

THE MICHIGAN ESP BILL OF RIGHTS

MEA • Voice



Letter to members

After budget, what is next

Lawmakers came together this month to pass an education budget that provides needed investments for students and educators. After months of delays and missed deadlines, the budget provides positive improvements for our schools in some areas while falling short in others.

A \$10,050 foundation grant. Continued student mental health support and free school meals. A 25% funding boost for at-risk students in lower-income rural and urban school districts. \$203 million to directly improve school employee pay, in light of raises being consumed by increased out-of-pocket health insurance costs.

All these investments and more will help Michigan students succeed, as well as the educators who work with them every day.

The budget contains significant flaws, however. State support for district retirement payments has been reduced, and \$400 million in higher education costs have been shifted onto the School Aid Fund to free up General Fund dollars for road projects.

This practice forces PreK-12 and higher education to compete for the same limited resources, an approach that undermines both sectors – and fails to provide a sustainable path for preparing students for post-secondary opportunities and long-term economic success.

Addressing Michigan's outdated school funding structure under Proposal A is long overdue and necessary to prevent these kinds of harmful trade-offs and ensure adequate, equitable and stable funding for the future.

Now that this year's budget is finalized, we urge state leaders to keep working to address some of the other emergent issues affecting schools throughout Michigan. Limiting student cell phone use during instructional time. Addressing growing issues with violent and threatening student behaviors. Providing flexibility to the high school curriculum to better meet individual student needs.

For the sake of every Michigan student, we urge lawmakers to rise above partisan politics and keep working together on real solutions to the challenges facing Michigan's public schools. **V**

THE MICHIGAN ESP BILL OF RIGHTS

1. Thriving wages
2. Full benefits
3. Workplace safety
4. Secure retirement
5. Job advancement
6. Job security

PAGES 13-19

40%

The percentage of educators responding to MEA's 2025 back-to-school survey who report having "a second or third job in addition to your job working in public education."



Chandra Madafferi,
MEA President & CEO



Brett Smith,
Vice President



Aaron Eling,
Secretary-Treasurer



A new bargaining team from a growing unit representing certificated staff at the intermediate school district in Traverse City achieved a hard-fought, significant contract win. Read more, pages 20-22.



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



On the cover: School support staff are building strength and backing for the Michigan ESP Bill of Rights campaign. Meet six of our captains. Photos by Tom Gennara, stories on pages 13-19.

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MEA Voice

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ICYMI: Survey on health care

A statewide MEA member survey showed educators are paying on average \$200 more per month in out-of-pocket health care costs this year, highlighting why House Bill 6058 must be delivered to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer for signature without further delay.

HB 6058 fixes a state law passed in 2011 that capped the amount employers could pay toward health care costs for educators and other public employees.

The Legislature passed the measure last December, but new House leadership in January refused to send it to the governor as required by the state Constitution. A lawsuit by Senate Democrats is working through the courts.

More than 1,700 members answered the MEA survey, and results were released to news media in September.

“The stall of House Bill 6058 has had a massive detrimental impact on our family,” said Kyle Saari, a teacher in Negaunee Public Schools. “At the beginning of last year, I was excited because we finally received a 5% raise, but that was wiped out by a 12+% increase in health care costs. As a result, my take home pay became nearly less than it was without the raise.”

Read the survey release and follow updates at mea.org/fixhealthcare.

Quotables

“It is unfair that I commit so much to my community by educating the next generation while I struggle to pay for medical expenses for my own family. I teach children with special needs, and I have my own child with medical needs that I am increasingly paying more for.”

MEA member Emily Friedman, a special education teacher in Troy, who had to switch health care plans and take on two additional jobs because of rising health care costs, quoted in an MEA press release from a member survey.



Above and Beyond

MEA member Melissa Wheeler, a social worker at Beer Middle School in Warren, has been named Michigan School Social Worker of the Year by the Michigan Association of School Social Workers (MASSW).

A 15-year veteran of Warren Consolidated School District, Wheeler has implemented peer-to-peer programs and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiatives in every school where she's worked.

“I see my role as building bridges — between students and resources, between families and schools, and between challenges and solutions,” Wheeler said. “What I love most about working in public schools is the chance to be part of a diverse community where every day brings a new opportunity to support and empower young people during such an important stage of their lives.”

Rochester school honors Escanaba man

MEA member Matt Cottone, a Rochester social studies teacher, returned to Escanaba to add a final touch to a special project from last year.

In 2024, Cottone and a former student traveled to France for ceremonies recognizing the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in World War II. Teacher and student researched and eulogized U.S. Navy seaman Auvergne Breault, an Escanaba man who died at age 20 in the invasion on June 6, 1944.

This year Cottone donated a bench in Escanaba for which his school raised money to honor Breault. “We had over 40 people show up for the official dedication,” he said.

Cottone enjoys bringing the world to his students. This summer he traveled on an Earthwatch fellowship to Brazil's rainforest and in October he will attend a workshop in New Zealand with the Korean Legacy Foundation. Read more about the visit to Normandy at mea.org/Rochester-d-day-project.



THE FUTURE IS NOW

Ensuring all are IncludED

Attendees at the MEA Aspiring Educators Conference next month will receive a special take-away: teaching and learning toolkits to support students with disabilities made by two leaders from MEA's Aspiring Educators of Michigan (AEM).



The two leaders, Lindsey Springer of Grand Valley State University and Madolyn (Maddie) Glocksine of Saginaw Valley State University, secured an NEA CREATE grant for \$2,000 to select and purchase supplies for the toolkits.



Their passion project, titled **IncludED: Teacher Toolkits for Accessible Learning**, showcased the importance of community outreach and social justice at the August AEM leadership retreat attended by future educators from across the state. Retreat participants helped to assemble the kits.

"Disability rights and inclusion means so much to me because I believe that all students deserve a safe, nurturing, and accepting environment where they are able to take risks and thrive," Springer said.

At its heart, the project is about equity and professional development, Glocksine added.

"Teachers shouldn't be prepared if they have a student with a disability in their classroom, but when. While systemic issues like underfunding, ableism, inequitable access, are much bigger than one project, we believe even small, intentional steps matter."

About 15% of Michigan's public school students receive some form of special education services. The majority spend at least part of the day in general education classrooms, so educators must understand strategies to support their social and academic goals, Springer and Glocksine point out.

The pair selected items for the kits from recommendations of special education professors and behavior analysts and therapists who were asked to choose one thing they wish students with disabilities could have in their classrooms.

Toolkits contain one folder with visual and communications support, and one folder with advocacy and extended resources, including a QR code to a Google document with additional resources, ideas, and supportive websites for various disabilities.

Also included are fidgets, chewable pencil toppers, chair bands, noise-canceling headphones, pencil grips and weighted pencils; colored overlays for students with dyslexia; guided reading strips and finger spacers; bump dots, loop scissors, imprinted pen and bracelet, and more.

The project demonstrates elements at the heart of MEA's Aspiring Educators program – which develops leaders and programs on college campuses – to bring future educators together from across the state to support each other and their future students.

Find information to register for the AEM Conference on Nov. 8 at MEA Headquarters at cml.mea.org.

Glocksine concluded, "My hope is that this work not only supports teachers now but also drives broader positive changes in how we prepare educators and fund public schools and special education, so accessibility and inclusion become the norm, not the exception!" **V**



AEM leaders assemble toolkits to support students with disabilities, a project organized by Lindsey Springer (GVSU) and Maddie Glocksine (SVSU).



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A teacher, a tumor and the power of MESSA coverage



Owosso English teacher Jessica McClung works one-on-one with 8th grader Kyra Wherry during class.

After Jessica McClung belted notes during musical rehearsal, something felt wrong.

A tingling sensation crept across her lips.

The 8th-grade English teacher and theater performer from Owosso didn't think much about it. Months later, while sitting in the dentist's chair, the tingling started again.

McClung, 49, mentioned it to the dentist, who referred her to an ENT specialist and a neurologist. Doctors discovered a racquetball-sized tumor tucked behind her eye.

Little did she know it had been there for 12 years.

Getting rid of the "bully"

Benign and slow-growing, the tumor compressed her nerves like a boa constrictor, paralyzing her palate and crushing her Eustachian tube.

"It was like a big bully," McClung said.

The "bully" threatened brain damage and blindness if left untreated. Doctors removed it during a seven-hour surgery at Michigan Medicine's University Hospital last year.

She credits MESSA for allowing her to focus on her health and family.

