

'Striking a Better Bargain'

FROM MFT PRESIDENT RICHARD MANS . . .

As a labor union representing teachers, the Minnesota Federation of Teachers has worked hard to promote and protect the rights of teachers through collective bargaining, legislation, and involvement in the education community.

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, the MFT faces new challenges. The needs of today's teaching professionals have grown beyond the traditional role of a labor union. Teachers want more than better salaries and the right to strike. They want to be treated as professionals; they want to be able to make decisions that affect their everyday life in the classroom; they want to help shape a better system of education for our youngsters; they want respect from the community; they want to take pride in their work.

The needs of tomorrow's teaching professionals will continue to change as a new breed of teachers enters the profession with different expectations and demands.

The MFT recognizes the expanding needs of those we serve and of the teaching profession in general. Not only does our organization stand ready to change with the times, but the MFT also plans to be in the forefront of that change. We believe it's time for teachers to turn the agenda for public education for everyone. Too often plans have been drawn up without input from teachers and the only option for us is to react to someone else's proposal.

This report, "Striking a Better Bargain," represents a six-month effort by the MFT's Task Force on the Future of Education to fashion a position paper that will help lay the groundwork for the future of education in Minnesota and the teaching profession.

Many of the issues discussed in this draft report are ones that MFT has long held as goals to work toward. Other issues are new and may be controversial to our own members and to other educators. Some have been put forth in other reports and "Striking a Better Bargain" reiterates those ideas.

This report is just the beginning. It has not officially been adopted by MFT members. The MFT is not a top-down organization. We want this plan for quality education to reflect the opinions of education's practitioners — classroom teachers.

The MFT Executive Council and the MFT Task Force on the Future of Education present these ideas to stimulate discussion and to encourage MFT officers, locals, area councils, and individual members to offer suggestions and additions. The Task Force will then revise this report and present it to the MFT Spring Convention in April.

Because of the deadlines involved, comments must be received in the MFT office by March 10. We encourage MFT locals and area councils to schedule special meetings to go through this report, carefully consider the ideas, and form a written response by the March deadline.

When it is officially adopted as MFT policy, the report will be the basis for immediate and long-range planning. Our committees will look at ways to implement the ideas presented. As a teachers' organization representing 18,000 members, the MFT will use all of its available resources to help bring about needed change in the profession and the education system.

We know the MFT is not alone in this campaign. Other education groups and business organizations have issued reports and the state Legislature has spent much time on education issues. We look forward to continuing to work with those who value public education and who are sincerely interested in attracting highly qualified teachers to the profession as well as in keeping the talented teachers that we have.

I'd like to thank the members of the MFT Task Force on the Future of Education for the many hours they spent researching the topics, discussing the issues, and writing this report. Special thanks to Marcia Averbook, president of the Bloomington Federation, who agreed to chair the task force, and to the other ten members: Steve Dress, St. Paul; Duane Eide, Mound; Bob Gunderson, St. Louis County; Shirley Hallberg, Minneapolis; Marlouise Koerber, Osseo; Sandy Peterson, Robbinsdale; Julie Rieken, Buffalo; Jim Smola, Rosemount; Frank Wanner, Duluth; and Delores Wiesner, 916 Vo-Tech.



Marcia Averbook, chair of the MFT Task Force on the Future of Education, introduced the draft of "Striking a Better Bargain" to MFT Q&EST participants. Averbook stressed that this is a draft version and that the task force needs input from MFT members.

OUTLINE

- I. RESTRUCTURE THE CAREER OF TEACHING.
 - A. Recruit highly qualified people into the teaching profession
 - B. Retain highly competent teachers.
 - C. Ensure overall quality and develop public trust.
- II. SHAPE A RESPONSIVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM
 - A. Create frameworks to provide meaningful instructional time.
 - B. Provide curriculum and courses to challenge, stimulate, and motivate learners.
 - C. Implement cooperative decision-making.
 - D. Address a changing social environment
- III. BUILD COMMUNITY SUPPORTS RESOURCES
 - A. Guarantee the availability of financial and material resources.
 - B. Unite business, labor, parents, and the community.
- IV. EXPAND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHERS' UNION
 - A. Involve our colleagues.
 - B. Form new coalitions with parents, business, and the community.
 - C. Establish mutual respect and trust between educators and the public.

