

MEA voice

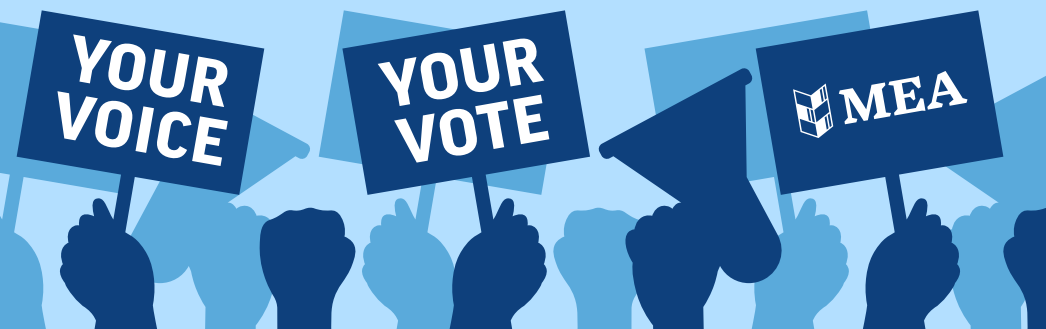
Oxford

Five years after
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BENSON
AND MORE FRIENDS OF EDUCATION

**MEA VOTER
GUIDE INSIDE
VOTE NOV. 3**



As educators, we know our voices matter. By belonging to MEA, we raise our voices together and advocate for stronger schools through collective strength.

If we want to create stronger local schools, we must stay involved in the political process. Every decision about public education — from educator pay and healthcare costs to per-pupil funding and certification requirements — is a political decision made by the leaders we're electing this November.

It's up to us to make our voices heard in political decisions about public education by electing leaders from school boards to the governor's office to Congress who will listen.

That includes leaders like Jocelyn Benson, who understands that we are the experts on student learning. As our next governor, Jocelyn will ensure we always have a seat at the table and a voice in decisions about our schools.

Jocelyn understands that we can't improve student outcomes if we don't have enough qualified teachers, school support staff and other educators working in every public school, helping every student fulfill their potential.

We need to recruit and retain the high-quality educators our students

need by providing school employees with increased compensation, affordable healthcare and a secure retirement. Jocelyn gets it: Increasing educator compensation is a key pillar of her comprehensive education plan. Learn more at JocelynBenson.com.

In addition to increasing educator pay, Jocelyn will protect the progress we have made in Michigan over the past eight years, including increased school funding, free breakfast and lunch, mental health supports, workplace rights and other critical areas.

This November, let's elect leaders who will listen to the voices of educators as the frontline experts on education — and provide our members from Pre-K through higher education with the resources we need to help students succeed and thrive.

Please visit MEAVotes.org to find friends of public education on your local ballot. Then get out and vote — using absentee ballot drop boxes, voting early in-person, or heading to polls on Election Day. And contribute to MEA-PAC to help get pro-education candidates over the finish line.

Our educator voices matter; let's make sure we're heard loud and clear across our state this November. ▼



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- **SIGN** the Membership Transfer Addendum

Members who already have transferable membership will not see this pop-up. You're all set!

Verify your contact information!

MEA locals with the highest percentage of members participating have a chance to win prizes as well!

For more information or help logging in, contact the MEA Help Center at 866-MEA-HELP (866-632-4357) or help@mea.org.



Paraeducators have long wanted better training to do the hard work of supporting students in learning, and MEA is helping to deliver with Paraeducator Bootcamp, page 34.



Para wins award, page 7.

On the cover: It's time to vote! Learn more about candidates recommended by MEA members across the state, including Jocelyn Benson for governor, in election coverage throughout this issue of the *Voice*. Photo by Miriam Garcia.

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MEA
Voice



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What changed in Oxford since school shooting

MEA member Melissa Gibbons knows everyone in Oxford suffered terrible effects five years ago when a 15-year-old student gunman killed four classmates and injured seven others, including a teacher.

“Whether you were in the school or not in the school, your kid was there that day, not there that day. It truly devastated the entire community.”

But Gibbons came to realize she had an unusual perspective. “Those of us who were there that day with our own children had to kind of put things aside. We had to be teachers and not just parents.”

Gibbons is a veteran English teacher; husband Jim is the longtime band director and union leader; and their three daughters were students at Oxford High School at the time of the shootings in November 2021.

In the aftermath, she brought the educator/parent point of view to a role in national activism through NEA, which she said, “also helped with my own healing. It gave me purpose.”

Just a few months after Oxford, an 18-year-old gunman killed 19 students and two teachers, injuring others, at a school in Uvalde, TX — amid a year, 2022, that would set a record for the highest number of school shootings since detailed tracking began.

That summer, President Joe Biden signed the first major federal gun legislation in 30 years, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, enhancing background checks, limiting gun purchases by convicted domestic abusers, and allocating \$15 billion for school security and mental health.

Then in February 2023, a shooting at Michigan State University again rocked the state as three students were killed and five critically injured on campus. Later that year, a newly elected Michigan Legislature passed several broadly popular gun safety measures.



Those gun violence prevention laws, signed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, expanded background checks to all gun purchases, set safe storage requirements, and established guardrails to prevent access to firearms by individuals deemed a threat to themselves or others.

More action is needed to address educator shortages and student mental health, Gibbons says. “Where we need to continue investing more money is in having adequate counselors and staffing to be able to directly interact with students who may be struggling.”

*Read more on pages 9-14 in our package of stories, **Oxford: Five Years After.***



ID theft protection for MEA members

Identity theft affects individuals at every stage of life, from newborns to centenarians, but the specific methods fraudsters use — and the personal data they target — shift dramatically as we age.

That’s why MEA has partnered with Securus ID / Aura to provide our members with access to a complimentary ID Theft Recovery plan. Members can register at mea.securusid.com.

In addition, MEA members have access to Aura’s award winning, all-in-one protection plans to protect against identity theft, scams and online threats. Enrollment options include individual and family plans at a 50% member discount with month-to-month billing and no contract. Family plans include up to 11 adults and unlimited minors so you can protect multiple generations for one low cost.

Visit mea.securusid.com to register and view plan options, pricing and enrollment. Learn more about identity theft vulnerabilities from birth to the golden years, at mea.org/stages-of-identity-theft-by-age.



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Sarah Foster
Teacher
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"One benefit I have really appreciated is free physical therapy through Hinge Health. I have been using the program to help with ongoing shoulder issues. The guided exercises are easy to follow and can be done from home on my own schedule, making it simple to stay consistent with my recovery. It has been a helpful tool in reducing pain, improving strength and getting me back to everyday activities."



Dawn Sommers
Teacher
Oak Park Schools



Melissa Dodge
Teacher
Troy School District



... you need peace of mind

"Aiden, who was 6 years old at the time, needed 3 inches of his colon removed. Through all of it, I never once had to choose between his care and our bills. As a single mom, that's everything. I didn't have to be the parent fighting insurance companies. I could just be the parent holding my son's hand. MESSA let me be strong when he needed me most."

Learn how MESSA cares for members like you at

messa.org/ForYou

Fraser paraeducator wins MEA award:

‘Our perspective matters’

In the 16 years since becoming a paraeducator in Fraser Public Schools, MEA member Michelle James helped form a union, assisted in bargaining the group’s first contract, and held every position in her local — including her current role as president.

But it wasn’t until a recent bout with cancer that James says she stopped “working scared” and embraced a new mindset she calls “professionally blunt.”

“I wasn’t going to wait anymore for someone to invite me to the table,” she said. “I became determined to make sure that our voices were heard whenever decisions were being made that affected members, our jobs, our students, our lives, because our perspective matters.”

For her fierce commitment and advocacy, James is winner of the 2026 Leon A. Brunner Award — MEA’s highest honor given annually to an Education Support Professional (ESP) for dedication to union values, leadership and service.

“Your voice matters, and you never know the impact it might have,” James said in accepting the award at the MEA ESP Statewide Conference in July. “Thank you for this heartfelt honor.”

Like many, James identifies a gap between the significance of the work that paraeducators do and the respect they receive in return. She has long fought for higher wages and improved benefits but in recent years has expanded her focus.

For example, she and her team secured extra pay and stronger protections for members who monitor students’ fragile health conditions and administer medication. “One of my greatest passions is

strengthening our contract language, because a strong contract protects people,” James said.

In 2010, when she first began working with students who have special needs, James was shocked to receive no training despite being assigned to help a second grader exhibiting violent behavior. She was stabbed in her first day on the job.

“Then I got together with the social worker for a couple weeks who gave me some strategies,” James said.

“But looking back now with all the experience and the knowledge that I have, I’m like, ‘Holy smokes, that was horrible.’”

Since then, the local union has bargained paid professional development for paraeducators into the contract.

In addition, James reaches out to new hires to share her cell phone number and names of coworkers in their building to assist with questions or concerns.

Her goal this year is to get a handle on the scope of student behavior problems and





Stephanie Givinsky, a high school physics teacher and president of the Lakeview Education Association in St. Clair Shores, nominated James for MEA's Brunner Award.

options for how the union can help equip members to improve classroom safety. Educators across the country are grappling with an increase in student aggression.