"One of the most powerful things about my experience with MESSA is that I didn't have to worry about reaching out to get them involved," McClung said. "They were just there to provide the things I needed. I didn't have to call. I didn't have to hunt them down. I didn't have to wait (on the phone) with elevator music in my ear. The bills were submitted and they were covered."

The wife and mother of four had a rare tumor that affects fewer than 200,000 Americans annually.

"I'm so grateful that my union has fought to have MESSA be our coverage provider so that when tragedy strikes, we're all set."

Focused on healing

It hasn't been an easy road, but Jessica has been able to focus on getting better thanks to her MESSA coverage.

More than a year later, McClung still suffers from nerve damage, pain and hearing issues.

Twelve years ago, the tiny undetected tumor had crushed her Eustachian tube, which protects the ear from hearing sounds your body causes. At that time, doctors inserted a permanent tube. After the tumor was removed, McClung's hearing became amplified. Doctors are now focused on repairing her hearing.

The surgery also caused a significant shift in McClung's jaw resulting in physical therapy with a speech pathologist.

MESSA makes the difference

Overall, McClung has 10 doctors working on solutions. Her pain tolerance is better thanks to her neurologist's pain management plan. McClung thanks her medical team and MESSA for coming this far on her recovery journey.

"I'm so unbelievably grateful to everything MESSA has done to provide for us," McClung said. "I'm so grateful that my union has fought to have MESSA be our coverage provider so that when tragedy strikes, we're all set."

When life took an unexpected turn, Jessica didn't have to do it alone because with MESSA, she's always supported. Discover how MESSA has your back at messa.org/HereForYou. **V**

Hard history teaches if we listen

*By Richard Mui, history teacher
Plymouth-Canton Education Association*

We often hear the word “unprecedented” to describe the current civic and political landscape of the United States, but we have seen parts of this story before. I teach Advanced Placement U.S. History at Canton High School, and I recognize echoes of dark chapters from America’s past.

Knowledge — not nostalgia — should inform this fraught moment. Despite our discomfort, we must learn and teach difficult history to understand its lessons and make a better future. What is at stake affects all Americans and the freedoms we value.

Throughout U.S. history, immigrants have made important contributions to this country yet suffered scapegoating and backlash particularly in times of social and economic upheaval. The first law in the U.S. to restrict the immi-

Americans, of which 80,000 were American citizens, were forcibly rounded up and incarcerated in camps, losing dignity along with homes, businesses, possessions — a shameful episode for which President Ronald Reagan later apologized and paid reparations.

Immigration reopened to excluded groups in 1965, and progress has been made since then, for example in Asian-Americans’ economic participation, political representation, and cultural influence.

However, it’s two steps forward, one step back. In 2020 anti-Asian hate crimes surged nationwide due to racist stereotypes and scapegoating of Chinese people amid the global pandemic. Mark Twain once said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” That is what we are experiencing today.

All new immigrant communities progress through three distinct phases: Survival, remembering, and imagining. The first generation to leave home for a new place sacrifices for children



includes American citizens and legal residents.

Due process, the constitutional right to know and defend charges against you, is in peril. Birthright citizenship faces challenges. Weakening of these rights could open the door to abuses by

“Research shows immigrants benefit economies and cultures.”

Richard Mui teaches AP U.S. History; AAPI History, Issues and Culture; and Civics at Canton High School.

gration of a particular group was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Scapegoating never stops with one vulnerable group, and backlash doesn’t end with bans.

By 1907, restrictions on immigration extended to people from Japan, Korea, India, and eventually all of Asia, and violence throughout the West sought to drive out Asian immigrants in the country. In 1924 the National Origins Act limited immigration from southern and eastern Europe for similar reasons.

These policies reached a zenith in World War II when 120,000 Japanese

and grandchildren, then works to keep memory alive, before next generations create the dreamed-of future.

All of the research shows immigrants benefit economies and cultures in their adopted countries. They perform labor, become educated, open businesses, pay taxes, buy homes, pursue dreams.

Yet again now in the U.S., immigrants are being used as a scapegoat for society’s ills. People are being picked up off the street and held in a growing number of detention camps and prisons — some deported — without due process. This

a government that is now also openly attacking constitutionally protected free speech.

All Americans should be alarmed by this dangerous erosion of norms threatening our civil liberties.

Please stay informed, talk about what you’re seeing, and act on your knowledge. The question has always been and remains: How can we form a more perfect union?

What we do in this moment will speak to who we are as Americans — and who we want to be. [V](#)

UTSF wins recognition at MSU

After years of organizing and hard-fought legal battles, the Union of Tenure System Faculty (UTSF) won recognition from Michigan State University (MSU) in September — part of a growing movement in higher education.

After failed unionization efforts in the 1970s and 1990s, this marks the first time MSU's tenure system faculty have achieved collective representation.

"This is a historic victory for tenure system faculty at MSU," the UTSF Organizing Committee said in a joint statement. "For years, we have organized to secure a voice in decisions shaping the future of our institution. With formal recognition, we can now join our colleagues in other legally recognized unions at MSU to meet administration on equal footing."

"We can secure a legally binding contract that requires administration to work with us. We can negotiate and advocate for the ideals that make our work possible. In times like these, solidarity is our strength, and we will stand together for the future of MSU."

A recognition agreement was signed by both parties on Sept. 8 following a neutral party verification confirming that a clear majority of eligible faculty submitted authorization cards in support of union representation.

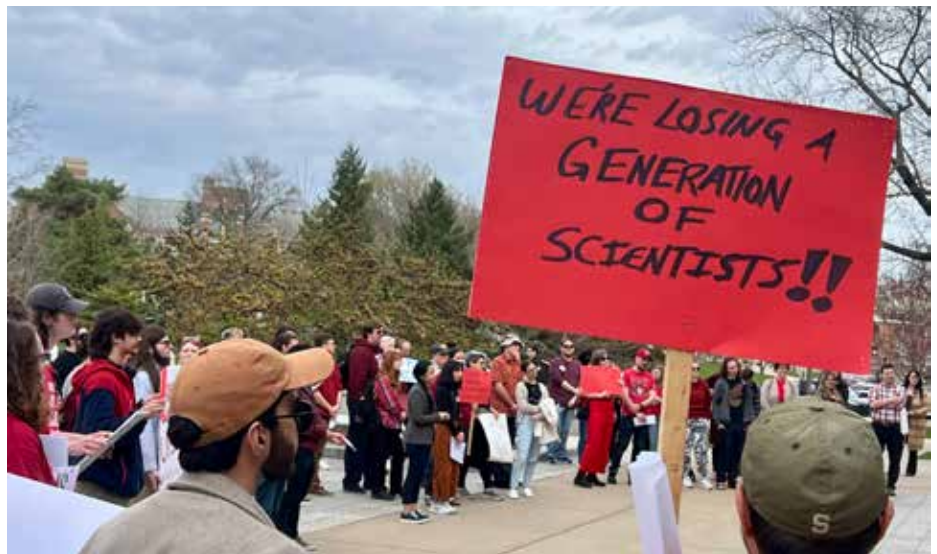
This verification process was the result of negotiations between UTSF and MSU administration.

The unionization campaign gained momentum for nearly 2,000 tenure-system faculty at MSU after they felt firsthand the vulnerability of non-unionized workers when their salaries and retirement benefits were slashed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These educators fought tirelessly to demand a seat at the table, and MEA will continue to stand with them as they negotiate their first contract," MEA President & CEO Chandra Madaffer said. "Working together with educators around the state,



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
UNION OF TENURE
SYSTEM FACULTY



UTSF joined a National Day of Action to protest the Trump administration's targeting of higher education, including termination of research programs.

we can ensure every student gets the opportunities provided by a great public education, from PreK-12 through higher education."

Every worker deserves a union, NEA President Becky Pringle said. "Higher education faculty nationwide are facing unprecedented challenges, from budget cuts and the elimination of federal funding to political attacks on research and teaching."

"Michigan State University's faculty know that unionization means they will be heard — and that their voices will make a difference on issues like academic

freedom, faculty workload, student learning conditions, and so much more."

The newly unionized faculty at MSU join a surging segment in the labor movement: higher education employees. Between 2012 and January 2024, the number of unionized faculty grew by 7.5 percent, a report from last year found.

In the same period, the number of graduate-student employees in unions grew by 133 percent, according to the 2024 Directory of Bargaining Agents and Contracts in Institutions of Higher Education by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions.



Strengthening faculty voices

Even before recognition was achieved, members and leaders of UTSF were flexing their advocacy muscles. For example, last April the union joined with two others at MSU to participate in a National Day of Action uniting campuses across the country.

