that,” Pearson said.

In addition, the bargainers met in the middle on layoff and recall rules, she said. Once based solely on seniority, the pendulum had swung far the other way to allow a fraction of one point on a teacher’s evaluation score to mean a 20-year veteran was laid off over a less experienced, less expensive teacher.

The new layoff and recall policy in Clawson will look first at each teacher’s evaluation rating instead of individual number scores — effective, developing or needing support — and if those are equal, then seniority will be used next.

The deal also restores payroll deduction for union dues next fall, which simplifies and splits the monthly amount over two pay periods. “We got everything,” Pearson said, adding the union conceded on two disagreements over evaluation: keeping the 5-D+ tool and adding a small deduction for attendance.

The team saved financial discussion for last but certainly not least, she added. The final deal continues an effort begun in the previous contract to beef up the salary schedule and restore steps for those who were frozen and took a pay cut during hard times.

Everyone will see at least a 3% increase on base salary, significantly higher longevity bonuses now beginning at five years, added days for bereavement, class size reductions, and more.

When agreement couldn’t be reached on raises or steps in the third year, the union agreed only to a two-year contract. That choice was made possible by repeal of a union-busting rule passed in 2011 which penalized only one side financially — educators — when negotiations reached an impasse.

“Now if we don’t have a settled contract come Dec. 31, 2025, everyone on steps will move up one at least,” Pearson said. “That wasn’t the case for a while.”

The longtime leader gave kudos to the CEA bargaining team, comprised of a balanced group of veteran, mid-career and newer educators — including a probationary teacher in her first negotiation — for working together to benefit all, including students and the community.

She also credited MEA’s Pratt and Dalton for their expertise and preparation, and she thanked the Legislature for delivering needed change. Next, she looks forward to training her leadership replacement and teaching for several more years.

Coming from a family of educators — including her parents and brother — Pearson said, “I’m happy my last contract as president was the best one. With everything we’ve been able to get back, I feel like we’ll be able to recruit the next generation of young people. We’re rounding the corner.”

The successful outcome in Clawson doesn’t mean the work is easy or done, but it reveals what’s possible, added Pratt.

“It’s a heavy lift to get this language back into contracts,” he said. “It’s not like you snap your fingers and suddenly it’s back to where it was — it will be busy and tough. But when all is said and done, I do believe this is going to be a really big year.”

Get ready: AI is transformative

‘We have to focus on the speed of change’

*Stories by Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is unlike any technological tool that has come along in the history of higher education, and educators and institutions must immediately begin the ongoing work of adopting it and adapting to the rapid change it will bring.

That was the striking thesis laid out in the opening sentences of a presentation delivered by MEA members Steve Tuckey and Mark Ott — two professors from Jackson College — at an MEA conference themed around the hot topic of AI in higher education.

“We keep hearing references of ‘AI is like a calculator,’ or ‘It’s just like when the internet came along,’ Tuckey said at the fall conference held by MEA’s Michigan Association for Higher Education (MAHE).

The pair delivered their urgent message at the MAHE conference with humor and historical context.

“AI is similar to those technologies in many ways — but it is also very, very different. We have to focus on the speed of change and why acknowledging it is a must. We can’t stick our heads in the sand or dismiss it as a passing fancy with ‘Oh yeah — it’s like the Segway we’re all driving around town!’”

AI has been around for decades, but the November 2022 release of ChatGPT captured imagination with its ability to instantly analyze information and generate sophisticated text responses to prompts. The large language model mimics human

intelligence with its capacity to learn, solve problems and converse with the user.

An open-source platform developed by OpenAI, a research and development company in San Francisco, ChatGPT set a growth record by attracting 100 million users in just two months — a milestone that took four years for Facebook to achieve and more than two years for Instagram.

Educators quickly began using the ChatGPT technology and other models arising in its wake to semi-automate time-consuming tasks: generating ideas or drafts for emails, lesson plans and differentiation, assessments, assignment instructions or feedback, and more.

Concerns have also arisen. Will students read, write, think and learn if a machine can do it for them? Can we protect privacy? Is it possible to root out conscious or unconscious biases built into systems by the humans who devised them? How do we address it when AI’s power is harnessed for ill intents?

Then there is the question Mathematics and Physics Professor Tuckey and Chemistry Professor Ott turned into the tongue-in-cheek title of their presentation. The Race is On: Will I be able to retire before AI makes my job obsolete?

The two were not sharing practical uses nor debating if machines will take over life as we know it in a science-fiction-come-true scenario. “If that does come, we’re out

of a job anyway because we’ll be surviving in the hellscape that is AI singularity, and that is a different talk,” Tuckey quipped.

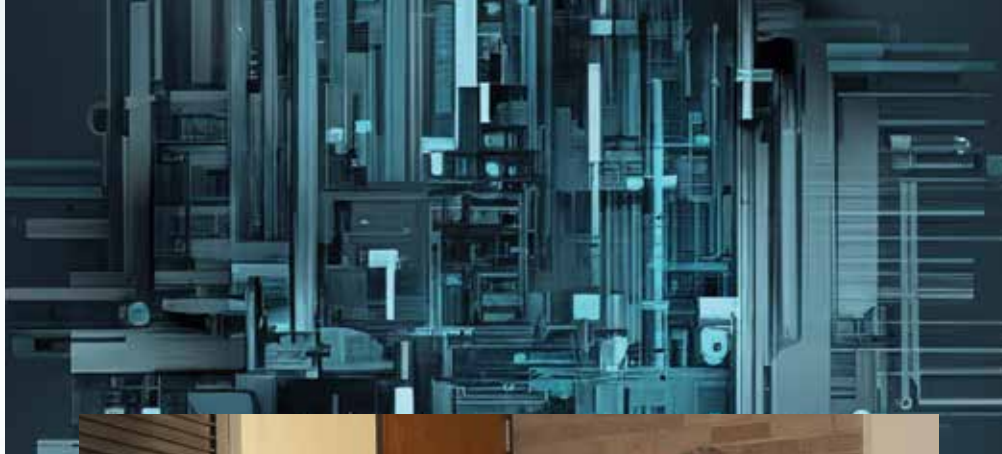
Instead, they pointed out technology has always disrupted cultures, changed the way societies function, and in turn been changed by users in a recursive cycle. The written word not only altered how humans process and recall information but itself evolved from stone tablets to the printing press and internet.

“Socrates used to complain at great length about how people are writing now and not remembering things like they used to, and that’s cheating!” Tuckey said. “So this idea that technology changes us and we change technology has been around for a long time.”

The difference today is in the pace of the evolution, Ott said. The internet took years to develop because it required infrastructure. Cell phones are ubiquitous, but their use grew over time from 2008. “Whereas these chatbots are amazingly easy to interact with, making the barrier for entry really low,” Ott said.

Users can already design their own chatbots, no coding required, he added: “I read just this morning about a professor of physics who’s designed three AIs, and one of them is a conversation AI trained on his syllabus with the sole purpose of answering students’ questions.”

Perhaps most mind-blowing to Tuckey is the fact that large language models are able to understand



the real world without having a concept of physical reality and can learn recursively from both external texts and those created by AI — “so it gets really good, really fast.”