Paraeducators are bearing the brunt of verbal and physical assaults as center-based programs have closed and not enough resources have flowed to mainstreamed classrooms to help staff manage challenging behaviors, James said.

"If I can support a member who is trying their best but needs more, then maybe that person becomes able to advocate for themselves or feels confident enough to say, 'Hey, I'm having trouble here.'"

Being part of a union, attending meetings and conferences where she encounters other leaders, inspires James to keep going and try new ideas, she said. "The union really ignites something in me. The more involved I get, the more I find the power from within."

Over the years, her professional work has shifted and evolved from running academic groups for K-6 students in resource rooms to assisting middle schoolers who have identified learning difficulties succeed in general education classrooms.

"I feel like an octopus, because I do it all — reading, writing, math, social studies — and I have to be flexible and provide whatever students need," James said.

From day one, she couldn't believe the low hourly pay that even longtime paras were making. She joined a fledgling effort to organize a union, which succeeded but didn't result in a settled contract for three long years.

That first agreement was barebones but laid the foundation for future gains, said Freya Weberman, the MEA executive director who serves the Fraser Paraeducators Association and wrote a letter in support of James' award nomination.

"Michelle has raised up the Fraser paraprofessionals in every way and at every turn," Weberman said, calling James a modest leader who "who simply and efficiently just gets stuff done regardless of whether it is her job or not."

The contract for paraeducators now offers competitive wages, association release time, paid professional development, vacation days to cover several unpaid school break days, paid snow days, cash in lieu of insurance, longevity pay, and protection for member discipline.

Two years ago, James was elected president of her local after serving in every other union role. A breast cancer diagnosis two weeks later forced her to delegate to her executive board — as she assisted behind the scenes — a challenge that strengthened the leadership team.

Having cancer also taught James about herself. She used to get nervous talking with administrators but learned to stand in her strength and speak her mind. "Now I try to help others realize they can stand by the value of their work and advocate for themselves — and I'll be right there with them."

Last year, James took on a wider role as vice president of Education Support Professionals in her 6-E Coordinating Council to elevate the needs of custodians, bus drivers, food service workers, office professionals and others across districts in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties.

Stephanie Givinsky, a high school physics teacher and president of the Lakeview Education Association in St. Clair Shores, nominated James for MEA's Brunner Award after working with her in the 6-E Coordinating Council. "She brings incredible energy," Givinsky said.

"She's welcoming, kind, compassionate, dedicated. She cares about kids; she cares about paras; she cares about teachers; she cares about the profession. Michelle has a heart of gold, and she just works so hard."

James grew up in Warren and studied biology at Oakland University before marrying and starting a family. "I have a special-needs daughter, and so I always say: my home life makes me good at my job, and my job makes me good at my home life."

She loves helping people in both her professional and union roles: "I always think, *What would I want somebody to do for my own child?* And I know the way that we can support special ed kids is by surrounding them with good people. That's why I'm here and it's what I do." ▼



Oxford: Five Years After

*Stories by Brenda Ortega,
MEA Voice Editor*

‘I want people to know we’re OK’



In five years since a deadly school shooting devastated the Oxford community, much has been done to heal the collective trauma, says Oxford High School Band Director Jim Gibbons: “We’ve kind of turned a corner in some ways.”

New building security systems and increased focus on mental health helped to restore a sense of safety. Close bonds forged among educators bolstered their ability to support students, family members, and themselves through a long struggle.

“We have a lot of teachers who could retire who haven’t,” said Gibbons, the local union president for more than 20 years. “I’m incredibly optimistic about what Oxford is capable of.”

Yet reminders of the terrible events of Nov. 30, 2021, still can overwhelm the good, he added. “That slice of life can sometimes completely bury all of the phenomenal things that have happened and do happen in the everyday life of our kids.”

Not a day goes by that he doesn’t remember. “There’s a part of me — when I walk in in the morning and the

building is quiet — that is honoring their memory.”

When a 15-year-old student gunman killed four and injured seven at Oxford High School, the community reeled and public condolences poured in, grieving the senseless loss of life: Madisyn Baldwin, 17; Justin Shilling, 17; Tate Myre, 16; and Hana St. Juliana, 14.

“People may not have known how much we appreciated it, but to have the state’s teachers standing with us and supporting us and understanding us — that was huge,” Gibbons said.

The aftermath, amid the holiday season, was grim. Recovery has been painful and slow. The work continues as folks seek healing in coming together, he said.

“That looks like 7,000 people showing up on Friday night for a football game. It’s selling out the auditorium for the musical. It’s the donations that we get from businesses to serve lunch to staff during the week of November 30th.”

District practices around each anniversary have evolved, but Oxford schools will likely never be open on that

date. The six-year mark will be extra challenging because Nov. 30 will again fall on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, as in 2021, Gibbons said.

“I think the cadence of that is going to be hard for people who were in the building.”

A hopeful sign noted by Gibbons and wife Melissa — an English teacher in the district — has been the large number of students from the class of 2022 who recently graduated from college with degrees in helping professions: teaching, therapy, medicine, social work, counseling.

Not only were these students seniors when the shooting happened, “that came off of two years of trauma associated with COVID,” Gibbons said.

He sees the young people’s commitment to service as a testament to the love and care the Oxford community has both given and received. For that, he’s grateful.

“I want people to know we’re OK. We still struggle, but we’re good. And Oxford is a great place to be.” ▼

Photos of Jim Gibbons conducting in May 2022 courtesy of Andrew David Perkins.

Oxford: *Five Years After*

Five years ago, Emma Trush was a senior at Oxford High School when a student gunman opened fire in the building on Nov. 30, 2021, killing four classmates, injuring several others, and splitting her life into two parts: Before and After.

Before, Trush had been certain of her career plan to become a special education teacher, sparked by the joy of growing up with a younger sister who has moderate cognitive impairment and maximum zest for life.

Today, however, Trush is a first-year special education teacher in the district. She fought her way back to a profession she loves, won a prestigious CMU award for an undergraduate capstone project promoting student safety, and graduated from college with honors.

Trush shares her remarkable journey to remind the world how survivors are left to handle complex, life-altering effects long after a school shooting fades from headlines or gets replaced by another one.

“There’s no blueprint to grief; there’s no blueprint to PTSD,” she said. “I am com-

count on being how it always has been my entire life was my sister.”

Bella still wanted to sing and dance and play Mario Kart, providing “escape,” Trush said. “Even though everyone else’s innocence was ripped away from us, she’s still here and she’s still bright and she’s overcome so many things that she was just that light in my life.”

Seeing her little sister’s experiences in special education had introduced Trush to “amazing” educators and programs in Oxford and Oakland County and ignited her passion for becoming a teacher.

Survivor becomes teacher, returns home

After, she wasn’t sure she could go through with it. “Everything felt gray,” she says.

Before, she was in the process of choosing a college, having recently competed for a merit-based full-ride scholarship to Central Michigan University. After, she won the scholarship and chose CMU despite knowing, “My light was dimmed.”

Before, she didn’t believe a school shooting could happen in her tight-knit community. But after fleeing gunfire in the hallways of her high school on a bright Tuesday afternoon, she could no longer live inside the illusion of safety.

“It never happens to you — until it does.”

For a time in the aftermath of the tragedy, Trush feared it would negatively define her life forever. Struggling with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), she couldn’t imagine returning to Oxford after graduating the following June.

fortable talking about it because I feel like sharing my story is only going to help others and it’s only going to help my future profession.”

Before, she had been a high-achieving, self-motivated student. Five years after, she is a promising new educator and MEA member whose courage and determination in the face of overwhelming trauma and grief offer a profound message of hope.

“I can’t let this stop me. I am a people helper. To the day I die, I want to help people.”

TRUSH CREDITS many helpers with supporting her in the heavy task of moving forward and trying to heal from the terrible events of that day: family, friends, teachers, the Oxford community — and eventually college roommates, classmates and professors.

Her sister with special needs, Bella, was 10 at the time and became Trush’s comfort — because “the one thing that I could

At the time of the shootings, “Bella was in fifth grade, and her teacher was really close with my family because she had taught her for five years. I remember that day, her teacher told Bella, ‘Go give your sisters a hug when you get home.’”

Growing up in Oxford, Trush took for granted the closeness of people, the small-town atmosphere, the lifelong friendships that started in pre-school dance classes.

“We were known as a farm town,” she said. “One thing I loved about my grade was we knew everyone’s name. We were all friends. I felt safe at school.”

Her sense of safety shattered in an instant.

CMU professor teaches from inside-out

Just after lunch on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

THAT DAY she veered from her normal routine. A gut feeling led Trush to skip the long post-lunch route she usually walked with friends — deep into the hallway where the shooter would begin



As a professor at Central Michigan University, MEA member Brandi Ansley teaches aspiring educators from an “inside-out” perspective. For Emma Trush, whose post-traumatic stress threatened to derail her dreams, that made all the difference.