The “Stand Up for Higher Ed” rally on April 17 brought together more than 100 faculty and students in front of the Hannah Administration Building. The event was jointly organized by UTSF, the Union of Non-Tenure Track Faculty (UNTF), and Graduate Employees Union (GEU).

A press release at the time laid out urgent issues arising from the Trump administration’s early targeting of higher education, from attempts to limit academic freedom and terminate research programs to attacks on immigrant and international students and suppression of free speech.

“As tenure-system faculty at MSU, we have been organizing to empower ourselves and stand in solidarity with others on our campus, across the state and across the country,” said Andaluna Borcila, a faculty member from MSU’s James Madison College and part of the UTSF Organizing Committee.

“What lies ahead demands strength — and together, we have it,” Borcila said.

Speakers from all three unions called on MSU administration to join them in standing against federal efforts that undermine the university’s mission. They called for public universities to resist compliance with unscientific, unethical, and politically

motivated directives that threaten the future of academia.

The faculty at MSU deserve many congratulations for years of hard work and persistence it took to win formal recognition, said MEA member Alec Thomson, a history and political science professor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

Thomson began 30 years ago as a graduate student organizer at Wayne State University. Now he’s leader of higher education unions within NEA as president of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Thomson also is past president of the Michigan Association of Higher Education (MAHE).

In his role as NCHE president, Thomson recently visited faculty at New Mexico State University (NMSU) who similarly unionized in 2024. Like at MSU, the faculty at NMSU had previously operated in a less formal “shared governance” model with administration.

Also similar to MSU, a revolving door of presidents and other high-level administrators at NMSU in recent years stymied faculty efforts to be heard and have their expertise and years of experience

respected in the university’s decision-making process.

At MSU, four presidents — either interim or permanent — have led since 2018 when Lou Anna Simon stepped down from the post.

“Achieving this recognition is remarkable because it comes at a time when colleges and universities find themselves the focus of political attacks designed to dismantle higher education,” Thomson said.

“With this achievement, the faculty at MSU have not only stepped forward to blunt these destructive efforts, but they are also leading Michigan State University by elevating the promise of the university’s mission: ‘restoring and transforming lives.’”

UTSF joins a growing movement of university graduate students, support personnel, librarians, counselors and faculty across the country demanding recognition of the essential roles they fill in the advancement of higher education, Thomson added.

“Unionization is a significant step toward recognizing the dignity of their work, respecting their rights, and securing financial stability,” he said. [V](#)

The rally in April brought together UTSF and two other campus unions (above). With recognition, UTSF joins a growing movement in higher education.



State budget: good, not perfect

The 2026 Michigan state budget that resulted from last-minute negotiations spilling into the new fiscal year works out to be a net positive for public education, according to an initial MEA analysis.

Educators from across the state held steady pressure on lawmakers to help break the months-long budget stalemate, including several dozen who descended on the Capitol in the shadow of a looming state government shutdown.

The compromise spending plan, adopted by the Legislature after the Oct. 1 deadline, reflects steadfast efforts by pro-education lawmakers to hold the line against the House's proposal to shift \$1.4 billion from PreK-12 to higher education to help pay for road construction.

In the early-morning hours of Oct. 1, the Legislature passed a stopgap continuation budget for one week to allow time for the agreement to be drafted into bills, reviewed by a conference committee, and finally passed by both chambers 36 hours later.

"While overdue and still with areas of concern, the education budget for this school year is finally complete and makes important investments in the success of Michigan's students and the educators

who serve them," MEA President & CEO Chandra Madafferi said.

"Although this budget compromise does not include all of our priorities, we welcome that it provides much-needed support and certainty for PreK-12 schools and higher education institutions to meet the needs of Michigan students."

Positive elements for public schools include a \$10,050 per pupil foundation allowance (a 4.6%/\$442 increase), full funding for universal free school meals, and more than \$300 million for safety and mental health programs.

Critical to MEA members is \$200 million directed toward providing school employees additional one-time compensation to help mitigate increased out-of-pocket health insurance costs.

In addition, the budget includes 25% increases to funding for at-risk (+250m) and English language learner education (+12.5m); increases of \$70 million for career and technical education and \$60 million for literacy programs; and investments of \$200 million for school infrastructure, \$125 million for rural transportation and \$65 million for smaller K-3 class sizes.

The plan provides an overall 2-3% boost to higher education funding and does not include penalties against universities for perceived political stances, which had been proposed in the House. Similarly, most language penalizing PreK-12 schools in continuing culture war fights has been removed.

Funding for student teacher stipends, future educator fellowships, free community college, and grant funding for educator recruitment programs will all continue.

Educators in Clintondale are among those who started the school year without a contract.

Given the vast differences between the original budget proposed by House Republicans compared to separate proposals by Senate Democrats and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, MEA Labor Economist Tanner Delpier gave his initial impression of the final spending plan as "better than expected."

However, this is a compromise budget and includes problematic aspects. Most concerning is a shift of School Aid Fund dollars to higher education which frees General Fund money to flow toward road-building costs.

The \$400 million shift, while much less than the \$1.4 billion first proposed in the House, remains significant.

Tax revenue from gas sales being moved to road funding instead of education is another area MEA will watch in future budgets. While those dollars have been backfilled in this year's budget, keeping it that way could be an annual legislative battle.

In addition, some categorical appropriations were rolled into the foundation allowance, including part of the funding for school employee retirement costs, but overall increases offset the losses for districts.

WORK TO DO

Despite progress in restoring public school funding over the past few years, Michigan still has much work to do in the wake of the previous 25 years of disinvestment in education.

Michigan still ranks in the bottom half of the nation in per-student funding, according to a recent NEA report. In 2023-24, Michigan public schools spent \$14,489 in combined federal, state and local funding per student compared with a national average of \$16,990, the study found.

MEA members who traveled to the Capitol one week before the fiscal-year deadline hammered that message home in a press conference and lobbying





Members in Grand Rapids have turned out to school board meetings demanding fair compensation to address shortages and stop the district's reliance on uncertified substitutes.

in the offices of state representatives and senators.

Allyson McCann, a paraprofessional in Grand Ledge Public Schools who works with students with special needs, told assembled news media that lawmakers must protect state funding allocated specifically for student mental health, universal school meals, and supporting at-risk students.

"With one voice, we are asking state lawmakers to provide our schools with all the funding they need — so that no student in need is left to fend for themselves."

Jennifer Hollander, a school social worker from Huron Valley Schools, also spoke at the press conference to say recent education funding increases — allowing public schools to deliver more mental health services, literacy resources, and educator salary improvements — should continue and grow.

"Now is a critical time, and lawmakers have a critical decision to make: invest in our future, or fall further behind other states and countries,"

Hollander said. "Let's come together as one, regardless of politics, to create a brighter future for our kids, our communities and our state."

The budget standoff played out against a troubling backdrop in places where educators started a new school year without a settled contract, including Northville, Utica, Birmingham, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Ludington, Walled Lake, Waterford, Howell, Brighton, Ortonville, Farwell, Holly, Milan and more.

While a number of local unions across the state cemented strong contract settlements over the summer to better attract and retain educators, in at least two school districts — Pontiac and Clintondale — teachers marked the start of a second school year under an expired contract.

In Clintondale, 75 of 115 professional staff resigned or retired from the district in the past two years, representing an incalculable loss, said Mike Ward, president of the Clintondale Education Association.

Educators in Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) also have turned out to demand the school district fairly compensate educators to address teacher shortages. GRPS teachers are lowest paid in Kent County, and the district relies on uncertified substitutes, union leaders said.

In Pontiac, educators continued their fight for a fair contract into a second school year while also pushing back against a district restructuring plan developed without staff expertise or insight, said Pontiac Education Association (PEA) President Candice Ridley.

Meanwhile, separate polls released by Michigan State University and the K-12 Alliance of Michigan showed overwhelming public support for increasing educator pay and funding schools over roads.

Ridley, who attended the lobby day at the Capitol, said she can't understand why educators must push to get what students need. "We know what we should be doing for children. Why is this a fight?" **V**

New training offered for paras

Paraeducators have long said they needed higher pay plus better training to improve staff retention and equip them for the vital and challenging work they do in schools.

That message was heard loud and clear at a MEA paraeducator summit in 2023. From there, a new statewide training series was developed in partnership with the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE) and Opening the Pipeline of Talent into Michigan's Special Education (OPTIMSE) to provide an opportunity to address both issues.

The Paraeducator Professional Learning Series — also known as Paraeducator Bootcamp — offers research-backed best practices in special education along with practical tools and strategies to effectively support students with disabilities in PK-12 classrooms.