“There was a time when the word ‘computer’ referred to a human being,” Tuckey said. “We would never say that now. In 50 years, will there be a need for engineers when you can just say to the machine, *‘Here’s the problem; give me five different solutions?’*”

Ott shared a recent example to underscore the point. At Northwestern University researchers developed an AI algorithm on a laptop that was able to respond to the simple prompt: Design a robot that can walk. The machine accomplished the task in nine attempts over 26 seconds.

The resulting robot which was 3-D printed from a blueprint, looking like no creature that has walked the earth, was powered by air. The researchers called it “instant evolution,” recognizing it used to take weeks of trial and error for a supercomputer to evolve a robot over multiple attempts.

“From prompt to nine iterations in 26 seconds, and it worked,” Ott stressed.

Tuckey referred to it as “artificial selection” — as opposed to natural selection — and restated the duo’s central thesis: change is happening quickly; it will shift reality in the near future of the world which our students are preparing to lead and inhabit; and educators must keep up, stay open, try new things.

“One way that I think about this is I’m helping my students become prompt engineers,” Tuckey said. “How do they communicate with that machine to get information, to process it, to connect it? For me, higher ed has become less about how do we get answers and more about how do we figure out better questions to ask?”

He urged peers to “think deeply about what professional development

looks like at your institutions,” adding he is chair of the Faculty Professional Development Committee at Jackson College. “The problem we run into is that staying current becomes part of our full-time jobs, and how do we negotiate that?”

“Literally — how do we negotiate that into our contracts? Professional development is a big deal. How supported are you to do meaningful, ongoing professional development? Throwing you a couple hundred bucks every year to attend a conference or get a journal isn’t good enough anymore.”

Ott encouraged educators concerned about remaining relevant to consider whether to pursue upskilling, which is building on existing skill sets, or reskilling to pivot in a different direction (teaching climate science instead of chemistry), or to shift away with training or certification in a new field of study.

Thoughtful adaptation is key, Tuckey said, referencing the ideas of evolutionary biologist Charles Darwin from *On the Origin of Species*.

“It’s not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change. Responsive to change doesn’t mean you automatically get better — it’s that you recognize change and you respond to it, and the way you choose to respond is key.” ♡

On these pages, meet MEA members exploring powerful uses of generative artificial intelligence tools — from elementary level to colleges and universities — as the technology’s possibilities and challenges unfold.

CMU prof: ‘We can do this. We have to.’

Gabrielle Likavec keeps up with research to guide her instruction as a teaching and learning consultant working with aspiring educators at Central Michigan University. The MEA member notes a few key points from early data emerging on AI.

- ▶ Within five months of ChatGPT’s release, 79% of surveyed C-suite executives reported at least occasional use of the technology, “so if we don’t prepare our students for using AI, we’re doing them a major disservice,” Likavec told attendees at MEA’s Higher Education conference in October.
- ▶ A study of coursework at 200 universities concluded in 80% of classrooms, generative AI could create a final product to be turned in with minimal human intervention. “That is what’s different; it produces products, meaning for us process has to become more of a focus.”
- ▶ Detection systems aren’t reliable. Numerous studies have shown at best programs accurately root out cheating students 60% of the time and at worst incorrectly flag original work from non-native English speakers, autistic people, and neurodiverse individuals, Likavec said.

“As students get better at writing prompts, that 60% number goes down. It’s an arms race, and there’s no way to get ahead of what these models and tools are doing, so we have to rely on other methods.”

For those reasons and more, AI is disrupting instructional practices. But the advancing technology also offers assistance to educators and benefits to students who make the shift, she says.

Likavec compares the potential for individualizing instruction to adaptive online tests in which students move through pathways depending on how they answer questions. “Now we have the same option not just for assessing learning but for helping students find a pathway to competency.”

In addition, chat bots can speed language acquisition for non-native speakers and accommodate students with learning disabilities. Neurodivergent students with executive dysfunction can be helped forward with organizing structures or step-by-step plans.

Despite her own initial reluctance, Likavec enjoys time-saving tools such as a rubric maker on Magic School AI. Nearly 70 offerings at Magic School, with K-12 and university levels, include tools to make AI-resistant assignments; give students feedback; and create a song on any topic.

Emphasizing process and relationships remains the best way for educators to discourage student cheating with AI, Likavec said. She encourages dialogue with students on how to use and cite AI and when to set it aside for their own good.

Assignments built around experiences further encourage students to deploy higher-order thinking in relation to content. Another adaptation asks students to reflect on learning, a metacognitive approach that is not new but takes on new importance in the age of AI, she added.

“One of the interesting things about artificial intelligence is it’s been trained to mimic human intelligence, so if you are aware of how you think, how you learn, how you accomplish a task with a goal and outputs, then you



In her work with aspiring educators at CMU, Gabrielle Likavec explores teaching practices that remove easy opportunities for cheating with AI.

are better able to use AI. We know our students struggle with this.”

Educators can also take advantage of the fact that AI goes off topic, makes mistakes and adopts biases and stereotypes. “When using generative AI, our students should know to ask these questions: Is this accurate? Is it clear? Is it biased? Is it well-focused? Why do you say that? How do you know?”

A future without human beings evaluating AI outputs is frightening, which underscores the importance of educators’ work in this realm, Likavec said: “Without a lot of literature to draw upon, we have to do some trial and error, but that’s OK. We can do this. We have to.” ▼

Veteran: AI ‘democratizes education’

MEA member Kecia Waddell began her career in the analog world, moved into digital, and will finish in the artificial intelligence age. A 30-year special education teacher in Utica, she couldn't be more excited

“I've always integrated technology for transformative teaching and learning experiences for my students, but I'm so, so, so excited to have lived this long — 56 years — to be able to interface with technology of this magnitude that just absolutely democratizes education,” Waddell said.

Waddell refers to ChatGPT and similar AI applications as a “Swiss Army knife”: all-in-one tutor, guide, organizer, editor, assistant. “To me, it's a tool to bring out higher function. We now have the tools for hyper personalization over one-size-fits-all. We're public educators. We have to pull everybody in.”

She uses it to organize thoughts or write emails and for more cutting-edge tasks, such as giving students instant individualized feedback, connecting learning goals to student interests, and identifying personalized learning accommodations.

She brainstorms with AI, asking it to identify overlooked angles to a problem or solution — “like a dragnet to discover ideas or frameworks I'm not considering. I constantly stay in a mode of thinking divergently, so a tool like this is so empowering. It jump-starts thoughts.”

Waddell holds a master's in special education from University of Detroit Mercy and both specialist certification and a doctorate in instructional technology from Wayne State University. She jumped to try ChatGPT upon its release 15 months ago and now subscribes to the plus version.

Last year she incorporated AI with sophomores conducting research on high-interest topics to write essays through a chosen lens — for example, race, psychological, cultural norms. Students submitted source notes, and she uploaded their material for ChatGPT to organize as a thinking and writing aid.

“You'd be amazed how interesting the topic of lipstick

becomes through the lens of environmental concerns,” she said. “It seems unlikely, but this is the brilliance of this approach with my students: Take high-interest subject matter plus academic research, add generative AI and Whoa! Deep engagement and ease in student comprehension.”