Trush took her first class taught by Ansley at the beginning of her sophomore year, just 18 months after experiencing severe trauma: She was in Oxford High School in November 2021 when four students were shot and killed not far from where she was walking.

Trush shared her traumatic history with Ansley in an introductory Google form, advising, “Hey, this is still very fresh to me. There might be days that are worse than others... and I might need time — especially around the anniversary and all that stuff.”

Ansley reached out to ask how to help. “Among the things in the messages that we talked about was it's up to you how much you're willing to share. I very much welcome it, but also by no means should you feel under pressure to talk about anything you don't want to talk about.”

Ansley became a mentor perfectly suited for the role, having started her career in psychology and mental health care before transitioning to special education and academia. “Even though the field tends to be very outside-in, my argument is no, it's more inside-out,” Ansley says.

She believes human beings have inner workings that matter more than purely observable outcomes. “I'm really familiar with how our personal journeys in life inspire a lot about what we then do with our lives, particularly in the helping professions.”

Ansley encourages students with high empathy not to suppress it but to invest that same care in themselves.

In class with Ansley, Trush processed an experience from freshman year when an instructor's insensitive question about the school shooting caused anxiety and isolation. “Healing from trauma never means 100% healed,” Ansley said.

“Just like if you have a physical injury and there could be a scar. Even if otherwise that body part is fully functional, it also is subject to being re-injured. Same with emotional types of struggles.”

Ansley was faculty advisor on Trush's capstone project for the CMU Honors College, helping her develop a literature review to write a children's book promoting school shooting safety.

The multi-year process of designing and executing a capstone culminated in a gallery event, which Trush said her parents attended specifically to meet Ansley and other professors.

“They wanted to meet the people who helped me be supported throughout this, because it's hard to drop your child off at school after your whole world just changed and hope that she was going to feel support.”

Trush's research and book project won the Outstanding Capstone Award in Professional Leadership from Ansley's nomination at a CMU Honors College ceremony last December. She graduated in May and returned to Oxford to teach this fall.

Ansley said, “It is sad there is a need for this book, but I'm extremely proud of Emma for how she has processed her traumatic stress and channeled this tragedy, using her creative intelligence to serve a higher purpose and address a harsh reality we cannot ignore.

“What a blessing to get to be along this journey.”

Oxford: Five Years After

his rampage — and instead review notes for a quiz.

She was walking to class when she heard loud bangs she first thought might be lockers slamming shut. Still moving toward the sound, she saw students running in her direction.

“I’m kind of just frozen in time like, *What is going on?* Because it was just screams and nobody was saying anything. And then I see one of our family friends, who was a freshman at the time and just looks at me and says, ‘Emma, you need to run!’

“In that moment, I immediately turned around and started running out. That’s when the word ‘shooter’ was being screamed, and the pieces started to kind of flow together in my mind that this might be real.”

Outside, she made a brief and emotional call to her mom, jumped in a car with friends as numerous police and tactical vehicles arrived on scene, and realized her other sister — 18 months younger, “my best friend” — remained in the building.

Trush texted in all-caps, “SCHOOL SHOOTER” and her sister replied, from a classroom on the opposite side of the building, “What is going on?”

“I’m hysterically crying, and I’m trying to call her, and I know that wasn’t smart because you’re supposed to be quiet, and she’s barricaded inside the door. So she texted me back, and she texted my mom, and she’s like, ‘There’s guns outside the door. There’s guns everywhere.’”

Their dad left work to find them; her sister was released; and Trush’s family reunited, collapsing in each other’s arms. Later she would learn of four classmates who died, including a friend, Justin Shilling, 17;

Madisyn Baldwin, 17; Tate Myre, 16; and Hana St. Juliana, 14.

“I remember everything photographically, but driving away from the school and seeing all the ambulances and cops and SWAT cars, that is my huge PTS trigger to this day. I hate cop lights. I hate sirens. It’s just that identification I have with them to a horrible event.”

FOR MONTHS, life became a series of monumental challenges. Attending funerals. Restarting classes at the middle school. Returning to the high school. Graduating with classmates missing. Leaving home.

Learning didn’t return to normal that school year. Rigorous academic demands took a back seat to caring for people’s mental health and emotional needs. The start of college shocked her system, Trush said.

She no longer felt understood by those around her; she felt isolated. The first day of college classes amplified her tension when Trush gave her name and hometown during self-introductions, and the instructor replied, “Oh, so you were at the school shooting?”

“That shook me to my core,” Trush said. “I remember going home after the first class being like, ‘I can’t do this. I am not meant to be here. That’s all I’m going to be known as.’”

For the first year, she was too afraid to use a public restroom on campus, which was the location at the high school where the violence began and her

friend Justin was killed. She didn’t know if she could be a teacher, or work in a school, though she didn’t change her major.

Trush hadn’t yet bonded with her roommate or dormmates, all of whom she now describes as “my ride-or-dies. I roomed with them all four years.”

Her roommate, Lily, became a close confidant. “She was the first person I truly opened up to. And her support was just... speechless. She knew exactly what to do; she just needed to listen... If I didn’t meet her, I don’t think I ever would’ve felt at home.”



“I can’t let this stop me. I am a people helper. To the day I die, I want to help people.”

— Emma Trush, Oxford survivor and educator

By the time Nov. 30, 2022, came around, Trush's new friends witnessed her raw pain.

"I stayed at school because I thought I could," Trush said, "and I regretted that decision pretty immediately. I was struggling very hard that day of the one-year anniversary, being at school and not being at home near family and near people who went through it, too."

Her friends submitted a referral to the university's mental health service, CMU Cares, and Trush gratefully used the chance to talk that day — and every year after — becoming a strong advocate of the free program. But she was disappointed not to hear more from college officials.

"I think I just wanted something personal from the university saying, 'Hey, we hear you and we see you. We support you. We're here for you. If you need anything, please let us know.'"

Weeks later, on Feb. 13, 2023, shootings at Michigan State University killed three students, injured five more, and retraumatized Oxford survivors, some of whom were on campus and again found themselves hiding from an active shooter as college freshmen.

The stressors prompted Trush to act ahead of the second anniversary. She met with officials in the CMU president's office to press for direct outreach to any students from Oxford.

"We had a really good conversation," Trush said. "From that point on, we were in touch through my last

'How can I help students in a way that is going to be inclusive to all?'

couple of years at Central because they took it very well."

HEALING has not happened in linear progression. However, sophomore year marked significant changes for the better.

With a trusted friend group and most general degree requirements completed, Trush began classes in her major with a cohort of aspiring educators who would form cohesive relationships over the next three years.

She connected with faculty, including MEA member Brandi Ansley, who began her career in psychology and mental health care more than 25 years ago before transitioning to teaching and special education.

Ansley, who teaches courses in special education research and practice and facilitates the student teaching seminar, became a mentor and the professor who first allowed Trush to feel safe enough to show her true self in times of struggle.

"Having a professor that I was able to turn those (masking) parts off and be real and have support throughout everything, even when I wasn't in courses, meant so, so much to me," Trush said.

"I wouldn't have been able to be the person I am today without Dr. Ansley, Dr. (Dawn) Decker, all the good people at Central that helped me find my passion again."

As a student in the CMU Honors College, Trush was required to complete a senior

capstone project. She mulled options as a sophomore: "What do I want to do? Something with school shootings. How can I help kids?"

She attended workshops and decided on a creative project. "I kept thinking, *How can I help students in a way that is going to be inclusive to all?* Because that's my mind. That's your mind in special education. You're thinking about inclusion all the time."

She latched on to the idea of a children's book: a story-in-metaphor to prepare K-2 students and those with cognitive impairments to avoid danger they can't fully comprehend.

In junior year, Trush had to get a proposal approved. An early submission was declined, but with the help of Ansley as her faculty advisor, she developed a winning plan that included a research component on children's working and long-term memory to inform the book's content.

The result is a "whimsical story" of an attention-seeking elephant popping balloons at school and a classroom of children blocking the door, turning off lights, hiding and staying quiet to get Ellie the elephant to go away.

Another result: Trush's creative/research project, "From Pages to Practice: School Shooting Safety Using Children's Literature," was selected by the CMU Honors Program for the Outstanding Capstone Award in Professional Leadership.

"I'm extremely proud of Emma for using her creative intelligence to serve a higher purpose and address a harsh reality we cannot ignore."

— Dr. Brandi Ansley, CMU professor

Oxford: *Five Years After*

Next she hopes to move beyond the prototype book she created and find a publisher or self-publish to make it available to other educators.

Trush says she was stunned by the award recognition, having often felt like “an imposter” in the Honors College next to other high achieving students in science, engineering and math majors.

“Winning the award just solidified everything — like this is exactly where I was supposed to be.”

THE TEST came during student teaching in senior year. Trush got the chance to practice leading a classroom and try out her children’s story with students during her assignment in an elementary special education classroom in Mt. Pleasant Public Schools.

Titled *The Elephant Who Wouldn’t Stop Popping Balloons*, her book helps students best remember what to do if they act it out as the teacher reads and the story and motions are practiced weekly, Trush said.