Local unions are starting to tie the training to pay increases, says MEA UniServ Director Tammy Daenzer, who serves various units in Tuscola and Genesee counties.

"This is an exciting development that is already translating into real gains at

the bargaining table for education support professionals (ESP)," Daenzer said.

Last summer three of Daenzer's ESP units bargained improvements in pay for paraeducators who complete the training.

- **In Lakeville Community Schools in Otisville, paraeducators secured additional compensation of \$0.25/hour for members who voluntarily complete the program.**
- **In Millington Community Schools, the ESP unit signed a letter of agreement creating a new Advanced Paraeducator wage category with increases from \$0.70 to \$0.90/hour for those who complete the training.**
- **In Reese Public School District, paraeducators negotiated a contract provision ensuring they will receive relevant training and paid attendance on required staff professional development days.**

Paraeducators and other ESP are often excluded and unpaid on scheduled staff PD days or forced to sit in trainings not tailored to their needs, Daenzer said.

The paraeducator learning series helps participants understand and use

essential tools in academics, behavior support, and special education fundamentals, said MEA UniServ Consultant Chad Williams who helped to develop the partnership with MAASE.

"This is about building skills that paraeducators can put into practice and gaining professional growth that can translate into recognition, respect and opportunity," Williams said.

Dave Vroman, president of the Millington ESP unit, said the contract improvement tying pay to training for paraeducators was part of a larger effort to boost frontline support staff whose commitment and hard work contribute to student success.

The bargain also resulted in an advanced maintenance category for workers who hold mechanical, electrical, plumbing or building licenses; offered a \$1,000 stipend to kitchen staff who complete ServSafe training; and eliminated the lowest-paid secretarial category.

"All the way around, getting better pay and advanced positions has made people happier," said Vroman, a nine-year maintenance employee who became ESP president one year ago. **V**

MAASE Paraeducator Training Conference

Train the Trainer

Feb. 19, 2026

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**MEA Headquarters,
East Lansing**

For new and existing trainers

The Paraeducator Professional Learning Series is funded with a state grant connected to the Optimise initiative, a multi-year effort to rebuild the talent pipeline of special education teachers and paraprofessionals in Michigan.

The five-unit series, developed by the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE), is being implemented in two stages — a **Train the Trainer** program and **Paraeducator Training Sessions**.

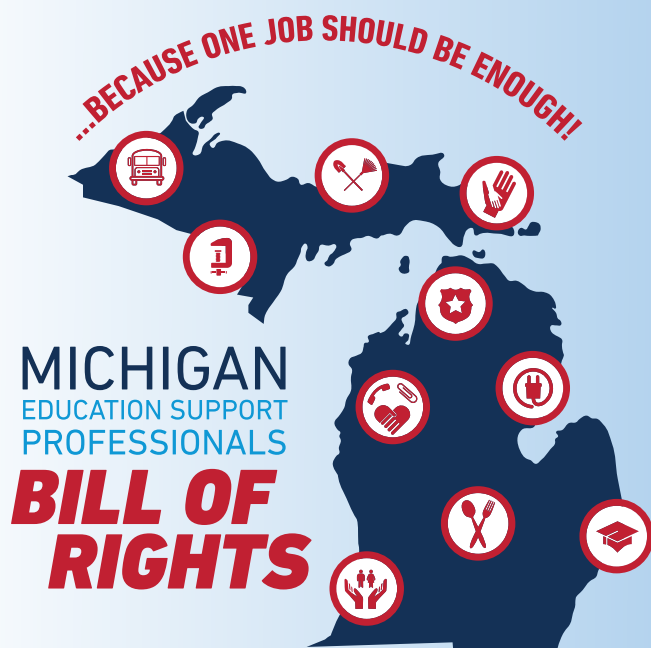
Once certified, trainers are available to lead training sessions across the state.

The next Train the Trainer program will be offered on Feb. 19 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at MEA Headquarters in East Lansing as part of the MAASE First Annual Paraeducator Training Conference. The program is open to new and existing trainers.

For more information about registering for the conference, becoming a trainer or bringing a trainer to your school or district, go to maase.org/paraeducator-learning-series.



THE MICHIGAN ESP BILL OF RIGHTS



Robin Moore and Jeff Wilson

The Michigan ESP Bill of Rights: an engine for advocacy

*Stories by MEA Voice Editor
Brenda Ortega*

MEA member Jeff Wilson sees the Michigan ESP Bill of Rights campaign as a message of hope in a sea of negative political discourse.

The campaign unveiled last summer is part of a growing effort across the U.S. to elevate the voices of Education Support Professionals (ESP) who do vital work in schools but whose contributions are too often overlooked and undervalued.

"We're seeing negativity in our state and national politics and more of our taxes being funneled upward to the wealthiest 1% of people that have more than enough," said Wilson, a member of the MEA Board of Directors and ESP

Caucus Board, who works in Human Resources at Michigan State University (MSU-APA).

A member of the Ad-Hoc Committee for the Bill of Rights campaign, Wilson said, "This campaign is something that people can rally around and say, 'Yes, I deserve this. I work hard, and you can't keep taking from me. I deserve to be paid a thriving wage.'"

Following the lead of Maryland, Massachusetts and Illinois — where similar campaigns are already in full swing — the Michigan ESP Bill of Rights is an engine to drive advocacy for the resources, policies, and programs that build presence and power for ESPs.

Phase I of the Michigan campaign began a year ago to develop the campaign's six areas of focus by gathering ESP input.

Last summer marked the start of Phase II in which ESP members and leaders serving as regional captains gather support and signatures, including from political leaders, school boards and other elected bodies.

Additional captains will be needed for the next phase, including in the northern, midwestern, Thumb and Upper Peninsula areas. Watch for applications to roll out this fall. For more information contact MEA New Unit Organizer Danielle Baranowski at dbaranowski@mea.org.

Four other states are also in Phase II, and another four states are getting underway.

"Our state got a large amount of engagement in Phase I, and we need to keep developing our strength in the months ahead," Wilson said. **V**

Read on to meet our featured captains:

Seeking a seat at the table

As a special education paraeducator in Kalamazoo Public Schools, MEA member Shona Espinoza serves as a lifeline for many kids but can't afford the level of health care or housing she needs for herself and her son.

Last year she moved home with her parents after a rent increase. Then her mother died, and her father — a retiree and military veteran — needed more help to make house payments. Espinoza had to turn down health insurance at work because the out-of-pocket costs were too much.

"Even from last year to this year, the price of everything is horrendous," she said. "I know KPS staff right now that are literally unhoused. We're a big district, and not one employee should ever be out on the street or on the verge, because we should have a thriving wage."

The fight for fairness drew Espinoza to be a captain in the Michigan ESP Bill of

Rights campaign, she said, "because we need a seat at the table."

Community activism is not new to her, though she's an introvert who avoids the spotlight. In 2020 she began locally campaigning for social justice and working to elect candidates for city and county offices after reflecting on her own difficult personal journey.

"I told myself when I first started doing this work that I'm going to push myself out of my comfort zone because it's not about me. It's about a better future for my kids."

Espinoza is interconnected and active across many Kalamazoo advocacy groups, and everywhere she goes she speaks about the ESP Bill of Rights and gathers signatures in support.

She draws strength to keep going from her four children, all grown except for nine-year-old Syncere, who often joins her at meetings and events. Espinoza had her first child at age 16, which she now believes saved her from a destructive path.

"At the end of the day, I want to show my kids that no matter how hard it is to make change, it gets done if you follow through and do what you need to do."

In her work as a paraeducator, she is a believer and encourager for students at-risk of dropping out, as she recalls a teacher still in the classroom — Michelle Wilson-Banks — once did for her. "Seeing these babies succeed in life is the greatest reward," she said.

And she taps connections from her activism to access resources for students and their families experiencing hunger, housing instability, mental health struggles and other challenges.

Just as helping families also helps students, Espinoza knows meeting basic needs of all school employees will nurture the health of the entire school community and foster student success.

"Why wouldn't we want the people working with our children — the most precious thing we have in life — to have a thriving wage?" 

1. Thriving wages

A thriving wage that can support a middle-class family, so we can put food on the table, shop at our local small businesses and save for our children's future.



"It's about a better future for my kids."

Shona Espinoza

middle school paraeducator

Finding strength in numbers

MEA member Robin Moore wants to change perceptions about the need for every worker to have a thriving wage, good health care, and a secure retirement.

“These things are not entitlements; they’re essential elements that people need to live a dignified life,” she says. “We have to take care of each other.”