This year Waddell teaches middle school students in the district's virtual academy where AI helps connect kids' real lives to learning. For example, ChatGPT helped the veteran educator assist a girl she knew was a “Swiftie” struggling to learn symbolism — by using Taylor Swift song lyrics.

Platforms like Curipod and Magic School draw on AI to create presentations, design AI-proof assignments, and craft rubrics, among other tasks. But Waddell also uses ChatGPT directly by “training” the machine with content — it's that easy, she says.

She excitedly discusses plans to consult in retirement to help educators empower students. “I want to be that person who teaches educators how to use this tool because everybody's upskilling, reskilling, unlearning, relearning.”

Waddell understands concerns about cheating and fears of becoming obsolete but says cheating isn't new and great educators bring more value than just content knowledge.

“Educators think. We create. We problem-solve. I need my colleagues to learn how to use this tool to solve real problems we face, with the constraints we have, and allow what (theorist Lev) Vygotsky calls ‘the more knowledgeable other’ to help us fill those gaps.” ▼



SVSU profs: AI can boost creativity

Phillip Hanson had “a bit of an existential crisis” when a new AI image generator emerged 18 months ago. An accomplished painter and digital artist, he realized artificial intelligence could achieve visual effects like his — only much faster.

Having undertaken an art project using the system, called Midjourney, Hanson then made another discovery: leveraging “constrained optimization” — which tightly limits AI offerings in response to a prompt — can spur human creativity rather than stifling or replacing it.

“It’s a delicate balance that streamlines the creative process, allowing for rapid exploration of ideas on the screen — not too many to overwhelm and not too few to limit your vision,” he said.

An art lecturer at Saginaw Valley State University, Hanson and fellow SVSU Associate Professor of Art J. Blake Johnson delivered an ambitious keynote address at MEA’s Higher Education conference last fall to demonstrate AI’s boundless potential alongside its implications and society’s imperatives.

“Fostering an ethical symbiosis between humanity and AI isn’t merely about coding algorithms,” Hanson said. “It’s about instilling a value system that emphasizes the human in the human-machine interface.”

To that end, faculty at SVSU are seeking a National Science Foundation grant to advance AI integration in the university’s computer science and creative disciplines and conduct an empirical study of the impact on student learning outcomes.

“Our initiative is not just about adopting new technologies; it’s about reshaping the educational landscape



J. Blake Johnson (left) and Phillip Hanson, art professors at Saginaw Valley State University, say AI holds great potential for good. Faculty at SVSU are seeking a National Science Foundation grant to advance AI integration and study its impact on student learning outcomes.

to better prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in their professional lives,” Johnson said.

Fears of students misusing technology are understandable, Johnson said. One AI model allows students to upload previous essays they’ve written and train it to write in their voice. But avoidance is impossible: The technology is powerful and advancing.

Instead he and Hanson use AI to develop students’ knowledge, critical thinking and “steering” ability — their skill at interacting with machines to advance their own creativity and problem-solving.

“The thing I want my students to understand is AI won’t take your job; it’s somebody using AI that will take your job,” Johnson said. “It’s best to adapt — let’s stay on top of it.”

AI tools can be programmed to work as tutors on any topic, eliciting a

student’s prior knowledge, explaining concepts to a specified grade level, asking questions and critiquing student responses. Educators can make lessons more inclusive or better at targeting a standard.

The uses are endless — already more than 5,000 AI tools exist, Johnson said. AI can guide students in career exploration and walk them through a job interview — then evaluate their performance.

Wearable AI is on the way, Hanson said, offering tips for newcomers: get the best AI you can afford. Then converse with it. If you get stuck, step back. “You can always ask the AI to help you,” he said.

Soon AI will be solving medical mysteries, Johnson told conference goers. “I believe we can adapt and use AI wisely to serve us and help the world. If we maintain our core values, it certainly can be beneficial to you and students at your colleges, universities, and schools.” ▼

In daily crunch, AI is a time machine

Fourth-year teacher Allison O’Connell challenges herself every day to engage a wide variety of fifth graders in her Kent City classroom and help them grow — whether they are performing at, below or above grade level, English Language learners (ELL), or students with special needs.

It’s not always easy.

“It’s natural for teachers to want to do more for students,” the MEA member said. “But how? We’re already running at maximum overdrive. We’re working way past contract hours. We want to address every need, but when the rubber hits the road there’s just not enough time in the day.”

This year O’Connell has seen a way to scrounge up more minutes: by assigning AI to do some of her routine work. “It doesn’t take me long to grade the spelling test, for example, but would I love to have 20 more minutes in my day? Who wouldn’t?”

She saves more moments by using an AI website for ELL students that a colleague showed her recently. It takes questions she asks of students — such as “What was the best part of your winter break?” — and produces sentence stems for beginning English speakers to answer.

The best part of my winter break was _____. I enjoyed _____ over my winter break.

“It’s something so simple, but it reduces that cognitive load that I think all teachers are constantly carrying throughout the day,” O’Connell said.

In addition, O’Connell glimpses into the future via the University of Michigan Center for Digital Curricula and summer work she took on last

year. Researchers at the UM Center are evaluating how well a ChatGPT grader can give feedback on students’ written work.

After her class wrote fictional adventure stories, O’Connell shared her four-point rubric, samples of work for each level 1-4, and her comments on students’ strengths and weaknesses. Once trained, the computer scored and commented on all student stories.

“Two of my coworkers on my fifth-grade team did this as well, and we couldn’t identify which ones we had written — quite a bit of time had elapsed since we’d graded them,” O’Connell said. “I graded the rest without knowing what the ChatGPT grader would say so I could authentically compare.

“There were minor differences, but nothing significant — a one-point difference here or there, wording I would change — nothing that I would say, ‘Oh, that’s incorrect.’”

O’Connell learned of the UM Center because Kent City teachers utilize open-source curricular materials designed there since the onset of COVID. Called Roadmap, the freely available K-8 learning platform of lessons, content and tools is digital, interactive and collaborative.

Roadmap is not AI-driven, but students enjoy engaging with the materials — developed by subject and grade — because they choose how they can learn and demonstrate what they know, O’Connell says. Last summer she joined the team of educators writing and vetting Roadmap lessons.

Now AI tools are being explored to possibly embed in Roadmap — such as the ChatGPT grader — which



Early career educator Allison O’Connell sees hope in time-saving advantages of AI to help educators do great work and sustain careers.

could deliver targeted feedback to students and teachers quickly and accurately. Such information can help O’Connell better help kids, and that’s what drives her every day.

An Ohio native who found she wanted to be an educator in a high school club, O’Connell loves teaching but worries about career demands if someday she starts a family of her own.

“ChatGPT gives me hope to sustain a career — that I can accommodate students, weave in creativity, and make content engaging without being overwhelmed spending hours upon hours doing it.” ♡

Rural Michigan students travel the world



By Heather Palo
MEA ARP Organizer

Last year MEA member Marissa Rodriguez took ninth graders on a tour of World War I trenches, and she transported sixth graders to countries where certain products began the manufacturing process — then brought them across the globe to watch those consumer items journey to store shelves.

A social studies teacher in Scottville's Mason County Central (MCC) School District, Rodriguez used a new Immersive Room — which opened at the high school just over a year ago — to better engage students in history and economics lessons so they understand more and retain what they learn.