“We did this as a hands-on experience that we were all doing together, going

through the motions, moving around the room. I knew this, but they reminded me all the time — my kids loved movement. I miss them every single day... They really taught me how to be a teacher.”

A key philosophy of her teaching, developed through her life experiences and college training, is that inclusive environments are not just created but fostered. “I tell this to everyone I know,” she said.

“You can create an inclusive environment, but what are you doing every single day to make sure these students are comfortable, are safe with you, are growing as a student, growing as an individual?”

She also learned from her mentor, Dr. Ansley, to turn that focus on herself. Student wellbeing depends on educator wellbeing, and educators carry a heavy load, Trush said.

“I have learned significantly through college, through student teaching, how to separate myself from the classroom personally, to know the warning signs. When am I getting triggered? What can I do to take care of myself?”

“Because I can’t protect everyone from everything. That’s a very hard truth. Having little sisters, I want to protect them from everything in the world, and I can’t.”

What also makes a difference is a supportive community, and Trush has that in spades. This summer, she accepted a job in Oxford Community Schools as a self-contained elementary special education teacher and says, “It feels really good to be home.

“All my previous teachers have reached out, gave me hugs at professional development days, and made this transition coming back to my home district wonderful. I’m so happy to be making a change in this district, as it has completely shaped me into the educator I am today!”

With all she’s accomplished in the past five years, Trush feels confident in her training, ability and resilience, she said.

“I am going to do great things no matter what I’ve been through. That doesn’t define me. I’m going to be a good educator. I’m going to make an impact on students. I’m going to provide them with a safe, inclusive environment.” ▼



MEA *for* BENSON

Pick Benson for public education

We all know Jocelyn Benson as Michigan's secretary of state, but as candidate for governor she introduces herself as "the daughter of public school teachers" in nearly every campaign speech and appearance she makes.

A strong believer in public schools, Benson is MEA's recommended candidate in the critical race to succeed Gov. Gretchen Whitmer — selected by a diverse group of MEA members who serve on the Statewide Screening and Recommendations Committee.

Benson told educators at the MEA Winter Conference last February that her parents were special education teachers and NEA members who inspired her to a career in public service and demonstrated how educators quietly show up early and stay late for students every day.

"A significant reason why I am running for this office is because I know and have seen and have lived firsthand your struggles and the need to have a governor who has walked in your shoes and is on your side," she said in the MEA candidate's forum.

"That's who I am; that's who I've been my entire life."

Benson has put forth a broad and detailed vision for public education to ensure stable, equitable funding; improve educator pay and supports,

including school support staff; and expand learning and career opportunities for students.

She's called for increasing educators' compensation. Her plan would expand play-based, hands-on and STEM learning for K-8 students; build more varied career programming for high schoolers; and create wrap-around services to better support children and families.

In a recent television news interview,

Benson vowed to bring "increased focus and priority on funding public education.

"That's something that has to be the foundation of everything we do, because we do not grow our economy if we don't improve our public education system," she told WDIV-Detroit. "My economic vision for the state is linked to improving our schools."

She has committed to addressing rising out-of-pocket health care costs for public employees — a key issue for



Jocelyn Benson is MEA's recommended candidate for governor — selected by a diverse group of MEA members who serve on the Statewide Screening and Recommendations Committee.

educators — and said she would have signed a bill, vetoed by Whitmer, that returned the right for public employees to bargain over health care.

“I look forward to signing these bills into law as governor,” Benson said in a statement after the veto. “And I’ll take on anyone, no matter how rich or powerful, who stands in the way.”

James also wants to tie educator pay to test scores; require all K-12 schools to post curriculum online; make teachers’ lesson plans subject to public disclosure; and mandate parental notification and opt-in for classroom instruction on undefined “controversial subjects.”

Benson has said Trump’s voucher scheme lacks transparency and oversight. “As

She advocates getting rid of the state’s “one size fits all” funding model for a more equitable system based on students’ and communities’ needs. Her plan separates K-12 and higher education funding but ensures support for both.

“Both are critical to enabling our education community to prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow. But we have to change the structure of how we’re funding education in the state if we’re going to get to that goal we all have — which is for our schools to be the best in the nation.”

First elected to statewide office alongside Whitmer in 2018, Benson streamlined and modernized Secretary of State services. She oversaw implementation of separate voter-approved initiatives to draw non-partisan legislative district maps and expand days, hours and methods of voting.

A former law school professor specializing in election law, education law, and civil rights, Benson became the youngest woman to lead an accredited law school in the U.S. as dean of Wayne State University’s law school from 2012-16.

Her goal as governor will be to restore not only pay but respect for educators, she told MEA members back in February. “As governor, I will make sure that you have a seat at every table. Every decision that is being made about you and your work, you will have a voice in, you will be part of.” ▼

On page 24, read more about Benson and her running mate, Sen. Winnie Brinks — a trusted friend of public education. Then make your plan to vote!

‘Who do you want Michigan’s leaders to work for — the people or the powerful?’

Standing for “the power of the people” is a constant refrain of Benson’s campaign, especially when comparing her leadership to that of her opponent, Congressman John James.

“Who do you want Michigan’s leaders to work for — the people or the powerful?” Benson said in a victory speech after winning the Democratic primary. “I will work for all of you and every Michigander in this state, not the highest bidder, not corporate interests, not Donald Trump — you.”

By contrast, James’ two terms in Congress have seen him embrace extreme, far-right policies to earn Trump’s support. His top education priority is to adopt Trump’s federal school voucher scheme to funnel tax dollars to private and religious schools, an idea repeatedly rejected by Michigan voters.

governor, I can’t commit taxpayer dollars to a program under Trump’s control with zero transparency or assurance it will deliver for Michigan students. That’s reckless and irresponsible.”

She repeatedly points out studies that have shown Michigan led the nation in cuts to education funding over 25 years — with an inflation-adjusted decline of 30% from 2002 to 2015, according to education policy researchers at Michigan State University.

“The fact is we have defunded our schools at a higher rate than any other state for three decades, and the small amount of work that Democrats have done recently to restore some of that funding is far from what’s needed to actually get to where we need to be to have the excellent schools we want,” Benson argued at the MEA candidate’s forum.

Benson joined union members at the Detroit Labor Day March on Sept. 7, including stopping by to meet with MEA members. Pictured (from left) are MEA Vice President Bob Callender, MEA Senior Executive Director Erik Edoff, Benson, MEA President Chandra Madaffer, and Rochester Education Association President Liz Schroeck.



MEA ELECTION 2026

PULLOUT VOTER GUIDE

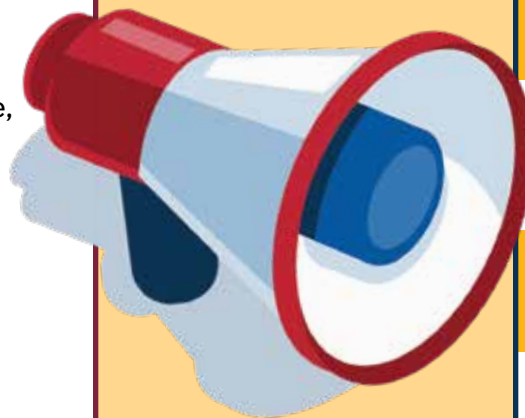
On or before Election Day on Nov. 3, it's crucial that MEA members — and your family and friends — vote for pro-education, pro-labor candidates.

The last time Michigan had a pro-education majority in the House, Senate, and Governor's office, educators made great strides to regain rights and create a brighter future for students. This included:

- *Fixing the state's broken teacher evaluation law.*
- *Restoring prohibited subjects of bargaining, including teacher placement, evaluation, support staff privatization and more.*
- *Rolling back the unfair tax on retired school employees' pensions.*
- *Implementing free school breakfast and lunch for all students.*
- *Increasing investments in student mental health support, student loan forgiveness for educators, school safety, educator recruitment, rural transportation and more.*

These victories were hard won, but we're not done. We can either continue this progress in 2027 by regaining pro-education control, or education opponents could undo all of these gains. Learn more at MEA.org/HardWonNotDone.

Make Your Voice Heard — Make Your Plan to Vote!



Visit the “Plan to Vote” area of MEAVotes.org for step-by-step instructions and resources to make your voice heard!

1 Are you registered to vote?

If you're not registered at your current address, you can register online until 14 days before the election or with your local clerk through Election Day.

2 Who are you supporting?

Find MEA recommended candidates near you with the Online Voter Guide at MEAVotes.org.

3 How will you vote?

Vote from home with an absentee ballot. Vote early in-person at your local clerk starting Saturday, Oct. 24. Vote at the polls on Election Day from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Learn more about all three options at MEAVotes.org.

4 When will you vote?

If voting absentee by mail, do so as soon as possible — or use a secure, approved ballot drop box provided by your local clerk. Look up your clerk's office or polling place at MEAVotes.org.

5 Know your rights!

With threats to voting rights, be informed and prepared by visiting MichiganVoting.org. Get answers about timelines, student voting rules, ID requirements, what to do if you feel your voting rights are challenged, and more.