A 28-year support staff employee at Lansing Community College (LCC), Moore is a captain in the Michigan ESP Bill of Rights campaign because she knows her personal story illustrates larger societal issues that require collective action.

“There’s power in numbers. When I think about different movements that have graced these United States, people came together and change happened.”

In 1998 Moore was a newly divorced single mom when she left an unfulfilling retail career to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher. She enrolled at LCC, but circumstances intervened.

She took a permanent job in the LCC Library where she was a student employee with hope of becoming full-time. For 15 years she worked 30 hours per week for less pay and benefits than her full-time counterpart — taking on second and third jobs to make ends meet.

“That was an eye opener for me when I saw the inequities,” she said. “The only difference between us was her being full-time and me being part-time; we had the same responsibilities, but my hourly rate was different.”

Now a full-time Library operations and circulation specialist, Moore processes student textbooks and manages operations and student employees. Support staff keep workplaces humming yet often remain overlooked and undervalued, she says.

“If we were all to decide we’re not doing anything, the institution could not function, so think of us,” she said, pausing and restating for emphasis: “Think of us.”

Recently part-time employees at LCC joined others in the union, and contract bargaining began to address some pay disparities. But she worries health care cost increases could wipe out gains.

“That’s why we say we need quality and affordable health care: It shouldn’t be one or the other.”

Both of her parents spent careers working for the state of Michigan, and the family enjoyed a middle-class life with healthy food, routine medical care, regular vacations.

Today Moore is remarried, mother of three, and president of the Board of Education for the Lansing School District. In every role she plays, leading, mentoring and serving others is key.

“I always wanted to help people, and I consider myself a public servant. I’m not in a classroom setting, but I am a teacher.” **V**

2. Full benefits

Good healthcare and leave benefits, including full-family health, dental and vision coverage; time off for illness, parental needs and personal days; disability and life insurance; and unemployment benefits for 10- and 11-month employees.



“These are essential elements that people need to live a dignified life.”

Robin Moore
college circulation specialist

Ensuring educators' safety

MEA member Katerina Tyner suffered more than physical injury after an emotionally dysregulated preschool student threw an object that fractured her ankle last May. "I didn't even get to say goodbye to those students after being there for them every day," she said.

Unable to drive a car or climb steps, Tyner had to file a workers' compensation claim and take a leave for the remainder of the school year from Van Buren Public Schools where she works as a teacher associate.

She couldn't undertake second and third jobs as a technical consultant she had planned for summer, so her family of five missed income needed to sustain them during the dry period when school paychecks stop. "This summer I had no money coming in," she said.

Perhaps the most emotionally painful effect was realizing her teenage son had stopped talking about attending a school trip to Peru. "Kids know

when things are not where they should be," she said, pausing and choking up mid-sentence.

"He didn't want to ask because how would we pay for it? So he just put it in his mind that he didn't want to go."

The incident brought home the need for school safety resources, training, and protections and motivated Tyner to become a captain in the ESP Bill of Rights campaign. "No one goes to work to be hurt," she said.

A longtime civic volunteer and youth pastor in her church, Tyner relied on her husband and extended support system to survive the time off. But the experience sharpened her understanding of the struggles faced by many hourly workers.

"A lot of our staff members are sneaking boxes into their cars from the food pantry at a church across the street from our schools. We qualify for food assistance. It's not right."

Tyner holds a bachelor of science degree in Business Administration/

Management Information Systems from Central State University, a historically Black college in Ohio. After working in the tech industry, which she found personally unsatisfying, she transitioned to education.

She worked as a substitute teacher and paraeducator while completing teacher certification and student teaching through Eastern Michigan University. She's been a preschool para for six years and is working toward a Child Development Associate certificate to apply as lead teacher.

Though preK teachers make less than K-12, Tyner feels called to it. Growing up in Detroit, she struggled early in school but graduated with honors thanks to supportive parents and educators. She loves showing youngsters many routes to answers and teaching them to read and love books.

"When these babies come into my classroom, I'm giving them the same care that I would give my own children, which is everything." **V**

3. Workplace safety

Strong workplace safety standards with clear safety protocols; appropriate supplies; zero exposure to hazardous materials; safely maintained equipment; a workplace free of physical, verbal or emotional abuse; and whistleblower protections.



"No one goes to work to be hurt."

Katerina Tyner

Preschool teacher associate

Mobilizing for power

MEA member Laken London loves to solve puzzles, so she's a go-to person in her department at Saginaw Valley State University when people have a problem they can't figure out.

London is a senior accounting clerk in Scholarships and Financial Aid at SVSU who earned a bachelor's degree in accounting fraud investigation from Davenport University in 2018. "They call my desk the dump desk," she said.

"Someone will say, 'Hey, Laken — I can't figure out this student account, but something's wrong.' And I'll just tear that account apart and be like, 'This is what happened.'"

Last year, London had a personal puzzle to solve when a temporary financial setback caused her to take on two additional part-time jobs. Mornings and weekends, she delivered food through a delivery app, and evenings and weekends she worked at a hardware store.

"I was able to get myself out of that situation, and it was only about a six-month

stint of having to go through that, but I was working 16-hour days — and it was miserable. Just because you can work three jobs doesn't mean you should."

The experience motivated London to become a captain in the ESP Bill of Rights campaign in addition to serving her local union as philanthropy chair and webmaster for the communications committee.

"I'm hoping this can stir conversations about how employers can give back to the people who do a lot of the day-to-day work," she said. "Employees want something to look forward to — something they can work toward and build for the future."

London grew up in rural Cass City and moved around after college to jobs in a brokerage firm, hospital and manufacturer before settling in the education sector. "Higher ed is where I feel at home, helping students grow and become well-rounded humans."

What she loves best about her job is the supportive co-workers who have

maintained stability through leadership changes in her department and higher up at SVSU. She's fascinated by what she calls "support cricket talk."

"Our support staff are the silent communicators between departments who keep things operating smoothly," she explained. "You go to someone and say, 'How does this work?' or 'Why do you guys do that?' And we get our ducks in a row."

Support staff often perform critical but unrecognized labor that the Bill of Rights campaign can highlight, she said. "I hope it mobilizes us to understand the power we have."

"I hope it opens companies' eyes to treat employees with the respect and dignity they deserve. Just because you can give us less pay or cheaper health insurance and save a couple bucks doesn't mean you should." **V**

4. Secure retirement

A secure and dignified retirement with post-retirement insurance benefits; all years of service counted toward pension benefits; and a payout of all accumulated leave days to a 403(b) or 401(k) account upon retirement.



"Employees want something they can build for the future."

Laken London

university accounting clerk

Making strong communities

MEA member Carol Urban grew up in a military family and married her high school sweetheart who served 24 years in the U.S. Air Force, so she knows the special bond that connects spouses and families of active-duty service members.

When her husband retired from the Air Force in 2018, she missed the tightly knit community surrounding her wherever she moved.

“The bond is so, so strong among military families because we’re all in the same boat, all on the same team, all fighting the same mission.”

A special education paraeducator in Utica Community Schools, she’s found that feeling again being joined in union with a network of school employees whose supportive work makes public education possible.

“We all help provide education to students,” she said.

Her motivation for becoming a captain in the ESP Bill of Rights campaign came into focus at MEA’s Statewide ESP Conference in June. Attending for the first time, she met professionals of every kind — food service workers, custodians, office secretaries, paras, bus drivers.

“I was looking around and seeing this perspective that when all of the school employees have all of the things that are included in this Bill of Rights, it’s our kids that benefit.”

Working as a paraeducator after years as a stay-at-home mom is a special calling for Urban, she says. Each of her three children had a specific learning challenge that required different parenting.

“I love working with kids who feel like there’s something wrong with them and showing them how amazing and wonderful and perfect they are.”

She points out her privilege in being able to stay despite low pay, because

her husband has military retirement benefits and a stable professional job. “One-hundred percent, I couldn’t do this if I had to support anything on my salary.”

In addition to low pay, Urban worries about lack of training for ESPs. For example, paraeducators often get assigned to work in programs for children with emotional impairment or non-verbal autistic students with little or no targeted professional development.

In Utica, the paraeducators union recently ratified a contract that includes time and attention for paras to get professional development they need so everyone is safe and successful. “I’m excited to have opportunities to learn and grow together with my colleagues.”

Respecting support staff means everyone wins, she added. “When staff feel happier and more competent, the learning environment improves for kids and employees want to stay.” **V**

5. Job advancement

Professional development and advancement opportunities, including regular training, onboarding assistance and the opportunity to earn continuing education credits.



“We all help provide education to students.”