With interactive touch-screen video on three sides of students in the room and under their feet — plus sensory details such as sounds and even smells piped in — the Immersive Room is a type of Virtual Reality that can create a four-dimensional experience for kids in all grade levels studying all subjects.

“I feel like it made the learning deeper for students,” Rodriguez said.

Enriching student learning was the goal when leaders in the rural district east of Ludington dedicated federal American Rescue Plan funding to install the Immersive Room for K-12 use, according to Miguel Quinteros, the district's technology coach and a MEA-Retired member educator.

“COVID pushed people to think outside the box,” Quinteros said. “This is all about making learning more fun, relevant and interactive.”

Championed by President Joe Biden, the American Rescue Plan in 2021 boosted the Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSER) Fund to help schools address ongoing challenges arising from the global pandemic. Michigan schools received \$5.6 billion in ESSER grants with Sept. 30, 2024 as the final deadline for ESSER spending.

In 2022 MCC became the first K-12 district in the country to install the learning system from Echo Education Technology, part of a larger company that is already a leader in providing realistic medical simulation equipment and technology worldwide — long a staple of health care training.

District needs assessments and surveys indicated a desire to use ARP

funds to benefit every student and spark interest and excitement. “We wanted to do anything we could to motivate learning and have students want to come to school,” said Angie Taylor, the district's director of state and federal programs.

In addition to sensing flowing air, smells and surround sounds, participants get a realistic experience from being immersed on three sides by high-quality video beaming from seven projectors, Taylor said, adding for example: “There is an ocean presentation that takes you deep into the water, and you can feel the motion.”

Many children in the 1,200-student district come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have never traveled outside of Mason County, Quinteros said.

“We cannot afford to take students on many field trips, so now we use this technology to create experiences that otherwise would not be possible for them.”

For example, in the space of a day or two the Immersive Room allows different students to visit locations, events and time periods as varied as the moon, the Civil War era, an active volcano, the Mackinac Bridge, an art

ld and solar system in immersive Room



(3rd from left to far right) teacher Marissa Rodriguez; Angie Taylor, MCC's director of state and federal programs; Marcus Antcliff of Echo Education Technology; and Miguel Quinteros, MCC technology coach and the room's facilitator; teacher Sara Morrow.

museum, a World Cup soccer game and the imaginative world of the popular children's story *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson.

First graders in MEA member Sara Morrow's class went for a lesson on moons in the solar system, lunar eclipses, tides, and more. As students entered, surrounded by our moon's lunar landscape, their steps left footprints in the moon's surface below their feet.

They learned facts from a holographic narrator and got a better sense of the difference in gravity between the earth and moon by "tossing" interactive images of concrete blocks and watching them float down slowly to the moon's surface.

The room was silent as astronaut Neil Armstrong walked on the moon and spoke his famous words — "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" — with the lunar landing module in the background. Students then took turns pressing touch points to prompt discussion and checks for understanding.

At the end of the lesson, Quinteros included a fun activity, dividing students into two teams that competed to destroy the most alien space ships

by tapping the cartoon objects as they moved on-screen. In a final calming move, students colored on-screen butterflies, stars and flowers with hands and fingers.

Morrow said her students love visiting the room, and it's wonderful to have a resource that serves to enhance curriculum at every grade level. "The students benefit from having different experiences that tie into the content in an interactive way," Morrow said.

As the district's tech coach, Quinteros was a champion of the project from its inception and serves as the room's facilitator. Teachers sign out the room and select the lesson they want to cover. Quinteros accesses content created by the developer and other users and creates some material himself.

For a high school lesson on the Mackinac Bridge, Quinteros filmed a trip across the span using a special 360-degree camera. Aerial footage from high above the bridge was also

incorporated to provide vivid imagery as the high schoolers learned about Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

Learning material is embedded via the room's numerous screen sensors which allow students to touch a spot in a video — including in the floor under their feet at times — to interact with objects or zero in on information and questions related to the lesson.

District leaders anticipate in the near future using the room for professional learning by staff and to build partnerships and outreach in the community. In addition, MCC plans to offer immersive experiences for local senior citizens and add inter-generational activities for seniors and students.

"Literally the options for this technology are endless," Quinteros said. ▼

Editor's Note: At mea.org/arp, find related stories on various ways Michigan districts are spending federal ESSER money. For information or to share your story, contact Heather Palo, MEA ARP organizer, at hpalo@mea.org.

Labor duo learns lessons together

Deborah Robertson had a tough go in her first year as president of the Harper Woods Education Association in 2021. She had only been a building rep for several months before becoming vice president, and only served in that role a few months before stepping into the top post.

“My first year of being a union president was an emotional roller coaster for me, and we were going through negotiations,” Robertson said. “I was figuring things out, and I was letting people get to me because I wanted to be right for everybody and I wanted people to like me.”

A number of factors helped her get through that difficult stretch and emerge into strength and calm — now in the second year of a solid contract with a powerful sense of who she wants to be as a leader.

“I had to take M-E out of the equation,” she said. “It can’t be about me. What you do will never please everybody, so I’m not here to please. I’m here to do my job, and that’s what I had to learn. At the end of the day, I want it to be remembered that I fought for what was right.”

Robertson was assisted by a skillful MEA Executive Director, Timm Couto, who led a strong bargaining team to a five-year deal that included a total of 15% in on-schedule increases plus additional steps to bring members previously frozen to their rightful salary step.

Couto then steered Robertson toward an opportunity to get extensive training in unionism and leadership through the Labor School at Wayne State University. Robertson seized the chance to apply for a

scholarship to attend the online certificate program.

Even more exciting was the partner she asked to join her: Robertson’s daughter, Kiarra Whitelow, is president of the support staff union in Harper Woods representing custodians and bus drivers. Together they became the first mother-daughter duo to graduate from Wayne State’s Labor School.

“That’s a gift that mothers dream about, doing something you love and having your daughter join you,” she said. “I’m proud to be the first African-American woman to be president in Harper Woods; I’m honored to be president along with my daughter, and I’m blessed to go to Labor School with her.”

Both women received the scholarship and completed 10 Labor School courses between September and May to earn the certificate last spring at a cost of only \$25 per class. They now are attending the Advanced Labor Academy together in pursuit of another certificate.

“Labor School gave me the historical perspective; it gave me the futuristic perspective, and it taught me how to engage daily,” Robertson said. “Before that, I had the desire and the motivation. I needed help with the tools.”

Like her mother, Whitelow took an unusual route to leadership of AFSCME Local 1228. She began her career in the district in 2013 working in food service at the high school after graduating from Grand Valley State University.

At the time Whitelow was working on a master’s degree in literacy at

the former Marygrove College, which she since completed. Meanwhile, she moved from food service to working as a special education parapro under a teacher who guided her with teaching strategies and other accommodation tips.

“I loved being a parapro; I really did,” Whitelow said. “It was great working with the kids, but in the end I became a full-time custodian because it was a union job with benefits and I needed health insurance.”

New paraeducators in the district are employees of a third-party company, but the unionized custodians and bus drivers receive the same health care benefits as the teachers negotiate, which is MESSA. “People need health insurance, and MESSA is great,” she said.