Visit MEAVotes.org to search for local recommended candidates, find resources to plan — and protect — your vote, and give to MEA-PAC!

MEAVotes.org



MEA STATEWIDE S&R COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

MEA's Screening & Recommendation (S&R) Process places control of MEA political recommendations in the hands of MEA members from across the state from diverse backgrounds and roles within the public education community.

The process is governed by the MEA Political Action Committee (MEA-PAC) Council, made up of local delegates from MEA's 60+ coordinating councils.

Recommendation decisions are based on candidate responses to questionnaires and interviews regarding education and labor issues only.

Recommendations at the state level are made by the Statewide S&R Committee, which is composed of elected members from various parts of the state and job classifications.

The S&R process for legislative districts is controlled at the local level, where interviews and recommendation votes are taken by MEA members from those jurisdictions serving on local S&R Committees.

Recommendations for federal offices must also be confirmed by the board of the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.



Proposal 1

Constitutional Convention (ConCon)

Opposed — Vote NO

Have voting questions?

Need to report a problem?

Call the nonpartisan Election Protection Hotline at (866) OUR-VOTE or (866) 687-8683, or visit MichiganVoting.org.

NOTE: If a race is not listed, that means the local Screening & Recommending Committee chose not to issue a recommendation in that race by our Sept. 28 publishing deadline. MEA is neutral on Proposal 2. Check MEAVotes.org for updates.

STATEWIDE

Governor / Lieutenant Governor

Jocelyn Benson / Winnie Brinks

United States Senate

Abdul El-Sayed

Secretary of State

Garlin Gilchrist II

Attorney General

Eli Savit

Michigan Supreme Court

Justice Megan Kathleen Cavanagh

Justice Noah P. Hood

State Board of Education

Judith Pritchett | Tiffany Tilley

Michigan State University Board of Trustees

Brianna Scott | Kelly Tebay Zemke

University of Michigan Board of Regents

Paul Brown | Amir Makled

Wayne State Board of Governors

Shereef Akeel | Richard Mack

Prioritizing Reductions for School Employee Health Costs

CONGRESS

CD 1	Callie Barr
CD 3	Hillary Scholten
CD 4	Sean McCann
CD 5	Christian Vukasovich
CD 6	Debbie Dingell
CD 7	William Lawrence
CD 8	Kristen McDonald Rivet
CD 10	Christina Bertrand Hines
CD 11	Jeremy Moss
CD 12	Rashida Tlaib
CD 13	Donavan McKinney

STATE SENATE

SD 1	Justin Onwenu
SD 2	Abbas Alaweih
SD 3	John Conyers III
SD 4	Darrin Camilleri
SD 5	Matt Koleszar (MEA Member)
SD 6	Mary Cavanagh
SD 7	Jason Hoskins
SD 8	Dayna Polehanki (MEA Member)
SD 9	Theresa Brooks
SD 10	Natalie Price
SD 11	Veronica Klinefelt
SD 12	Kevin Hertel
SD 13	Sean Carlson
SD 14	Sue Shink
SD 15	Felicia Brabec
SD 16	Deandre Barnes (MEA Member)
SD 18	Anthony Pennock (MEA Member)
SD 19	Julie M. Rogers
SD 20	Dale Murney
SD 21	Sarah Anthony
SD 24	Edlira Sako
SD 27	John D. Cherry
SD 28	Rashida Harrison (MEA Member)
SD 29	Abbie Groff-Blaszak
SD 30	Carol Glanville
SD 31	Chris Kleinjans
SD 32	Rebecca Amidon
SD 35	Chedrick Greene
SD 38	No Position

After the delay and ultimate veto of legislation that would have addressed skyrocketing health care costs for public school employees, MEA asked all candidates their stance on the following MEA position:

MEA supports immediate passage in 2027 of legislation addressing PA 152 of 2011, which mandated limits on public employer health insurance premium coverage — including providing healthcare cost relief for educators, more fairly sharing cost increases between public employers and employees, and returning discussions about healthcare costs to local collective bargaining

We're pleased to report that EVERY candidate listed here agreed to make health care cost reductions a priority when elected. (NOTE: Judicial candidates were not asked as they are not allowed to take positions on issues without recusing themselves from future cases.)

And those already in Lansing are already taking action, with the Senate passing reintroduced legislation to fix the "hardcap or 80/20" requirement put in place during the Snyder administration.

Learn more, including how you can help make this legislation a reality, at [MEA.org/FixHealthcare](https://mea.org/FixHealthcare).

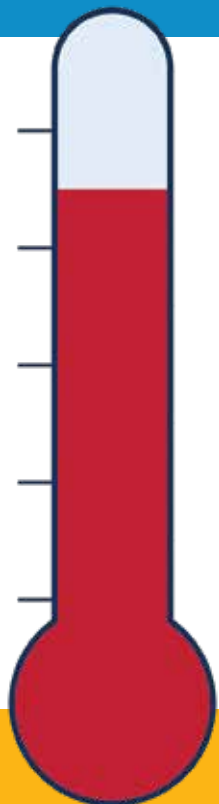
STATE HOUSE

HD 1	Tyrone Carter	HD 31	Shannon Dare Wayne	HD 68	Matt Schlinker
HD 2	Joanna Whaley	HD 32	Jimmie Wilson Jr.	HD 69	Jasper Ryan Martus
HD 3	Alabas Farhat	HD 33	Morgan Foreman	HD 70	Cynthia R. Neeley
HD 4	Regina Ross	HD 38	Joey Andrews	HD 73	Julie Brixie
HD 5	Candance Calloway	HD 39	Kerry Tapper	HD 74	Harold A. Pope
HD 6	Melanie Macey	HD 40	Matt Longjohn	HD 75	Penelope Tsernoglou
HD 7	Tonya Myers Phillips	HD 41	Jen Strebs	HD 76	Angela Witwer
HD 8	Chris Gilmer-Hill	HD 42	Nick Rowe	HD 77	Emily Dievendorf
HD 10	Veronica Paiz	HD 43	Alan Swank	HD 78	Rachel Gross
HD 12	Kimberly L. Edwards	HD 44	Jim Haadsma	HD 80	Lily Cheng-Schulting
HD 13	Mai Xiong	HD 45	Randy Davis	HD 81	Stephen Wooden
HD 14	Mike McFall	HD 46	Jan Maino	HD 82	Kristian C. Grant
HD 15	Jalal Abdallah	HD 47	Carrie A. Rheingans	HD 83	John Fitzgerald
HD 16	Stephanie A. Young	HD 48	Jennifer A. Conlin	HD 84	Khristian Silvis
HD 17	Laurie Pohutsky	HD 51	Stacey McDuffie	HD 86	Joseph McClusky
HD 18	Kelly Garrett	HD 53	Brenda Carter	HD 87	Will Snyder
HD 19	Samantha Steckloff	HD 54	Sarah Pounds	HD 90	Rachel Crowther
HD 20	Noah Arbit	HD 55	Alex Hawkins	HD 91	Frank Lafata
HD 21	Kelly Breen	HD 56	Sharon MacDonell	HD 94	Amos O'Neal
HD 22	Lisa McIntyre	HD 57	Tom Turner	HD 95	AnnMarie Horseman (MEA Member)
HD 23	Jason Morgan (MEA Member)	HD 58	Katrina Manetta	HD 96	Christopher R. Girard
HD 24	Ranjeev Puri	HD 60	Amy Gray	HD 103	Betsy Coffia
HD 25	Peter Herzberg	HD 61	Denise Mentzer	HD 109	Anna Aho Rink
HD 26	Dylan Wegela	HD 63	Jamie Sonneberger	HD 110	Brian Irizarry (MEA Member)
HD 27	Jaime Churches (MEA Member)	HD 66	Ned Zimmer		
HD 28	Sherry A. Berecz	HD 67	Leslie Getz (MEA Member)		
HD 29	Darian Counts				

MEA  **votes.org**



- ☐ **Online Voter Guide** ✓ Find recommended candidates near you
- ☐ **Vote From Home** ✓ Request and track your absentee ballot
- ☐ **Plan To Vote** ✓ Make your voting plan: absentee, early or at the polls
- ☐ **Volunteering For Victory** ✓ Knock doors, make calls, send texts
- ☐ **Donate to MEA-PAC** ✓ Fund friends of public education



PACtober Final Push: \$200k by E-Day

In order to meet our goal of helping friends of public education across Michigan win this November, we need to bring in another \$200,000 for MEA-PAC by Election Day.

Through our “political action committee,” we make contributions to MEA recommended candidates who’ll make students and educators a priority. Dues dollars cannot be contributed to political candidates — that’s what your voluntary contributions to PAC fund.

Less than 10% of MEA members contribute to MEA-PAC or the NEA Fund — our national committee that contributes to

federal candidates. If we only doubled that participation and collected \$26 for ’26 from each new donor, we’d more than reach our goal.

To help win at the local level, 40% of what you give is rebated to your coordinating council to invest in races near you — especially local school and community college boards that make a day-to-day difference for students and educators alike.