MISSION STATEMENT

"Education for democracy and democracy for education" has served as the motto of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers in the 50 years since its inception in 1936. Fundamental to a democracy is an educated citizenry capable of making informed judgments on public issues and a quality workforce to provide a sound economic base.

We are living in a time when technology has brought about unprecedented change. As a result, society must once again face up to the challenge of updating and restoring public education. As a professional union, we take the common sense view that real and meaningful changes can only occur where learning takes place whether in the school building, in the classroom, or in the relationship between student and teacher.

Central to education are teachers and their students. The MFT is a professional union representing educators. We believe that society needs better schools and that we can have them. We must be eager to change and be willing to work vigorously for constant improvement.

As MFT celebrates its 50th anniversary, we issue these recommendations on behalf of the practitioners — the teachers. We believe implementing these recommendations will significantly improve education and thereby increase public education's contribution to society in the 21st century.

RESTRUCTURE THE CAREER OF TEACHING

INTRODUCTION:

Central to educational effectiveness stand the teacher and the environment in which teachers and learners work.

Reports have pointed to the weaknesses in today's educational system. Piecemeal reform and the addition of more money alone as suggested in the first wave of reform reports will not be enough to solve the problems of an imminent explosion in the demand for teachers. Potential teacher candidates have a multitude of career options and may be attracted to other professions that offer the prospects of superior salaries, attractive working conditions, and opportunities for advancement and recognition.

If society is to meet the challenges facing education today, build upon its strengths, and overcome its weaknesses, a major restructuring of the teaching profession is imperative. Children, our most valuable resource, deserve to be taught by bright, capable, challenging teachers.

MARCH, 1986

GOAL: RECRUIT HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

RATIONALE:

The demand for teachers is about to explode, virtually doubling to a need for 1.3 million new teachers by 1990. This explosion in demand is only partly due to an acceleration in the retirement rate of the current teaching force and a modest increase in the number of elementary and secondary age children. More importantly, this accelerated demand will be fueled by the dramatic reduction in talented, dedicated candidates who will choose teaching as a career. Evidence clearly shows that today's teacher applicants are less academically talented than their counterparts who choose other professions. Today's teacher applicants also display less academic talent than current members of the teaching force.

Previously, low teachers' salaries were either overlooked or accepted by potential teachers because of the personal satisfaction of teaching or its respected status in the community. This is no longer the case. Competent people, including women and minorities, traditionally rich sources of the labor supply in education, now choose other occupations due to a startling lack of regard for teaching. In a 1969 Gallup Poll, 75% of the respondents indicated they would like their child to pursue a career in teaching. In 1984, only 45% gave this answer.

The "graying" of the faculty and steady increases in the school age population create not only a problem, but also a window of opportunity. Changes that are made now in the recruitment and education of new teacher candidates can affect the quality of the teaching profession and the potential quality of our instructional program for years to come.

Recasting teaching into a highly respected, highly trained, fairly compensated profession will require far-reaching changes in the structure and governance of schools. There will be implications for the community at large, local school boards, teacher training institutions, state boards of education, legislatures, and teachers themselves. This is a challenge that cannot go unmet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Establish rigorous entry requirements.
 - For example:
 - maintain at least a "B" average;
 - be in the upper one-half on SAT or ACT tests;

- pass a basic skills exam before entering teacher preparation programs.
- 2. Develop recruitment incentives.
 - For example:
 - establish scholarships;
 - provide forgivable loans for academically talented college students who will enter teaching;
 - foster career changes to teaching from other professions.
- 3. Monitor and control supply and demand ensuring jobs and security for those who enter the profession.
- 4. Improve teacher training.
 - For example:
 - make teacher training a 5-6 year developmental program prior to full certification status;
 - make teacher training more intellectually stimulating, relevant to the classroom and geared to practical application;
 - abolish state prescribed curriculum for teacher training;
 - implement teacher developed curriculum for teacher training;
 - require residencies as a prerequisite for teacher certification;
 - promote internships for possible career exploration.
- 5. Provide competitive entry level salaries for teachers currently equal to those of middle management employees (\$20,000-\$50,000).
- 6. Heighten public esteem and respect for teaching and education in order to attract highly qualified teachers.