She soon stepped up to fill a leadership void in the local. In the future, Whitelow is considering seeking a job as a reading specialist, which might allow her to join MEA — something Robertson dreams to see come true. If that happens, the daughter’s path to the classroom would mirror her mother’s.

Robertson spent many years as a paraeducator, lured into the role by a principal who saw her skill in working with children when she volunteered in her son’s elementary classroom years ago.

She slowly completed a graduate degree at Marygrove while working. It just so happened that she and her daughter earned master’s degrees at the same time and walked the stage for diplomas together.

“It took quite a while for me,” she said.



Deborah Robertson and Kiarra Whitelow together earned certificates from Wayne State University’s Labor School last year. The mother-daughter duo are presidents of the teacher and support staff unions at Harper Woods School District in Wayne County.

people are welcomed into the fold, Robertson said.

She is fond of quoting a line from her favorite movie which she’s seen dozens of times — *Hidden Figures*: “We either get there together, or we don’t get there at all.”

That sentiment is rising in popular culture, Whitelow added, evidenced by union organizing and job actions in diverse industries across the country. She was particularly heartened to see solidarity on the picket lines of Hollywood writers, actors and directors last year. She is a writer with big dreams.

“People look at labor like it’s separate, but the writers, the teachers, the auto workers — they’re all fighting for things that should be as simple as breathing, and they want to be heard.”

Whitelow knew some labor history but has been moved by the study of how people died to win rights and protections we now take for granted, a legacy that makes her want to leave her AFSCME unit in better shape than she found it, she added.

“To see other people fighting the good fight gives me something to hold on to,” she said. “I’m the type of person that can rejoice in anybody else’s win because your win is my win. If you can do it, I can do it.”

Robertson agreed. “Unionism is breathing new life and it’s building back up. The rebirth we are witnessing is phenomenal, and to learn how to build labor strength alongside my daughter is a tremendous blessing.” ♡

Robertson teaches social studies and is one of those educators able to hold students to high standards but also build strong connections because they know she cares, her daughter said. “They have an affection for her,” Whitelow said.

If students aren’t listening in class, Robertson says she blames “Napoleonism,” and in response they sometimes repeat one of her aphorisms: “I say, ‘You’re not respecting me because I’m a little,’ and they go, ‘Oh, here she goes. Come on now. Let’s hear what she got to say, because *people want to be heard*.’”

“People want to be heard,” she repeated. “They want to be heard more than anything, and that is true in the union also.”

Mother and daughter come from an extended family that migrated north and escaped poverty through union jobs, including United Auto Workers, Teamsters and Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers. Robertson recalls her father explaining unions growing up.

She is a longtime student of labor leader Walter Reuther and a fierce defender of the collective bargaining

agreement. “Nobody — not the superintendent, not central office, not Timm at MEA or Deborah at HWEA — is bigger than the CBA. Why do you think we put blood, sweat and tears in to negotiate that?”

Her convictions have only been strengthened by deeper learning at Labor School. From those lessons, this year or next, she’s hoping to organize a breakfast to bring together the strength of union leaders, district administrators, and city leaders to reinforce school-community connections.

“I want to unite us together because for so long as the Blacks moved in and the Whites moved out, the community has not always embraced this school,” Robertson said. “But as homeowners and residents, we have goals and vision in common, and we need to be partners if we want to bring it to reality.”

Unions demonstrated that lesson in the past as they welcomed Black people, women, Latinos and others to build power and remain relevant amid the civil rights movement decades ago. Today those bonds must be renewed as LGBTQ+

Late SVSU union leader honored for legacy, estate gift

Deb Rickert joined the support staff association when she began working at Saginaw Valley State University three decades ago, but she wasn't active in the union for the first 15 years of her career as an administrative assistant — not until she testified at an arbitration hearing.

“It was then I realized that labor has a voice and that voice can be used to help people and make a better working environment for many employees,” Rickert said.

Rickert stepped up to be a union steward and came under the guidance of a legendary figure: Gloria Wagener, longtime president and a founder of the SVSU Support Staff Association (SSA), led Rickert to join MEA committees at the state level to learn, grow and extend the reach of her voice.

“Gloria understood that it takes each one of us to contribute and be actively involved in our union to keep it strong and resilient,” she said.

Now the SSA vice president, Rickert spoke at a November ceremony honoring Wagener, who died in 2016, and her husband who also worked at SVSU and died in 2022. The couple's estate delivered a staggering \$650,000 gift to the support staff union's endowed scholarship.

Renamed the Gloria J. and Douglas E. Wagener Support Staff Association Endowed Scholarship, the fund was started in 2012 to invest in the education of SSA members, their spouses and children or grandchildren.

The fund had been delivering about \$1,000 a year in scholarships without

touching the principal amount. With the Wageners' sizable gift, that figure should increase to more than \$25,000 a year in perpetuity, according to the SVSU Foundation.

Gloria Wagener began working at SVSU in 1974 where she met her husband Doug, an electrician who worked in the theater department. The couple valued education and dedicated their lives to the university they loved, its students, and their staff colleagues who made it run.

When Gloria was thwarted in early efforts to secure benefits and improved working conditions for support staff employees, she was among those who organized the SSA in 1980. She led it for 20 years, while also serving in leadership roles at the state and national levels of MEA and NEA.

Known for her encyclopedic knowledge of both SVSU and the SSA, “Gloria was always finding a way to empower and strengthen those around her,” said Saun Strobel, a former president of the SSA who now works at MEA. “She was a confidant, friend, cheerleader, mentor, challenger and advisor.”

Anne Garcia, another former president, said she was mentored by Gloria who had an “eidactic memory” for details and dates. “It drove me crazy, but there's nothing I wouldn't give to have her back here telling me dates and contract articles and pushing me to do what needs to be done.”

Scholarship recipient Caleb Zastrow, whose mother Amy Zastrow is an MEA member administrative assistant at SVSU, said financial



Pictured at a ceremony honoring the Wageners (left to right): SSA President Kathleen Chantaca-Kubczak, former MEA Vice President Nancy Strachan, SSA Vice President Deb Rickert, MEA Vice President Brett Smith.

help allows him to accept leadership opportunities. In one such role, he worked with numerous SVSU secretaries and facilities staff.

“I got to see firsthand how they all work together to make this an exceptional place for students to further their education,” Zastrow said.

Kathleen Chantaca-Kubczak, current SSA president, told those gathered at the ceremony that SSA members were “flabbergasted and proud” when they heard of the Wageners' generous gift to the scholarship fund.