Go online to MEAVotes.org to make your one-time or monthly recurring PAC contribution today!

Vote NO on Prop 1 — “ConCon”

Proposal 1 on the November ballot would convene a new Constitutional Convention (ConCon) to rewrite our state’s highest law.

The MEA Board of Directors voted to recommend MEA members VOTE NO on Prop 1.

The ConCon rules have no limits on campaign contributions to delegates or restrictions on what could be rewritten in our Constitution, allowing special interest groups and corporations to pour money into efforts to rewrite laws for their personal gain. Our Constitution could be rewritten to...

- *Threaten public school funding*
- *Expand unaccountable for-profit education and allow public money to pay for private schools*
- *Eliminate free school meals and other efforts to make public education equitable for all students*
- *Ban school employee collective bargaining that gives educators a voice in their profession*

You aren’t done voting until you flip your ballot and **VOTE NO on Prop 1** to Protect Our Constitution. Learn more at ProtectMIConstitution.com.

VOTE NO
ON Prop 1
Protect Our Constitution

FYI: Proposal 2 would prohibit utilities and companies with government contracts from making campaign contributions to candidates or elected officials. The MEA Board chose to remain neutral on Prop 2.

A conversation with Abdul El-Sayed

MEA's recommended candidate for U.S. Senate

By Zach Crim
MEA Communications Specialist

Dr. Abdul El-Sayed

doesn't come across as one might expect of a Rhodes Scholar with a rock-star celebrity status. His approachable, down-to-earth demeanor is consistent in both one-on-one conversations and high-profile speeches to thousands.

His signature casual look (a black V-neck shirt) isn't a new gimmick — it's been his wardrobe staple since childhood. This ability to balance the dual personas of academic and everyman has led to legions of diehard supporters and more than a few skeptics.

Most headlines have focused on Abdul's economic and health care policy (and for good reason with those issues at the top of most voters' minds) but I sat down with him to dig in on his less talked about stance on education and labor issues.

You're a highly educated person; what does public education mean to you?

It's the foundation of the life I got to build. You know, I went to public schools all the way through college, and it was teachers, like my fifth-grade teacher Ms. Smith, who invested in me and saw something in me, who showed me what I could be, and really took time to mentor and uplift.

Public educators are the greatest manifestation of public service, right? People who come to work every day to invest in our collective future, our kids, whose very future depends on what you do and what you give them. You can give part of yourself to somebody to empower everybody, and that's a beautiful thing.

You mentioned Ms. Smith, your fifth-grade teacher. Take me back to 10 or 11-year-old Abdul, what kind of impact did Ms. Smith have on you?

Look, I was always good at school but didn't always apply myself. This was a teacher who saw something in me and was willing to see beyond my penchant to get in trouble.

She was very honest with me, even at a young age, about the discipline it takes to be able to invest in yourself. I always appreciated that. She's someone who was just a really gifted educator and, like all great teachers, they see something in you that you're not willing to see or care for in yourself.



ABDUL'S POLICY SPECIFICS

- Establish a minimum salary of \$60,000/year for every public school teacher and strengthen federal funding for long-term pay increases for experienced educators.
- Protect defined-benefit pension programs and direct federal resources to state retirement systems.
- Support legislation reforming Rick Snyder's hard cap on health insurance premiums.
- Invest in support staff and ancillary services like nurses, social workers, and behavioral health specialists.
- Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Move beyond funding models tied to local property taxes and equalize school funding based on student need.
- Make a federal commitment to universal, publicly funded childcare and pre-K.
- Guarantee every student a tuition-free, debt-free path through an apprenticeship, trade school, or four-year degree.
- Cap administrative overhead at federally funded institutions.

I can't believe I have to ask this, but given today's political climate, I do... should the Department of Education exist?

Yes (laughs), it should — because what are we doing if we can't educate our kids?

I actually want to tie the Department of Education funding to the Department of Defense budget. Tie any percentage increase in defense spending to an equal increase in education funding and raise revenue by taxing capital gains and inheritances over \$1 million as ordinary income, closing the stepped-up basis loophole, and enact a billionaire tax on wealth over \$1 billion — so Wall Street and the ultra-wealthy, not our schools, foot the bill.

So, if you want to spend money on war, you're going to spend money on education too.

Speaking of federal education initiatives, how do you feel about vouchers?

I believe public schools should stay public — it's one of the great guarantees that we give to every child that they should have the right to a great public education. When people want to privatize that, that becomes a real risk, and we've seen what the consequences of privatizing public service looks like. It benefits the richest people, and the



people who truly need support tend to be the ones who pay the price.

Shifting gears a bit — what does organized labor mean to you? What does it mean for Michigan?

Unions built this country. They built the state. They built the middle class. They built the 40-hour work week. They built the fact that our kids go to school instead of going to work. They built the weekend, and there is no coincidence that we are at an all-time low in union participation, all-time high in inequality.

If we're serious about rebuilding the middle class, we have to be serious about empowering labor organizing in every sector of our lives, and I say this as a second-generation union member. My father was the president of an educators' union, I've been a member of an educators' union, and I know what unions can mean.

We have to double down on protecting union organizing and empowering unions to fight for our most vulnerable, whether they're workers or our kids in public schools.

I know you have some very specific policy ideas, but overall, what kind of future do you want to see for public education?

The most sacred thing humans can do is communicate with each other and build community, and educators are the heart and soul of that. It's not just about teaching information; it's about creating the space within somebody to build themselves and become the future of our society.

Educators do that every day, and this is hallowed work, and it's past time for us to dignify that work — not just by investing in minimum wages and tenure, but also investing in the people around teachers, like paraprofessionals and support staff.

We ask our teachers right now to be teachers and also custodians and social workers and nurses, because we're disinvested in these other people who are so critical to empowering a student to be their best self.

Dignifying educators and students — that's a real commitment that I have as a product of Michigan public schools. ▼

Garlin Gilchrist for Secretary of State

"Education makes our democracy run by helping create an informed and engaged voting public. Defending democracy means defending public schools and the educators who help students succeed. I'll stand tall against anyone who threatens Michiganders' right to vote or freedom to learn."

Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, MEA recommended candidate for Secretary of State

During his eight years as Lieutenant Governor, Gilchrist has a proven track record of standing up for public education. He'll carry that commitment with him to the task of being Michigan's next Secretary of State, partnering with public school employees to:

- protect voting rights,
- demystify the voting process for new, young voters,
- return drivers education programs to schools to make it more affordable, and
- protect our personal data from both political and big tech bad actors.



See MEA Members Run

“Just like with solving any problem, lawmakers should consult the experts to make the right decisions — and for public education, that’s us: educators who know our jobs and what our students need. I’m committed to bringing that attitude to Lansing.”

Dr. Rashida Harrison, MEA member and Candidate for State Senate (District 28)

Harrison, who until recently was an MSU professor and member of the Union of Tenure Stream Faculty, is one of several MEA members running for state office this fall:

- State Senate, District 5 – Matt Koleszar
- State Senate, District 8 – Dayna Polehanki
- State Senate, District 16 – Deandre Barnes
- State Senate, District 18 – Anthony Pennock
- State Senate, District 28 – Rashida Harrison
- State House, District 23 – Jason Morgan
- State House, District 27 – Jaime Churches
- State House, District 67 – Leslie Getz
- State House, District 95 – AnnMarie Horseman
- State House, District 110 – Brian Irizarry

There are dozens of others with education backgrounds on the ballot as well — find recommended candidates near you on the Online Voter Guide at MEAVotes.org.

Are you interested in running for office? Plan now to join a special NEA training program — See Educators Run — which is coming to Michigan in 2027. Express your interest in running for local, state or federal office by emailing us at pac@mea.org — we’ll share details when they’re available.



SUPPORT STUDENTS & EDUCATORS VOTE FOR MEA RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES



Eli Savit for Attorney General

“Public money belongs in public schools. The Michigan Constitution makes that clear — which is why as Attorney General I’ll fight any effort to siphon away taxpayer dollars to private and for-profit schools. Every student has a right to a great public education, which is why we need to invest in the neighborhood schools our students depend on.”

Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit, MEA’s recommended candidate for Attorney General

Before law school at the University of Michigan, Eli Savit was an eighth-grade history teacher in public schools. As our next attorney general, Eli will continue his life’s work of protecting our human and civil rights from attack by corporate special interests and power-hungry politicians. From students’ right to literacy to educators’ right to bargain, he’ll be a strong partner for schools and unions across our state.



Jocelyn Benson demonstrated her commitment to public education when she chose state Sen. Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) as her running mate.

Brinks has been a champion for education since she was first elected to the state House in a write-in campaign in 2012. After three terms in the House, she won election to the state Senate.

"I need a governing partner who has a track record for getting things done," Benson said in announcing her historic selection of Brinks to run for lieutenant governor — marking the first time two women are heading the top of the state Democratic ticket.

Benson-Brinks: a winning combination

Brinks rose to become Michigan's first female Senate Majority leader in 2023, amid a Democratic trifecta that restored collective bargaining rights to school employees and grew the state's investment in education, including universal free school meals.