Carol Urban

junior high paraeducator

Protecting workers' rights

Within months of becoming an MEA member this year, Dylan Baade joined the bargaining team for his support staff unit at Oakland University and signed up to be a captain in the ESP Bill of Rights campaign.

The reason is simple: Baade has worked in union and non-union settings, and union is better.

"I'm always trying to get involved as much as I can and help my fellow co-workers — trying to make the things that I believe in come true," he said. "I'm passionate about workers' rights, workplace democracy, economic and social justice, all of it."

As a night-shift custodian, Baade takes pride in his work and being part of educating students. "All work has dignity, and no matter what work you do, a job should meet your needs."

He sees hard-working people juggling two and three jobs just to stay afloat — "walking around with thousand-yard

stares" — and remembers when he was that person. "I did it for six months, and I was losing my mind. I don't know how people do it."

Without a union, individual workers are vulnerable to exploitation, arbitrary management decisions, and direct targeting. Baade has experienced all of the above at previous jobs in manufacturing and retail.

He once worked for a custodial company that subcontracts cleaning duties, which he described as "chaotic." No consistency in pay. Unsafe working conditions. Retaliation for speaking up. Eventually he was isolated and fired for leading a union organizing campaign, he says.

Saving money by outsourcing work to such companies dehumanizes people and devalues their labor, Baade said. "When you subcontract out, you're just bringing in a bunch of people who have no investment in the place or the mission."

Unions give people a voice, a contract, rights enforcement, which translate

into order, consistency, a process for resolving disputes, he said: "All workers should be part of the community because what they contribute matters."

Baade grew up in Flint and learned union values from his grandfather who belonged to United Auto Workers. He has since read widely on labor law and history and is motivated to share his knowledge, experience and passion as a captain in the ESP Bill of Rights campaign.

He believes the campaign's six priorities are all equally important to ensure everyone has what they need to be safe and successful, afford necessities, access health care, and enjoy work-life balance.

"I love being a custodian in education. The teachers and paraprofessionals are teaching the future of this country, and we're a part of that — all the custodians and bus drivers and skilled trades. No one else can do their job if we don't do ours." **V**

6. Job security

A secure job we can count on with a reasonable assurance of employment; a shorter and fairer probationary period; and protections against job privatization.



"I'm trying to make the things that I believe in come true."

Dylan Baade
university custodian

New members, new bargainers, big win

By Brenda Ortega
MEA Voice Editor

Maria del Pilar Galnares knew the right thing to do when a group of unrepresented educators approached her about forming a union or joining the unit she leads at Northwest Education Services — the intermediate school district based in Traverse City.

Galnares got on board. It was unfair that these 14 teachers, literacy consultants, English learner/migrant teachers, and instructional service specialists were not included among more than 250 other professionals who belonged to the district's bargaining unit, she said.

"Basically we had people who were making less pay than what was on the professional pay scale in our contract,"

calendar, and working conditions for these new union members began. It was a long and difficult struggle involving numerous mediation sessions, said MEA UniServ Director Mary McGee-Cullen, who serves the unit.

It was 2022, and the union had just ratified a new three-year contract. A hard-fought letter of agreement was negotiated over 18 months to address some pay disparities for the new members, and the rest would be addressed in the next contract, McGee-Cullen said.

Fast forward to June. That contract bargain concluded with a remarkable win for everyone — but especially validating improvements for the 14 newly unionized educators. One teacher got a 63% raise. Some quit second jobs or decided they could afford to start a family.

A veteran MEA staff negotiator, McGee-Cullen said the three-year set-

It's important to note the contract deal was struck by an all-new bargaining team whose members had to learn how to negotiate, master their approach, and stay disciplined at the negotiating table, Galnares said.

"We didn't ask for too much. We didn't ask for too little. We asked for what we thought would work."

Success could not have happened without a unified, engaged, active membership along with training, financial data, and proposal analyses from MEA's professional staff, including Bargaining Consultant Craig Culver and Labor Economist Tanner Delpier, she added.

"It really was a village that created this, and people are happy; they're relieved."

Leave none behind

Beyond issues of right and wrong, the struggle held personal meaning for

"It really was a village that created this, and people are happy."

Maria del Pilar Galnares, president of NWESEA, a growing unit of certificated staff at the ISD in Traverse City.

Galnares said. "Some worked more days than everyone else, and all of them had multiple degrees — advanced degrees — and Michigan certifications."

The local union fought to accrete the educators into their unit called the Northwest Education Services Education Association or NWESEA.

The accretion process, overseen by the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) seeks to determine if a group of employees not currently in a bargaining unit share a "community of interest" with existing members.

A secret ballot vote was held by MERC three years ago and with 100% of the votes in support of joining the union, the work of bargaining wages, hours,

tlement was particularly rewarding to achieve because the disparate treatment had been so egregious.

"This was absolutely life-changing for many members in this bargaining unit. I get goosebumps every time I talk about it; there were lots of joyful tears."

For Galnares, who was a brand new local president when the group first inquired about joining the union, the outcome is satisfying.

"I worked hard because I believed in something," she said. "These people give their all to this district and the students we serve, and now they have representation. Now their pay reflects their hard work. That feels good."

Galnares, who has taught at the ISD in a center-based program for children with emotional impairment for 29 years.

Among the 14 accreted members were four teachers who work with migrant students, those children whose families move frequently to perform temporary or seasonal work in agriculture or fishing. Frequent movement puts the children at-risk of losing out on learning.

The godmother of Galnares' brother, Jean Franco, pioneered what is now the Migrant Education Program in Traverse City in the 1960s. And Galnares' father, John Galnares — who taught at Traverse City Senior High School for 31 years — would later work with Franco in the program.



A new bargaining team of educators at the intermediate school district in Traverse City used MEA resources and member solidarity to achieve a strong contract. (L-R) Erin Ryan, Sheri Connors, Pat Louzon, Lauren Holmes, Lauren Davison.

Described in her obituary as “a teacher of teachers” and “a celebrity in her own right in the community,” Franco became executive director of the Northwestern Michigan Migrant Program in 1971 and retired at age 88 in 2012.

“She wholly loved people and kids,” her obituary reads. “Close friends recall that although Jean never had biological children, she considered all the students in the migrant school her kids. Jean believed that all children deserved the opportunity to progress in life.”

John Galnares worked as an administrator in the migrant program through the 1980s, his daughter said. He died last year. Franco passed away at age 98 in 2022, the same year that migrant teachers were accreted into the union.

“Jean Franco was an amazing woman, and my father worked very hard as a supervisor for her,” Galnares said. “It was a really big thing for him, coming from a Hispanic background, to get the kids out of the field.”

Before joining the union, the four migrant teachers were severely overworked and underpaid, McGee-Cullen

said. As highly qualified educators serving migrant students across seven counties, they worked 35 extra days per year and made \$41,000.

“Now that they’re on the professional salary schedule, those migrant teachers are working 35 fewer days and making about \$30,000 more,” McGee-Cullen said.

Before the new contract was settled, one veteran teacher in the program had tearfully told Galnares she didn’t know how much longer she could do it. Galnares urged her to hang on, and she did.



Maria del Pilar Galnares (left) has taught in a center-based program at the ISD for 29 years and became union president four years ago. Lauren Holmes, who accreted to the unit three years ago, said people feel valued in the new contract.

“We have the second-largest Migrant Education Program in Michigan right now,” Galnares said. “For me, it was super important that when those students that travel the country come here, they have the same access to highly qualified teachers as anyone else, and that those teachers are respected.”

The district kept trying to separate the migrant teachers from the salary schedule because part of their pay is covered by federal grants, McGee-Cullen said. But the bargaining team was committed to leave no one behind, she added, “because it was the right thing to do.”

The team held strong because they knew from MEA’s detailed financial analysis that what they were seeking was reasonable, Galnares said. “There were rough patches, of course, but we knew we weren’t crazy, and we were able to hold our ground and counter with confidence.”

People feel valued

All of the 14 new members received pay hikes because they had been subjected to arbitrary and inequitable management decisions about pay in the past, including new employees being hired at higher salaries than 25-year veterans.

The bargainers ensured employees were placed on the salary schedule at their level of experience. Galnares said, “I had one person that said to me, ‘This is life altering; I don’t have to work a second job — I get to go home and be with my kids.’”

Instructional calendars were standardized to ensure those who worked days beyond the contractual number would receive additional pay.

School psychologist Lauren Holmes, who served as the union’s lead negotiator, is one of the MEA members who joined the unit in 2022. Collective

action is the only way to address persistent systemic pay and workload inequities, she said.