GOAL: RETAIN HIGHLY COMPETENT TEACHERS

RATIONALE:

The strength of the teaching profession and the instructional system depends on our ability to retain a highly competent corps of teachers.

In a survey conducted in 1981, statistics revealed that 40% of the respondents said they would not choose teaching as a profession again. This was triple the number answering in this manner ten years earlier. Further revealing the discontent of the current teaching force, less than half said they plan to continue teaching until retirement. Moreover, the most highly qualified teachers were the most dissatisfied and the

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GOAL: IMPLEMENT COOPERATIVE DECISION MAKING

RATIONALE:

Teachers need to control the profession of teaching. Central to that control is the power to make decisions.

Research clearly shows that in order to have a truly efficient and effective operation, those who implement the plans must make the plans. Participation in decision-making would give teachers a sense of ownership of the educational enterprise, a stake in the outcome. Ownership is a powerful motivator.

Being part of a decision-making process would improve job satisfaction and could be an important factor in maintaining the enthusiasm and effectiveness of those already in teaching. Teachers are trained experts in dealing with students and are best qualified to make educational decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide teachers the authority to make curricular decisions.

For example:

- develop and design curriculum;
- make choices available to students within the curriculum;
- use technology as appropriate within the curriculum;
- develop individual learning plans;
- select appropriate textbooks, software, and materials.

2. Empower teachers to establish procedures related to:

- peer evaluation;
- evaluation of administrators;
- hiring and training of new staff members;
- staff development programs;
- standards of professional behavior;
- standards for admission to the profession;
- recertification requirements;
- intervention models for teachers in need of help.

3. Establish teachers as the authorities in making site management decisions.

For example:

- allow time for preparation and collegial work;
- establish instructional cabinets;
- decide class size;
- examine length of the school day and class periods;
- report pupil progress;
- schedule teaching assignments at the grade level and building level;
- identify staffing needs and prerequisites.

4. Ensure that information on teacher involvement in decision making is widely distributed.

GOAL: ADDRESS A CHANGING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

RATIONALE:

The educator's role is influenced by societal changes that affect students, such as working parents, availability of drugs and alcohol, early sexual experiences, and the necessity of students to work. Schools can serve as an intervening force to ameliorate some of the problems growing out of these social changes. Public education must cope with the changing nature of the children it seeks to educate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Work with all community agencies to provide adequate child care, especially for:

- children of teenagers who are finishing their education;
- unsupervised young children before and after school;
- preschool age siblings of students who otherwise would be compelled to babysit.

2. Address the problem of teenage pregnancy.

For example:

- establish appropriate sex education;
- develop appropriate parenting education;
- include health clinics in the junior and senior high schools.

3. Address the problems of drug and chemical abuse.

For example:

- provide adequate health counseling and support services;
- provide education and information about the effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco products;
- establish strict enforcement of smoking restrictions in schools.

4. Develop and support adequate pre-service and in-service education for professionals and paraprofessionals to provide the resources to counteract the effects of social problems encountered in the classroom. Such training should address the issues of:

- child abuse and neglect;
- lack of self esteem;
- disruptive students;
- emotionally unstable students;
- potential student dropouts.

5. Develop and support comprehensive mental and physical health awareness programs.

BUILD COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION:

The most important investment the state and its people can make for the future is a strong financial commitment to education, a commitment ensuring that resources not only are available but that they are used wisely and effectively. When faced with a scarce resource, industry pays the price necessary to produce a quality product. When education faces scarce resources it traditionally pays the price by sacrificing quality.