She is committed to finding ways to lower health care costs — a key issue for educators.

"Jocelyn Benson brings a wealth of executive experience, and my legislative experience rounds out the ticket," Brinks told CBS Detroit in an interview.

A one-time public school paraeducator, married to a middle school teacher and MEA member, Brinks has long been a strong literacy advocate. She listens to educators as professionals who need resources and consistency over time to make changes.

"We've seen our kids struggle, especially since COVID, so taking concrete steps with everybody coming together to acknowledge the problem and to address it in a sustained way... is really the key."

At the event announcing her candidacy in Grand Rapids, Brinks connected her record of fighting for working families to the determination she learned growing up on a dairy farm as the daughter of Dutch immigrants.

"What Michigan needs is a leader who fights for the people, someone who has proven she can deliver results and make government work better," Brinks said. "That's Jocelyn Benson — and I intend to be right by her side every step of the way, fighting for a Michigan we can all afford."

"Let's go win this!" ▼

MEA members on Election 2026



"Jocelyn Benson has shown that she can get things done, and she's talking about addressing our most serious issues in education — equitable funding, starting teacher pay, student absenteeism. The state is still suffering from a teacher shortage that was created by former Gov. Rick Snyder when he attacked public educators and cut public school funding. I hope for a future where more young adults pursue a career in education and are treated with respect by all politicians."

Eric Henzi, high school English teacher, Wayne-Westland Community Schools

"I was part of a roundtable discussion when Jocelyn Benson asked to hear our thoughts as educators. We talked about rising health care costs and the loss of pensions — how those issues make it hard to attract and retain good people. And we talked about student behaviors we're dealing with. It's her intent to form an education advisory panel, and that's important. It's refreshing when a policymaker wants to talk with the experts who actually do the work."

Heather Schulz, middle school science teacher, Lakeview Public Schools

"What are we going to do collectively to rise up and to challenge and overcome all of these attacks that continue to happen to education? We have to lead for the benefit of our students. We are their voice, so it's important that we all come together. We are the union, and it's our children we're talking about. It's our job. Collectively we can influence who ends up sitting in that governor's chair. We've all got to get in the game."

Tamala Bell, fourth-grade teacher, Ann Arbor Public Schools

New NEA President kicks off school year in Michigan



Members of the Plymouth-Canton Lightning Robotics team gathered around their newest team member behind the plexiglass wall, providing a quick tutorial on the controls.

In no time, a robot was launching balls into the air as the team's newest operator beamed with excitement: NEA President Princess Moss kept driving—gathering balls, lining up her shot and launching them toward the target bin. With every launch, her enthusiasm and smile grew.

The robotics lesson highlighted a brand new state-of-the-art technology and innovation center at Canton High School — part of a national Back-To-School tour for the newly elected NEA leader to meet with members and witness work happening in public schools.

Moss began her tenure as NEA president on Sept. 1, capping a 30-year career as an educator and union leader.

A powerful advocate, Moss connected, listened and learned at every stop on her two-day Michigan visit.

In Ann Arbor, Moss joined educators rallying after months of working without a contract. She met with members and heard about the challenges they face before standing alongside them in solidarity and delivering a rousing speech to cheers from rally participants.

"It was an honor to welcome NEA President Princess Moss to our local association," said Fred Klein, Ann Arbor Education Association president. "Her presence, support, and words of solidarity meant so much to our members."

Moss traded the rally stage for breakfast trays in Ypsilanti Community Schools.

At Puentes Multilingual School, Moss helped serve breakfast to students, read to a classroom, and joined the school community for an assembly — taking time along the way to talk with students and educators and learn more about their school.





“Know that the National Education Association is behind you and we support you a thousand percent.”

Puentes is a newer Dual Language Spanish Immersion School in the district to help students build Spanish fluency while deepening their understanding of diverse cultures.

“We feel special in this district to have her presence in our building. It means so much because it gives us an opportunity to highlight the work we’re doing here in Ypsilanti,” said local president Charlotte Tillerson.

“This is our second year opening Puentes, and now the program is growing so much,” said Rhoshawda Miller, MEA member and educator. “It’s wonderful for President Moss to experience this as we’re growing and thriving. I’m just glad she’s here in Michigan with us!”

Moss has said her leadership rests on five priorities: continuous organizing, grassroots direction from local and state affiliates, driving policy with earned expertise, issue-based advocacy that transcends party lines, and securing greater investment in public schools.

That emphasis on grassroots voices and earned expertise was on display as Moss sat down with MEA members for an ESP Bill of Rights roundtable discussion, hearing directly from education support professionals leading a statewide movement around improving



compensation, working conditions and respect for ESPs.

For Moss, the conversation also carried a personal connection. Both of her parents were public school bus drivers — something that resonated with Leslie Bailey-Leonard, an MEA member and ESP Bill of Rights Roundtable participant.

“I loved that she led with and talked about both of her parents being bus drivers,” Bailey-Leonard said. “It’s just truly amazing to think that you come from two bus drivers and now you’re the NEA President. It’s inspiring and I have true hope that someone growing up and seeing the struggle would definitely lead the charge to improve things for us all.”

Just days into her tenure as NEA president, Moss’s Michigan visit provided an early look at her approach to leadership — listening to members and learning firsthand from the people doing the work in public schools.



Her Back-to-School Tour is taking that approach to communities across the country, giving Moss the opportunity to hear directly from educators while highlighting the work happening every day in public schools.

Before leaving Michigan, Moss shared a message for MEA members.

“I’m happy to be here in Michigan and wish you all of the success as you go into this new school year. Know that the National Education Association is behind you and we support you a thousand percent.” ♥

REGION ELECTION INFORMATION

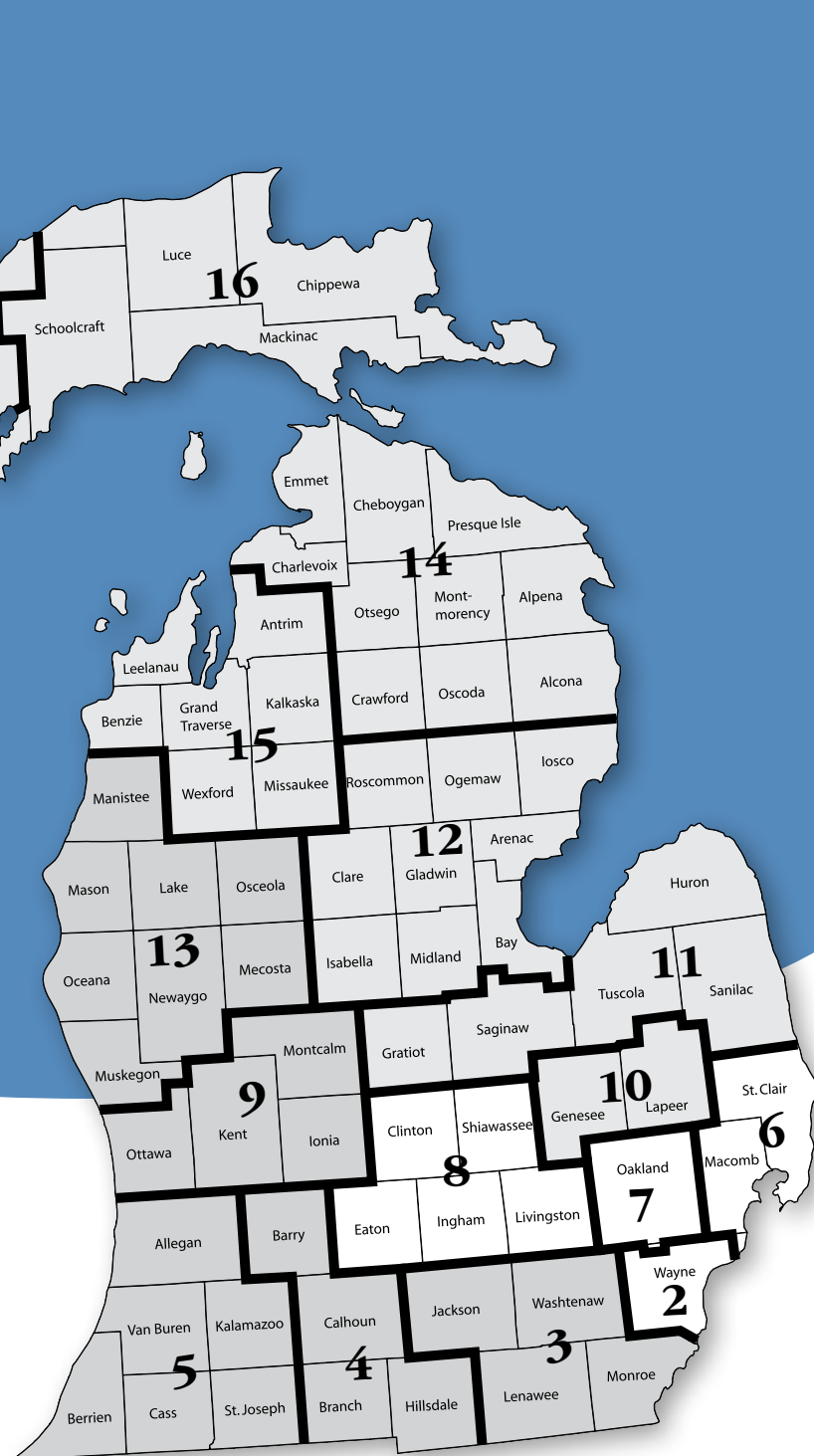
Following is a description of the election procedures to be followed in the regions. This process complies with relevant federal laws. (See *positions to be elected following this section*.)