“If we want a decent contract, or decent working conditions — caseload sizes — we have way more leverage as a unit rather than as individuals,” she said.

A 14-year employee of the district, Holmes supports area elementary schools with special education evaluations, data collection, behavior intervention plans, multi-tiered systems of support, and more.

Key to the team’s success was an annual MEA bargaining training they attended for northern Michigan locals, she said. Armed with tools, financial analyses and a bargaining plan, the group committed to stay the course and continued to use MEA resources as needed.

In addition, members engaged by writing letters to the board and regularly attending board meetings, and the bargaining team kept them informed. “It was so essential to have that unified cohesive front to get these inequalities taken care of,” Holmes said.

In the end, everyone appreciated the solid contract gains that emerged from negotiations, she said. The schedule increases each year of the deal, 5%-4%-4%, and improvements were won in MESSA ancillary benefits, mentor pay, mileage, and more.

“I’m still getting thank yous, just lots of gratitude and joy,” Holmes said. “People feel valued for all of the work they’re putting in.”

On a larger scale, the teamwork and success of the bargain has prompted a positive change in the union’s overall culture and solidarity, Galnares added.

“There’s been a shift in the environment that’s small but noticeable. I think people are realizing that *Wow, I have a say in what we do here. I have a say in my future.*” **V**

REGION ELECTION INFORMATION

Following is a description of the election procedures to be followed in the regions. This process complies with relevant federal laws. (See positions to be elected following this section.)

Election dates for all regions are 8 a.m., Sunday, March 1, 2026 through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 15, 2026.

Persons interested in running for a position should contact their region elections chairperson or nominations chair.

The candidates for the region at-large positions shall be printed in the February edition of the *MEA Voice*.

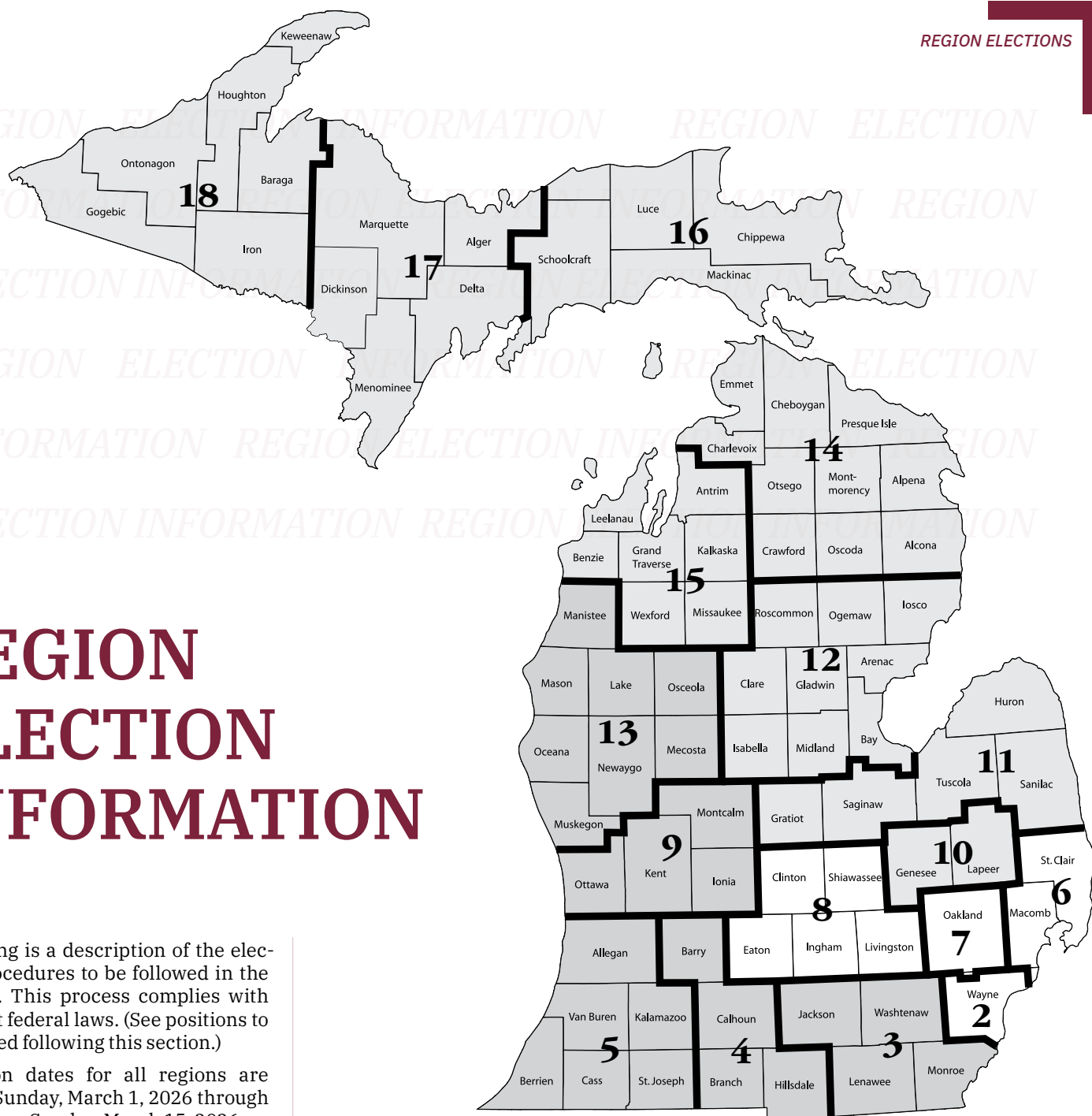
If a region does not have a December meeting, they cannot use acclamation. In order to elect by acclamation, there must be a quorum at the December meeting. Nominations and acclamation election results sent by the region to MEA must be received/postmarked by Dec. 21, 2025.

PAPER BALLOTS

The region at-large election is an online election. If an individual is unable to access the online voting system during the election period, a paper ballot may be requested by contacting mea_ra@mea.org. Paper ballots must be returned by U.S. mail and received by the MEA Executive Office no later than the last day of the election. Late paper ballots shall be unopened and set aside as void ballots.

ELIGIBLE VOTERS

Voter eligibility listings will be created from information received by the MEA Membership Department from the local associations by Feb. 7, 2026.



ATTENTION ESP MEMBERS – 2026 Region 50 Statewide Election (ESP Only)

ESP members of the MEA are entitled to send delegates to the National Education Association Representative Assembly (NEA RA). Next year, the NEA RA will be held in Denver, CO July 3-7, 2026. Expenses to attend the NEA convention are reimbursed in accordance with the adopted state delegate expense policy for Region 50 delegates.

All Michigan ESP candidates for NEA statewide at-large delegate seats run as delegates for Region 50. All Michigan ESP members vote as part of Region 50 in electing their statewide at-large delegates to the NEA RA. The NEA procedures require that these statewide delegates and alternates be elected by secret ballot. Elections for Region 50 will be conducted in accordance with the 2026 Online Region Elections.

Any MEA ESP member in good standing is eligible to be nominated or may nominate themselves at the region nominations meeting or by using the Region 50 Nomination Form. Candidate must give consent before any name is printed on the ballot by completing the Nominee Consent Form. Forms may be obtained from your region president or region election chairperson or can be found at mea.org/governance under the Forms section.

Each nominated candidate may submit a biographical statement of no more than 150 words to be included with the online ballots. Statement must be in paragraph form and will be printed as received. Pictures can also be submitted along with the biographical statement. Bio forms can be obtained from the elections chair or found at mea.org/governance. Bio

forms and pictures must be received by Dec. 31, 2025 and can be emailed to mea_ra@mea.org or mailed to the MEA Executive Office, 1350 Kendale Blvd, East Lansing, MI 48823.

If you wish to nominate yourself or someone else, obtain the consent of the candidate, complete the nomination form and send to the MEA Executive Office no later than Dec. 31, 2025. Nominations received after Dec. 31, 2025 will not be accepted. Names of nominees will be placed on the ballot that will be distributed to all ESP locals through the region at-large online elections process.

If you have any questions, contact your region elections chairperson, or for further clarification, email mea_ra@mea.org or call 800-292-1934, ext. 5411.

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

Supply the following information regarding the nominee.

Remember, the consent of a candidate must be secured before that name is placed on any ballot. Nominees will be required to complete the Region Elections Nominee Consent Form found at mea.org/governance.

NAME _____

LOCAL ESP ASSOCIATION _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

Nomination form must be received no later than Dec. 31, 2025.

Email to mea_ra@mea.org or mail to MEA Executive Office, 1350 Kendale Blvd, East Lansing, MI 48823.