“They're legends,” Chantaca-Kubczak said of Gloria and Doug. “What better way to be an example than to give back — not only to the people that are around you but to the place that you worked and cared about so much.” ▾



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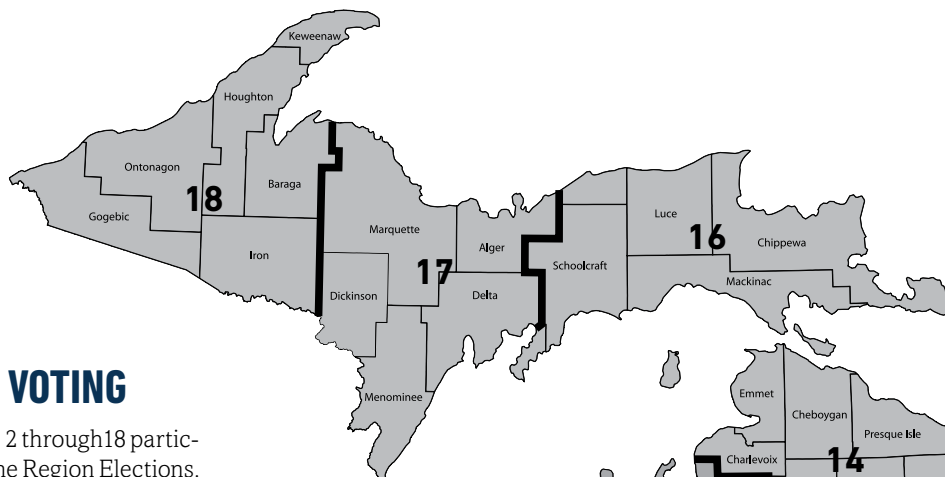
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REGION ELECTION INFORMATION



ELECTRONIC VOTING

Members of regions 2 through 18 participate in MEA's Online Region Elections.

Get involved by voting for your MEA Board members and your state and national delegates anytime between 8 a.m. **Friday, March 1, 2024** and 3:59 p.m. **Friday, March 15, 2024**. Sign in at mymea.org/voting/vote and follow the prompts. Members access the website using the same username and password for the Members Only website. If you have any problems, please contact the MEA IT department at 517-337-5440. The phone is staffed from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. If you call after hours, please leave a message and someone will get back with you as soon as possible.

There will be a continuous ballot for ESP members who will begin with the statewide Region 50 ballot and continue with their region's ballot.

Positions elected by acclamation at the December region meetings will be noted on the ballot.

Online election rules and an explanation of the process were forwarded to local presidents and region election chairs the last week of January 2024.

Election procedures required to be followed in the regions comply with relevant federal laws.

ELIGIBLE VOTERS

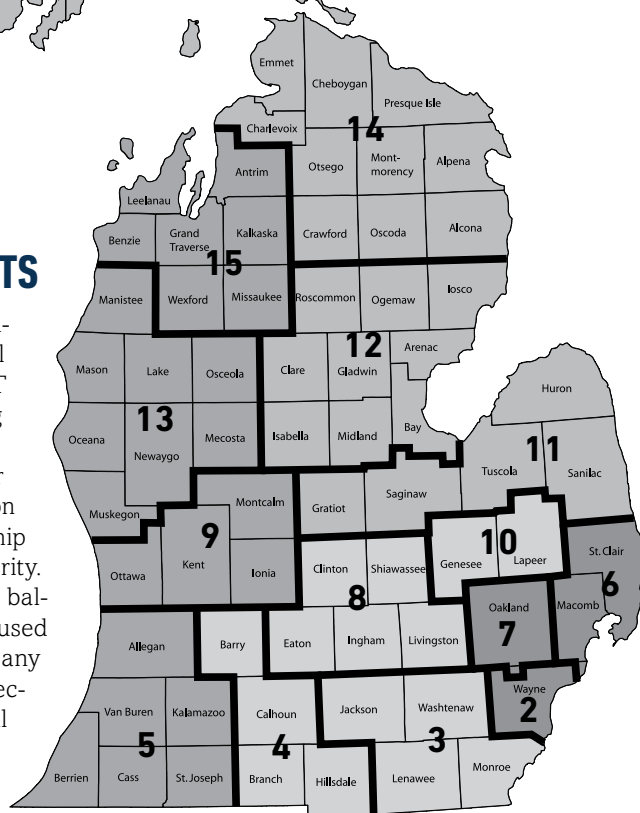
Voter eligibility listings will be created from information received by the MEA Membership Department from the local associations by Feb. 7, 2024.

PAPER BALLOTS

All elections conducted by MEA will utilize the MEA IT electronic voting system to allow the opportunity for greater participation in our membership and election integrity. This means paper ballots should not be used at the local level for any March 2024 region elections. If an individual is unable to access the online voting system during the voting period, a paper ballot may be requested by contacting MEA IT at 517-337-5440 or by sending an email to meait@mea.org. All members must be in good standing to be eligible to vote.

ABSENTEE BALLOTING

The region at-large election is an online election, however, eligible voters who are not able to vote online during the election period may notify Rebbecca Ernst of their need to vote by absentee ballot. Notification can be sent by email to renst@mea.org or by mail to MEA Executive Office,



1350 Kendale Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48823. The request must be in writing, include the specific reason necessitating an absentee ballot, and be received no later than Feb. 21. Eligible voters requesting an absentee ballot, and complying with the above requirements, shall be mailed an absentee ballot by the MEA Executive Office. An absentee ballot must be returned by U.S. mail and received no later than the last day of the election. Late absentee ballots shall be unopened and set aside as void ballots. ▼

CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH REGION ELECTIONS

REGION 2

Position 1–MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Don Harris, Wayne-Westland E

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

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Dawn Pierz, Wyandotte E

Position 3–MEA RA At-Large Delegate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Lauren Altenbernt, Van Buren E

Position 4–MEA RA At-Large Alternate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Christine Lakatos, Livonia E; #Amanda Moran, Dearborn Heights E

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

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Lauren Altenbernt, Van Buren E

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: #Christine Lakatos, Livonia E

Position 8–EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Dan Danic, Gibraltar E

Position 9–EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10–ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

3 positions, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

3 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 11–ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12–EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 13–EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 4/1/24: NNR

Position 14–ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 15–ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Steve Conn, swconn80@hotmail.com

REGION 3

Position 1–MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Percy Brown, Ann Arbor P

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: Nency Fields, Ann Arbor E; Lee Haselschwerdt, Dundee E

Position 3–MEA RA At-Large Delegate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Jim Brousseau, Milan E; #Nency Fields, Ann Arbor E

Position 4–MEA RA At-Large Alternate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Crystal Willit, Monroe ISD CMOPT

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

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

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Harriet Moore-Kovac, Washtenaw CC E; #Sheri Powers, Adrian E

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 8–EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 9–EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10–ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Santino Gaitan, Jackson ISD CFMOT

3 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 11–ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12–EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

6 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

2 positions*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 13–EA NEA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14–ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Crystal Willit, Monroe ISD CMOPT

3 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Santino Gaitan, Jackson ISD CFMOT

Position 15–ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Jim Brousseau, jbrousseau@mea.org

REGION 4

Position 1–MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Rachel Foreman, Harper Creek E

Position 3–MEA RA At-Large Delegate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: #Willandra Macklin-Malone, Battle Creek E

Position 4–MEA RA At-Large Alternate–Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

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

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Anthony Pennock, Battle Creek E

3 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 8–EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Jonathan Milliman, Bronson E

Key:

Elected by acclamation – denoted with “#”

No nominations received – denoted with “NNR”

Minority 3-1(g) position – denoted with (*)

Funded NEA RA position – denoted with \$

Multiple candidates – listed in alphabetical order

CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH REGION ELECTIONS

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Sarah
Garrett, Battle Creek O
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$
2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR
1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Sarah
Garrett, Battle Creek O