Election dates for all regions are 8 a.m., Sunday, March 1, 2027 through 11:59 p.m., Sunday, March 15, 2027.

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. 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, 2026.



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, 2027.

ATTENTION ESP MEMBERS

2027 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 Indianapolis, Ind. July 1-5, 2027. 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 2027 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. Candidates 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. Statements 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, 2026 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 it to the MEA Executive Office no later than Dec. 31, 2026. Nominations received after Dec. 31, 2026 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.

NOMINATION FORM

REGION 50 – NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, ESP DELEGATE AT-LARGE

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



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:
1 position, immediate through 8/31/29
- ☐ ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate:
1 position, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/27
- ☐ ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1(g):
2 positions, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/27

Nomination forms must be received no later than Dec. 31, 2026.

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, 2026 will not be accepted.

POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED

REGION 2

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

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Steve Conn,
swconn80@hotmail.com

REGION 3

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

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27, same seat as above

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

2 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

4 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

6 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

KEY:

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

\$ is used to represent MEA funded seats

3 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Claire Arthurs,
contactclaireathome@gmail.com

REGION 4

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

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Lance Hawblitz,

lancehawblitz@yahoo.com

REGION 5

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27, same seat as above

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

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

2 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

2 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

4 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/28

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/28

Elections Chair: Mary Cooper,

coopermmary29@gmail.com

REGION 6

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 7/14/29

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

3 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Cara Konicek,

carakonicek@gmail.com

REGION 7

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27, same seat as above

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 7/14/29

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

4 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

6 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

2 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Robert Gaines,

rgainesiii@mea.org

REGION 8

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/15/28

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27, same seat as above

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

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

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 4/1/27

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Jeffry Wilson,

parliamentdestruction@gmail.com

REGION 9

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

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

3 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat

as above

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

3 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

4 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

4 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

3 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

5 Positions: 3-yr term begins 4/1/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 4/1/27

Elections Chair: Marcella Weldon,

weldonghea@gmail.com

REGION 10

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27
 1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through

3/31/29 **Elections Chair:** Stacey Hittle,

kamandkara@me.com

REGION 11**Position 1**—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27, same seat as above

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

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

2 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

4 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

2 Positions*: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Jennifer Shelito,

jenshelito@gmail.com

REGION 12**Position 1**—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

2 Positions*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

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

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 7/14/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/28

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Deb Rickert,

debrmarie@gmail.com

REGION 13**Position 1**—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large

Alternate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

3 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/28

3 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

3 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

3 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/28

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: TBD

REGION 14**Position 3**—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

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

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29 Region

14 MAHE—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29 Region

14 MAHE—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Michelle Chase,mchase625@gmail.com**REGION 15****Position 3**—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 4—MEA RA At-Large Alternate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 6—EA NEA RA At-Large Alternate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 Positions*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/27

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seats as above

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Genevieve Minor,gminor@mea.org**REGION 16****Position 1**—MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 7/15/27

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Al Beamish,albeamish8912@gmail.com**REGION 17****Position 3**—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

2 Positions: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

3 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 10—ESP MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 11—ESP MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

2 Positions: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 15—ESP NEA RA Cluster Alternate

2 Positions: Immediate through 3/31/29

Elections Chair: Paulette Pepin,paulettelarson@chartermi.net**REGION 18****Position 3**—MEA RA At-Large Delegate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

1 Position*: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Position 8—EA MEA RA Cluster Delegate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/27

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27, same seat as above

Position 9—EA MEA RA Cluster Alternate \$

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 12—EA NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position*: Immediate through 8/31/29

Position 13—EA NEA RA Cluster Alternate

1 Position: Immediate through 3/31/29

1 Position*: Immediate through 3/31/29

Position 14—ESP NEA RA Cluster Delegate

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

Elections Chair: Steve Elenich,selenich@copperisd.org**REGION 50***Unsuccessful candidates will become NEA RA Alternates***Region 50**—ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate \$

1 Position: 3-yr term begins 9/1/27

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/28

1 Position: Immediate through 8/31/29

Region 50—ESP NEA RA At-Large Delegate—

Representing Minority 3-1(g) \$

2 positions*, 3-yr. term begins 9/1/27

ESP Caucus Board nominations

Several positions on the MEA ESP Caucus Board will be up for election next year, including president, vice-president, and secretary, in addition to two at-large positions and two directors by classification: food service and higher education.

All but one are three-year roles beginning Sept. 1, 2027. The food service director is currently vacant and begins immediately after the election and runs through August 2028. The election for all positions will be held at the MEA Representative Assembly, April 23-24, 2027.

For more information on deadlines and directions for nominating individuals, go to mea.org/esp-caucus-noms-2027. ▼

More than coverage:

Health plans that support and care

Open enrollment season is in full swing for many groups — and it's more than just another task to check off your to-do list. It's a chance to pause, review your health benefits, understand what's available to you and simply know where to turn when you need care.

At MESSA, you have our support every step of the way. We believe a health plan should do more than provide coverage. It should look out for you and make it easier to take care of your health when you need it most.

If you're thinking about making a change this year, or if you just want to know more about your bargained benefits, we're here to help you sort it out.

All MESSA plans include free preventive care benefits when you go to an in-network provider. Each plan also includes Michigan's largest provider network, giving you the greatest choice of

doctors and access to expert medical care from the best hospitals across the nation.

If you need help exploring these health plans, you can use our MESSA Plan Comparison Tool at messa.org/ComparePlans to see your plan options side-by-side.

If you'd like to talk through plan details with someone, we're here for that, too.

You can call our award-winning Member Service Center at 800-336-0013 or your local MESSA field representative at 866-637-0006.

And remember, choosing a health plan is just the beginning of your MESSA experience. All year long, MESSA members and their families have access to health resources, helpful tools, and real people who are ready to support you along the way.

MESSA cares about you and your family, and we're always happy to help. ♥



Ross Wilson
Executive Director
MESSA



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Who Qualifies:

- Members — with an unpaid MEA-Retired dues balance — who have officially retired from their district.

Payment Plan Details:

- Members can choose their own monthly payment date.
- Payment options are offered in 3, 6, 9, & 12 monthly installments.
- Monthly payments can only be made by credit or debit card.

How to Enroll:

- Call MEA Membership to speak with a membership processor about your dues balance and payment plan options.
- Once enrolled, you will make monthly dues payments until your MEA-Retired membership balance is paid in full.
- After that, you will become a full-fledged, lifetime MEA-Retired member!

Who to Contact:

- MEA Membership is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at **800-292-1934**.



MEA-Retired
THE COMMITMENT CONTINUES



MEA leads paraeducator bootcamp

MEA member Aaron Bailey knows what it's like to be a brand-new paraprofessional in a classroom at the beginning of the school year.

"When I first started, I had very little training, and I was lucky enough to get teachers who had 10 or 15 years of experience and could take the time to teach me *and* run the classroom," said Bailey, who's worked in Plymouth-Canton Community Schools for about a decade. "A lot of people don't have that [anymore]."

MEA is working to address that problem by providing training and professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals, who are often overlooked but perform critical work in schools throughout Michigan.

Bailey and more than 300 other paraprofessionals joined together at the Plymouth-Canton Educational Park in August for the inaugural "Paraeducator Bootcamp" a training co-organized by MEA and centered on research-backed practices in special education, along with practical tools and strategies to effectively support students with disabilities.

The goal of the training, launched in partnership with the Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education and OPTIMISE, "is to make sure education support professionals have access to meaningful professional learning and the tools, voice and respect they deserve," said MEA President and CEO Chandra Madaffer, a former special education teacher who's helped lead the effort.

OPTIMISE (Opening the Pipeline of Talent Into Michigan's Special Education) is a state initiative that aims to effectively attract, prepare and retain a qualified and diverse special education workforce that can help students with disabilities fulfill their full potential.

"We can't support students if our paras don't have the knowledge and the training to support the students," said Mary Connor, an elementary school paraprofessional and president of the Plymouth-Canton Paraprofessional Association.

Plymouth-Canton paraprofessional and MEA member Christine Wyman said she's confident the training will have a significant impact for attendees and students alike.

"The students are the most important thing here, and the students do better when they are taught and cared for by people who know what they're doing," Wyman said.

For Bailey, the value of starting the school year with this training is simple.

"We talked a lot this morning about the baggage that educators can bring into the classroom," Bailey said, referencing the stress and burnout felt by too many educators. "Training helps focus you. It helps you set aside that baggage."

"Happy educators make happy students."





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