Nomination forms received after Dec. 31, 2025 will not be accepted.

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

- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate:**
1 position, immediate through 8/31/28
- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate:**
3 positions, immediate through 8/31/26
- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate:**
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate:**
2 positions 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate – Representing Minority 3-1(g):**
2 positions, immediate through 8/31/28
- ☐ **ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate – Representing Minority 3-1(g):**
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Positions to be Elected

REGION 2

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

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

Position 2 MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate-Representative of Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, immed. through 7/14/27

Position 3 MEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 5 EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
5 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
3 positions, immed. through 8/31/27
1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
1 position, immed. through 3/31/27

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Steve Conn,
swconn80@hotmail.com

REGION 3

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

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

Position 3 MEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
6 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
3 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
6 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
6 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
3 positions*, immed. through 8/31/26
3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
3 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Jim Brousseau,
jbrousseau@mea.org

REGION 4

Position 3 MEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

KEY:

* is used to represent Representative of Minority 3-1(g) seats

\$ is used to represent MEA funded seats

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Lance Hawblitz,
lancehawblitz@yahoo.com

REGION 5

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

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

Position 3 MEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 5 EA NEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
6 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

4 positions, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

2 positions*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
4 positions, immed. through 3/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 3/31/28

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, immed. through 3/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 3/31/28

Elections Chair: Mary Cooper,
coopermary29@gmail.com

REGION 6

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

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

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

5 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. through 3/31/28

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Cara Konicek,
carakonicek@gmail.com

REGION 7

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

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

6 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

6 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

3 positions, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, immed. through 3/31/28

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

3 positions, immed. through 8/31/26

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Kecia Jones,
jaxjokeci@gmail.com

REGION 8

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

1 position, immed. through 7/14/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26, same seat as above

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

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

6 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, immed. through 3/31/27

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Jeffry Wilson,
parliamentdestruction@gmail.com

REGION 9

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

1 position, immed. through 7/14/28

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

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

5 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

7 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

4 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

5 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

2 positions*, immed. through 8/31/26

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

5 positions, immed. through 3/31/27

2 positions*, immed. through 3/31/27

Elections Chair: Marcella Weldon,
weldonghea@gmail.com

REGION 10

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

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

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

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Stacey Hittle,
kamandkara@me.com

REGION 11

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

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

3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

2 positions*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Jennifer Shelito,
jshelito@mea.org

REGION 12

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

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26

1 position, immed. through 7/14/27

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

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

4 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Deb Rickert,
debrmarie@gmail.com

REGION 13

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

3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

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

3 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 positions, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position*, immed. through 3/31/28

Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 position, immed. through 8/31/27

1 position, immed. through 8/31/28

Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Elections Chair: Sue Federico,
suefed14855@icloud.com

REGION 14

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

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

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

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

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

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26

1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above

Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/28
 1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Region 14 MAHE EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
Region 14 MAHE EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Elections Chair: Greta Brock, gbrock@mea.org

REGION 15

Position 1 MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26
Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 7 EA/ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/27
Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27
Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/27
 1 position*, immed. through 8/31/28
Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Elections Chair: Not Available

REGION 16

Position 3 MEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Elections Chair: Al Beamish, albeamish8912@gmail.com

REGION 17

Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
 1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 14 ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 2 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26

Region 17 MAHE EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/27
Elections Chair: Erinn Parker, erinn.parker1@gmail.com

REGION 18

Position 1 MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 7/15/26
Position 4 MEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 6 EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 8 EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/28
Position 9 EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 10 ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
Position 11 ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 12 EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
 1 position*, immed. through 8/31/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Position 13 EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
 1 position*, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Position 15 ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Region 18 MAHE EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
Region 18 MAHE EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$
 1 position, 3-yr. term begins 4/1/26
Elections Chair: Steve Elenich, mraether526@googlemail.com

REGION 50

Region 50 ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$
 1 position, immed. through 8/31/28
 2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26
 3 positions, immed. through 8/31/26
 3 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26, same seat as above
Region 50 ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$
 2 positions*, immed. through 8/31/28
 2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/26

KEY:

- * is used to represent Representative of Minority 3-1(g) seats
- \$ is used to represent MEA funded seats

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*By Ross Wilson,
MESSA Executive Director*



Nominations sought for ESP Caucus Board

Nominations are being accepted for several positions on the MEA ESP Caucus Executive Board. Open positions are as follows:

DIRECTOR BY CLASSIFICATION

FOOD SERVICE:

1 Position – Immediate
to August 31, 2028

MAINTENANCE:

1 Position – Immediate
to August 31, 2028

OFFICE PERSONNEL:

1 Position – September 1, 2026
to August 31, 2029

TRANSPORTATION:

1 Position – September 1, 2026
to August 31, 2029

Elections to the ESP Caucus Executive Board will take place during the MEA Representative Assembly on April 17-18, 2026.

Information needed for each candidate includes: name, present occupation, home address, home and work telephone numbers, home email address, school district, name of nominee's local ESP association and written consent of the candidate running for office.

Candidates and nominators must be members in good standing of MEA/NEA. In order to receive delegate mailing labels, information must be received no later than February 17, 2026 and should be mailed to: Gezelle Oliver, MEA/ESP Department, P.O. Box 2573, 1216 Kendale Blvd., East Lansing, MI 48826-2573, or it can be sent via email to goliver@mea.org.

Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the MEA/ESP Caucus meeting on Friday, April 17, 2026 and those names will be added to the ballot. Candidates will be given up to three minutes to address delegates.

Biographical sketches can be sent to Heather Traxler, MEA staff assistant to the ESP Caucus. Please send them via email to htraxler@mea.org. She will send them collectively to all ESP RA Delegates in good standing.

Questions about the elections should be directed to Jim Sparapani, ESP Caucus Elections Chairperson, at 906-779-1984 or via email to jsparapani@att.net. **V**

Educator joins ‘Art of Democracy’ exhibition

For MEA member Sarah Ellis, making art is essential to being alive and human — like breathing. “For as long as we’ve been able to recognize that humans have existed, we’ve found art alongside them,” she says.

In a time of deep societal divisions, Ellis wants art to be a source of hope and empowerment. The high school Spanish teacher from Lowell was among a group of 19 Grand Rapids artists who exhibited “The Art of Democracy” at ArtPrize 2025.

The collaborative installation was on display during the annual international art competition in Grand Rapids from Sept. 18 to Oct. 4. The Art of Democracy was selected by the historic and venerable Fountain Street Church as its entry for ArtPrize 2025.

Several related events invited public participation, including a program with MEA members and others drawing connections between education and democracy.

“I think a lot of people feel out of control and like there’s nothing we can do to change how society is — when, in fact, we hold the power,” Ellis said. “That can look like just showing up to participate in an event that is close to your heart. Showing up, which I know can seem easier said than done.

“I’m guilty of this, too — we hide behind walls and screens and feel like the problems of the world are somebody else’s problems to solve, and really it’s us.”

“We hide behind walls and screens and feel like the problems of the world are somebody else’s problems to solve, and really it’s us.” — Sarah Ellis

The group of artists included painters, print-makers, photographers, three dimensional artists, installation artists, interactive artists, and a philosopher.

Ellis contributed an oil painting to the exhibit, which is connected in style and subject to a series of paintings she created in 2023 to honor MEA member Christine Beachler, a Lowell school librarian who has faced ongoing harassment for upholding students’ right to read.

In the new painting, in a slight nod to McCarthyism, a small faceless figure dressed in 1950s-style suit, vest, tie, pleated pants and wingtip shoes is in the foreground with books towering behind. Ellis said: “He’s kind of disheveled, with hands in pockets, and he’s walking away from the books.”



Two of the books lie flat, and the rest stand upright — spines backward — with the last one tilted to create a sort of A-shape and keep the stack from falling, which also serves as a frame for the figure.

“He’s walking toward the viewer in an image that I hope conveys in some sense that in order to have a functioning democracy, it’s essential to have a literate society. The sky is tiny, so it can be interpreted to say the books are larger than life.”



On the eve of opening day of ArtPrize, Ellis organized students who signed up to be part of “Sidewalk Words and Art” to decorate sidewalks surrounding Fountain Street Church with chalk poems and quotes on the theme of democracy.

Public events connected with the exhibition included an Art March for Democracy and a free live event featuring speakers and performers, including MEA members, who presented on the importance of education to shaping and upholding a democratic society.

Being part of the exhibition brought Ellis a sense of hope, she said. “I realize that I feel so much better when I do something, and it’s empowering to be part of a dialogue that is uplifting democracy. Art will always be there — it can’t be taken away.”

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