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate
2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Lance Hawblitz,
lancehawblitz@yahoo.com

REGION 5

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA
RA Delegate \$
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: Jeffrey
Bopp, South Haven E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Caryn Blackburn, Martin E; #Damon
Blackburn, Martin E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Roy
Freeman, Dowagiac Union CMT
1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$
3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Jeffrey Bopp, South Haven E

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR
1 position, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Abilyn Janke, Brandywine E

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR
2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
4 positions, immediate through
3/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/25: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate
2 positions, immediate through
3/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/25: NNR

Elections Chair: Mary Cooper,
coopermary29@gmail.com

REGION 6

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Eric Kehres, Utica E; #Heather Schulz,
Lakeview-St Clair Sh E

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24,
same seat as above: #Eric Kehres, Utica E;
#Heather Schulz, Lakeview-St Clair Sh E

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Jody
Becker, Port Huron E

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Patrick Connell, Port Huron E

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

2 positions*, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Jacqueline Shelton, Grosse Pointe E;
#Rebecca Wendel, Port Huron E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Alan Demski, St Clair Co ISD E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Stephanie Urban, Algonac E

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Leslie Bailey-Leonard, Marysville O

1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Ericka Noblett, Lakeview-St Clair Sh P

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24,
same seat as above: #Ericka Noblett,
Lakeview-St Clair Sh P

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Stephanie Urban, Algonac E

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Ericka Noblett, Lakeview-St Clair Sh P

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Leslie Bailey-Leonard, Marysville O

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

1 position, immediate through
3/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Cara Konicek,
carakonicek@gmail.com

REGION 7

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA
RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Lisa
Welch, South Lyon E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24:
Thomas Boomer, Northville E; Kecia
Jackson Jones, Pontiac P

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

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24:
Robert Gaines III, Farmington OP; Fred
McFadden Jr., Pontiac P

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Amanda Maki, Clarkston T; #Candice
Ridley, Pontiac E

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

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

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Candice Ridley, Pontiac E

Position 6—EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 7—EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 7/14/26: #Chandra Madaffer, Novi E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: #Deborah Terry, Walled Lake E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Amanda Maki, Clarkston T

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Amanda Maki, Clarkston T

3 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Kecia Jackson Jones, jaxjokeci@gmail.com

REGION 8

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Eva Menefee, Lansing CC E

Position 2—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Jeffrey Wilson, MSU APA E/ESP

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Curlada Eure-Harris, Lansing CC E; #Alfonso Salais, Jr., Lansing E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Bryan Wertz, Ovid-Elsie E

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Allyson McCann, Grand Ledge P

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: #Bonnie Rattai, Stockbridge FOPT; #Anthony Steenbeke, Stockbridge FOPT

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Mary McKern, Ovid-Elsie E; #Bryan Wertz, Ovid-Elsie E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Anthony Steenbeke, Stockbridge FOPT; #Andrea Wells, Eaton Rapids CFMOP

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: #Bonnie Rattai, Stockbridge FOPT

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: #Kelly Davis, Lansing O

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/24: #Bridgette Gonzalez, Holt P

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: Nicole Clear, Stockbridge FOPT; Allyson McCann, Grand Ledge P

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: #Anthony Steenbeke, Stockbridge FOPT

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Nicole Clear, Stockbridge FOPT

Elections Chair: Jeffrey Wilson, parliamentdestruction@gmail.com

REGION 9

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: #Erik Bye, Grand Haven E

1 position, immediate through 7/14/24: Jeff Pietrowski, Grandville E; Wendy Winston, Grand Rapids E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24, same seat as above: Joseph (Jeff) Pietrowski, Grandville E; Wendy Winston, Grand Rapids E

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

4 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Molly Marshall, Byron Center E; #Pamela Seales, Grand Rapids E; #Dan Slagter, Grand Rapids E; #Troy Ungrey, Grandville E

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

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

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Troy Ungrey, Grandville E

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: #Dan Slagter, Grand Rapids E

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

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: #Juan Gonzalez, Jenison E; #Cara Williams-Gardner, Grand Rapids E

Position 7—EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 7/14/26: #Aaron Eling, Grand Haven E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Erin Porter, Carson City E; #Mike Porter, Carson City E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Jennifer Davlin, Portland E

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH REGION ELECTIONS

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Stephanie Ferrel, Kentwood CFMPT

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

4 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

4 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

3 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

3 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

3 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

5 positions, 3 yr. term begins 4/1/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 4/1/24: NNR

Elections Chair: Wendy Winston,
wendy.winston@att.net

REGION 10

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

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Felicia
Naimark, Flint E; Trishanda Williams,
Flint E

Position 7—EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 7/14/26:
#Brett Smith, Linden E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/25:
#Vishaun Ezell, Westwood Heights E;
#Gwendalyn Thomas, Westwood
Heights E

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Marcia Turner, Beecher E

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Cheri Sutherland, Beecher OP

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Vishaun Ezell, Westwood Heights E;
#Gwendalyn Thomas, Westwood
Heights E

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: #Vishaun Ezell, Westwood
Heights E; #Gwendalyn Thomas,
Westwood Heights E

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Stacey Hittle,
kamandkara@me.com

REGION 11

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA
RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24:
#Marci LaValley, Unionville-Sebewaing E

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Marci LaValley, Unionville-Sebewaing E

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Dawn Perez, Swan Valley E

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

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

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Christina Mulford, Saginaw Twp E

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

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Dawn Perez, Swan Valley E

4 positions*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

3 positions, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Daryl Lynn Rodabaugh, Vassar E; #Ryan
Schian, Vassar E #Toni Scribner, Vassar E

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

5 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Tracy Brightman, Vassar E; #Danielle
Cuddie, Tuscola ISD E; #Amy Krug,
Reese E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Toni
Scribner, Vassar E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Daryl Lynn Rodabaugh, Vassar E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: #Daryl Lynn Rodabaugh,
Vassar E

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26:
Jill Eremia, Tuscola ISD E

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Jennifer Shelito, Tuscola ISD COPT

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Jennifer Shelito, jshelito@mymea.org

REGION 12

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: Rick Meeth, Bay City E

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Kathleen Chantaca Kubczak, Saginaw Valley St U CM; Ana Geib, Midland City E; Deb Rickert, Saginaw Valley St U CM

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

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: Maureen Eke, Central Mich Univ E; Ana Geib, Midland City E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Jenny VanDuinen, jjvandui@svsu.edu

REGION 13

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24: Melissa Treppa, Montague E

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Sue Federico, Reeths-Puffer OP; Stacy VandenBosch, Whitehall E

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

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

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

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

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Karla Wheeler, Oakridge CFMT

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same seat as above: NNR

1 position, immediate through 8/31/25: Sue Federico, Reeths-Puffer OP

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Sue Federico, sfederico@mymea.org

REGION 14

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

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

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: #Timothy McFalda, Mio-AuSable E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, immediate through 8/31/26: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH REGION ELECTIONS

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Region 14 MAHE—EA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Region 14 MAHE—EA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Greta Brock,
gbrock@mea.org

REGION 15

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

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

2 positions*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

3 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position, immediate through
8/31/24: NNR

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: NNR

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
8/31/25: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Not Available