Equally important to financial investment is a commitment

MARCH, 1986



Members of the MFT Task Force on the Future of Education received Certificates of Appreciation at MFT QUEST for their work over the last six months on researching and writing "Striking a Better Bargain." Pictured (l. to r.) are Delores Wiesner, Sady Peterson, Bob Gunderson, Steve Dress, Julie Ricken, Marcia Averbook, Shirley Hallberg, Dazee Elde, Frank Wanner and Marjorie Koerber. Not pictured is Jim Smola.

to try new ideas. Parents, students, teachers, business and civic organizations, union leaders, and other community groups must work together to set basic goals and objectives and implement proposed changes.

The ultimate test of whether excellence will become a reality will be the willingness of this state and its people to meet the challenge of providing the necessary financial resources and making an equal commitment of time and energy to make education its number one priority.

GOAL: GUARANTEE THE AVAILABILITY OF FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE LEARNING GAINS FOR STUDENTS

RATIONALE:

At a time when assembled commissions and task forces call for major initiatives and the restructuring of education, this nation's and this state's economic health has been at best unstable. Concern for education tends to develop when the economy is in a downturn. The result is that when increased financial commitment is needed it is the most difficult to make.

In the decade between 1972 and 1982 Minnesota's expenditures for education dropped 16.5 percent in real dollars. As a portion of the state's budget, the contraction was again noticeable, dropping from 40 percent in 1971-73 to 27 percent in 1983-85. The need for additional resources cannot be disputed. While there are demands for current technology and telecommunications, most teachers do not have easy access to a telephone. Teachers are asked to be innovative, dedicated, and inspirational despite the fact that they must fight for a duty free lunch period and cautiously take "potty" breaks. Many teachers continue to supplement inadequate classroom materials and supplies by digging into their own pockets to purchase them.

Education must also become more efficient in using current resources. It is estimated that by the year 2000, for every two workers one person will be retired. Greater competition for public services for seniors and health care dollars will mushroom. To sustain public confidence, interest and support, public education must work to streamline its operation in addition to providing effective programs.

Involvement of the education community, commitment of the public, and leadership of state policy makers are crucial to help create and sustain Minnesota as a model of excellence for learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop and implement a funding formula based on providing programs for learners.
2. Mandate a stable base for funding education.
3. Ensure access to programs and services regardless of a learner's geographic, community, or family situation.
4. Explore new funding sources, such as a statewide lottery.
5. Ensure an adequate supply of well-trained personnel.
6. Provide sufficient and current instructional materials and supplies.
7. Provide clean, safe, and adequate school facilities.
8. Utilize, develop, and encourage opportunities for investment in education by businesses, community groups, and foundations.
9. Intervene in schools at risk.
10. Streamline and remove duplicative and administrative levels.
11. Provide incentives and remove disincentives for program and school district consolidation.
12. Create an independent panel of teachers, administrators, and business management experts to review and comment on all state programs intended to improve education.

13. Provide greater discretion in school site budgeting.

14. Explore ways to use existing funds and classroom space more creatively.

15. Adapt management techniques used by business for efficiency and the use of human and material resources.

16. Expediently fund new school construction but provide needed construction on an equalized basis.

17. Provide funding that will act as a catalyst for experimentation, research, and development of programs and management techniques.

18. Mandate that school district fund balances, if allowed to exist, be invested in Minnesota.

GOAL: UNITE BUSINESS, LABOR, PARENTS, AND THE COMMUNITY IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

RATIONALE:

The goal to improve public education cannot be accomplished by any one group working in isolation. The education community, the business community, the labor community, parents, and society at large share this goal. Each has a stake in the outcome of the education reform movement. These communities are linked together by the very nature of public education.

Educators alone cannot promote the importance of education. Every facet of our society should reflect this importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop collaborative projects by involving teachers in the corporate world and business and community leaders in the education world.
2. Initiate partnerships with parents, business, labor unions, and community groups.
3. Establish education as the center of involvement for the community.
4. Promote the establishment of internships, speakers' bureaus, and community volunteer resource banks.
5. Encourage strategic planning at the local level to determine educational needs.
6. Emphasize the importance of education by stressing the need for students to be in the classroom.
7. Promote education as a community priority; for example, develop alternatives to students working long hours at the expense of their education.
8. Explore new ways to contribute to the economic well-being of education: donations of time and money; the funding of specific programs; and the establishing of grants for teachers who develop outstanding programs.
9. Equalize the importance of academic achievement with extra-curricular involvement.

EXPAND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHERS' UNION

This report suggests new ways to structure the teaching profession and the educational system. It outlines ways to gain public support and increase funding.

Research shows that performance, self-esteem, and job satisfaction increase when employees are allowed to participate in the decisions that affect their work life. Teachers are no exception. Better salaries alone will not attract and keep quality teachers.

Teachers' unions must play an integral role in the implementation of professional and education reform issues.

Teachers' unions must be actively involved in achieving these goals. The task cannot be left to others; the union must help fashion new structures instead of just reacting when an injustice occurs.

Teachers' unions must be willing to go beyond their current role of negotiators, grievance handlers, and the protectors of bread and butter issues.

As teachers move toward a new professionalism, unions

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must insist on a new approach. The new approach should involve educators — particularly the classroom teacher — in the movement to restructure the system and the profession; should form new coalitions with parents, businesses, and the community; and should establish mutual respect and trust.

SPECIFICALLY, TEACHERS' UNIONS MUST:

1. Continue the education of their own members on professional issues and education reform;
2. Lobby for legislation that ensures teachers the right to negotiate professional issues, such as peer evaluation, class size, adequate time for preparation and collegiality, and decision-making authority;
3. Look at ways to alter their structure in order to reflect the goals of a profession;
4. Seek out new ways to inform and involve the community in activities that promote the improvement of public education (too often the community only hears of union activity when a strike is imminent or when the union is seeking more money);
5. Encourage teachers and union leaders to become involved in the communities in which they teach to have a better understanding of that environment and to enhance the image of the profession;
6. Hold public forums to discuss education issues with parents, students and business and community leaders to find ways to stress the importance of education in every aspect of society;
7. Promote involvement in the community through programs such as Dial-A-Teacher and "Inside Your Schools";
8. Ensure due process for teachers;
9. Ensure competency in the classroom;
10. Continue to train negotiators in methods of cooperative bargaining;
11. Broaden the scope of negotiations to foster teacher willingness to experiment with education reform ideas without being saddled with unworkable programs;
12. Develop a process of self-regulation for teachers through methods such as peer evaluation, intervention programs and teacher review boards.

The public is skeptical. Teachers, through their unions, must demonstrate that they are willing to accept the responsibility that goes along with increased authority and professionalism.

Teachers are skeptical. Past attempts to make much-needed changes in education often have resulted in few long-term solutions. When teachers have shown some flexibility, they often have been hurt.

Teachers' unions and the community at large must begin to erase this skepticism and move toward a new trust and respect for each other to attain their common goal — an improved system of education.

EVALUATION FORM

We need and would appreciate your input toward revising the draft of this document. After reading STRIKING A BETTER BARGAIN, please give us your response.

In regards to the content of each of the following sections, please indicate whether you agree, disagree, need more information before making a decision. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.

	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEED MORE INFORMATION
I. RESTRUCTURE THE CAREER OF TEACHING			
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For more information, contact MFT Task Force Committee members or call the MFT office (612) 227-8544 or (800) 652-7710.

Remove this form and return it by March 10 to your building representative or directly to:

MFT TASK FORCE
 Minnesota Federation of Teachers
 168 Aurora Avenue
 St. Paul, MN 55103



Lakeville Federation members received their first paycheck under their new contract and took time out to celebrate. Pictured (l. to r.) are: Bill Daly, Ann Poulsen, Delores Morrison, Pat Korba and Lyn Chamberlaine.



Lakeville President Mike Garaghty chats with Superintendent Karl Wahlstrom at a recent social to celebrate the ratification of Lakeville's new contract.

Meet Lakeville Federation, Local 1801



Members of the Lakeville Federation bargaining team gathered to review the bargaining process and celebrate the ratification of a new two-year contract for Local 1801. Pictured (l. to r.) are: Barb Stefans, Mary Malone, Jim Falkenhagen, Carol Freeman (MFT staff), Linda Moening, Tim King, Kevin McNulty, and Mike Garaghty, president of the local.