REGION 16

Position 1—MEA Board of Directors/NEA
RA Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 7/15/24:
#Andrew Long, St Ignace E

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Stacy Geyer, DeTour E

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

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Andrew Long, St Ignace E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: #Andrew Long, St Ignace E

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Alyssa Rogers, Brimley E

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Anna Wilson, Lake Superior St Univ
CFGMO

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Christina Messer, Lake Superior St Univ
CFGMO

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster
Alternate

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Elections Chair: Al Beamish,
a-beamish@mymea.org

REGION 17

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—
Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24:
#Paulette Pepin, Gladstone E

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

2 positions*, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Erinn Parker, Stephenson E; #Paulette
Pepin, Gladstone E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Erinn
Parker, Stephenson E; #Kimberly Wygant,
Menominee ISD E

1 position, immediate through 8/31/24:
#Victoria Snyder, North Central E

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24, same
seat as above: #Victoria Snyder, North
Central E

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26:
#Nicole Peddycord, Iron Mountain E;
#Elizabeth Gudwer, North Central E

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26:
#Christopher Lund, Delta Schoolcraft ISD
CMOP

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster
Alternate \$

2 positions, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through
3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immediate through
8/31/26: NNR

Schedule your free annual checkup today

Last month, you probably made some healthy New Year's resolutions. Why not continue that healthy streak and schedule your annual physical today to help get 2024 off to the right start?


We at MESSA care about your health and well-being. That's why we want you to stay on top of your health.

February is American Heart Month and National Cancer Prevention Month, a moment to raise awareness about the two leading causes of death in the United States — heart disease and cancer.

It's also a great time to put your MESSA benefits to work.

At MESSA, we cover one physical every calendar year for members and their dependents, making it easy to prioritize your health. This preventive checkup is free under every MESSA plan if you see an in-network provider.

Often, we are so busy with the tasks of everyday life that we hit the pause button on our health. However, regular checkups are necessary to live a full and healthy life. Routine physicals can help identify early health concerns and can be a lifesaver.

If you need help finding an in-network doctor, call us at 800-336-0013 or use our Find Care tool at messa.org/FindCare. 



*By Ross Wilson,
MESSA Executive Director*



CANDIDATES IN THE MARCH REGION ELECTIONS

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Region 17 MAHE—EA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Nanci Love, Bay De Noc CC E

Region 17 MAHE—EA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 4/1/24: #Ronald Pearson, Bay De Noc CC E

Elections Chair: Paulette Pepin, paulettelarson@chartermi.net

REGION 18

Position 3—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 position*, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Eric Ghiggia, West Iron County E

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Timothy Routheaux, Baraga Twp E

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: #John Lorensen, Ironwood CFMOPT

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

1 position*, immediate through 3/31/26: NNR

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: #Stephen Elenich, Copper Country ISD CFMOPT

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immediate through 3/31/26: #Chantel Spear, Ironwood CFMOPT

Elections Chair: Steve Elenich, selenich@copperisd.org

REGION 50

Region 50—ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$

1 position, immediate through 8/31/26: Brittani Brisker, Bloomfield Hills OP; Dana Bruton, Farmington OP; Nicole Clear, Stockbridge FOPT

1 position, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Brittani Brisker, Bloomfield Hills OP; Dana Bruton, Farmington OP; Nicole Clear, Stockbridge FOPT; Paula McConnell, Utica P; Antonella Piccirilli, Utica P; Deb Rickert, Saginaw Valley St U CM

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

1 position*, immediate through 8/31/25: Brittani Brisker, Bloomfield Hills OP; Dana Bruton, Farmington OP; Nicole Clear, Stockbridge FOPT

2 positions, 3 yr. term begins 9/1/24: Dana Bruton, Farmington OP; Brittani Brisker, Bloomfield Hills OP; Nikki Clear, Stockbridge FOPT; Paula McConnell, Utica P; Antonella Piccirilli, Utica P; Deb Rickert, Saginaw Valley St U CM

Key:

Elected by acclamation – denoted with “#”
No nominations received – denoted with “NNR”
Minority 3-1(g) position – denoted with (*)
Funded NEA RA position – denoted with \$
Multiple candidates – listed in alphabetical order

In praise of pension tax rollback



ME Vice President Brett Smith thanked lawmakers and Gov. Whitmer alongside MEA-Retired President Kay Walker-Telma (pictured).



ME member Amy Pavelka says legislative changes have brought hope.



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and state Rep. Kristian Grant (D-Grand Rapids) talk to the media at MEA offices in Ada.

Retired educator Isabell Nazar says a new law that will save her pension from being taxed will allow her to upgrade hearing aids to better enjoy the music she loves making as a singer.

A board member of MEA-Retired and former 38-year science teacher in Homer, Nazar was among dozens of retired educators who joined Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and several lawmakers at MEA offices in Ada to celebrate the law which begins phasing out the unfair retirement tax this year.

Many retirees who need a hearing aid can't afford one at all, Nazar said: "Having \$1,000 back to spend on basic needs will be an absolute godsend for people."

In remarks to the crowd and assembled media, Whitmer said she prioritized the retiree tax change since taking office in 2019 but couldn't get it done without partners in the Legislature who agreed it was unfair to pull the rug out from under retirees living on fixed incomes.

"It wasn't until 2023 with a new Legislature that we were able to get this over the finish line," Whitmer said to applause. "With the first Democratic

majority in 40 years, we've rolled back the retirement tax on seniors, saving half a million households an average of \$1,000 a year."

As a state senator in 2011, Whitmer opposed moves by Gov. Rick Snyder and the Republican-controlled Legislature to finance a massive corporate tax cut by taxing public-employee pensions, slashing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low-income working families, and gutting education funding.

"Three moves that were wrong until we rectified them in these last couple years," Whitmer said, also pointing to fixes that include record investments in public education and a quintupling of the EITC — now called the Working Families Tax Credit — to return thousands of dollars to households where more than half of the state's children reside.

"While everyone talks about children being our future, not every state walks the walk — and here in Michigan we do," she said.

The plan known as Lowering MI Costs phases in the pension tax rollback over four years with incremental

changes beginning with tax year 2023 depending on taxpayer age. By tax year 2026, the pre-2012 retirement and pension subtraction will be restored for most taxpayers in Michigan.

MEA-Retired President Kay Walker-Telma invited a still-active school counselor, Amy Pavelka, to be her guest at the event because the change affects all educators.

"My dear friend Amy makes a difference in the lives of students, staff and families every day as an award-winning counselor at nearby Forest Hills Eastern Middle School," Walker-Telma said. "She will be eligible to join the ranks of the retired in the near future, and when she does she will join the hundreds of thousands who will be positively impacted by this legislation."

Pavelka said she attended because the governor's leadership and the Legislature's support have resulted in meaningful education improvements. "It fosters hope every day when we come in to do that wonderful, important work with our future leaders," Pavelka said. ▾



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We know it's stressful and challenging at times. Here's what MESSA provides to give you some peace of mind, too:

- Access to the best doctors and hospitals in the nation.
- Free worksite wellness programs to support your physical and mental health.
- Comprehensive mental health benefits for you and your covered dependents.
- Personal support from MESSA's Member Services specialists and your local field representative, who can help you navigate the complex world of health care.

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