



Special thanks to EdMN & the members of the SW Metro Presidents' PLC for their contributions to this document. Also, the chart on p2 is adapted from Don Sinner's work at EdMN-Lakeville.

What does being a union member mean, and why would I want to be in one?

SEA and Education Minnesota (EdMN) are stronger and better able to advocate for educators and public education when more people belong to the union. The wages and benefits we have are because thousands of union members, past and present stood/stand together, paid/pay in, and fought/fight for them. Our strength is and always has been in our numbers. The more members we have the stronger our union is. And that means it will be easier for us to stand together to negotiate fair wages and benefits, to have a voice in our profession, and to advocate for our students.

Benefits of Union Membership

1. Better Pay

- Help workers earn more of what they deserve
- Negotiate regular wage increases
- Provide equitable wages & benefits for all (regardless of gender, race, religion, etc.)

2. Collective Bargaining Rights

- Help workers assemble for a common goal = collective bargaining power
- Protect workers so that they do not have to fight battles on their own
- Have greater impact in contract negotiations than non-union workers

3. Better Working Conditions

- Prevent workers from having to work under harsh conditions
- Provide workers a collective voice
- Negotiate benefits like holidays and improved safety measures

4. Training Opportunities for New Skills

- Provide mentoring, training, and skills development for members
- Help workers improve their skills and increase their productivity

5. Better Job Security

- Help increase productivity
- Ensure members' due process rights: they cannot be fired without a valid and concrete reason

6. General Advice and Support

- Provide professional advice
- Teach members their rights
- Provide advice on career decisions and work-related issues
- Empower workers with information and support

7. Additional Benefits

- Insurance Benefits
 - Medical - personal and family
 - Dental - personal and family
 - Disability - long-term & short-term
 - Life/Accidental Death and Dismemberment
- Negotiate Retirement Benefits
 - Deferred Compensation (matching)

8. Benefits to the Employer

- Help management increase efficiency and effectiveness through collaboration and maintaining labor peace
- Ensure single channel communication between employer and employees

A KEY Benefit Is Our Collective Voice – Many people think they know what's best for students without asking educators. Your union makes sure educator's voices are heard when policy decisions are made. We have a collective voice in conversation with district leaders about school climate, training and student supports, and a voice at the Legislature and in the public policy arena to advance legislation and programs that benefit children, public schools and school employees.

What benefits will a potential SEA member receive? They receive the benefits of the negotiated contract, the local’s “duty of fair representation” on contractual issues, and all of these benefits:

CATEGORY	UNION MEMBERS	POTENTIAL MEMBERS
General Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiated Contract wages, working conditions, leaves, etc. DUES TAB no-cost Life Insurance Identity Theft coverage Basic is FREE Publications President’s Update, EdMN Educator, NEA Insider, AFT Newsletter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiated Contract (but NOT eligible to vote on contract ratification)
Member Voice / Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievance Representation on contract violations by SEA Officers, Building Reps, and EdMN Field Rep Communication and updates from SEA emails, President’s Update, negotiations updates, etc. Participation in SEA elections, voting, committees, surveys, and professional development Questions and concerns answered by Officers, Building Reps, and/or EdMN Field Staff Invited to all General membership meetings Eligible for serving in local leadership as an Officer, Negotiator, or Building Rep Eligible to attend EdMN Conventions and Trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievance Representation on contract violations (by field rep only)
Job Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,000,000 Liability Insurance (per job-related occurrence) EdMN Crisis Fund (during difficult negotiations/strikes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>None other than contractual</i>
Legal Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance from EdMN Attorneys for work-related situations investigations, terminations, arbitration, layoff, etc. Criminal Attorney referral if accused of inappropriate work conduct Attorney Referral for non-work-related assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not eligible</i>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEA Annual Professional Development Institute (free) South Suburban United Training Academy (free) EdMN Minnesota Educator Academy (free) EdMN Summer Seminar Grants from EdMN Foundation Eligible for AFT TEACH Conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not eligible</i>
Reduced Cost Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to EdMN ESI Financial Advisory Services Home Mortgages Credit Unions Personal Financial Planning (free) Credit Cards (at reduced APR) Insurance options at reduced cost Disability, Long-Term Care, Short-Term Medical, Critical Illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not eligible</i>

Common Questions and Responses:

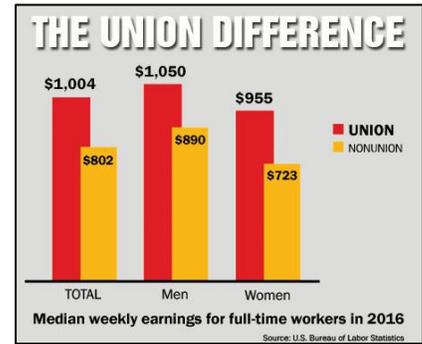
Statement: I’m a probationary teacher, why should I be a member?

Your union is here for you whether it’s your first day in the classroom or 40 years on the job. We are the most significant reason why you earn the wages and have the benefits you do (see graphic to right about unique benefits negotiated for new teachers). We also know that support and advice are particularly crucial in teachers’ early years. Your union reps are here to help you navigate the school system, to help answer questions you have, and to be the voice for your issues and concerns if you are not ready to step forward.

<p>NEW TEACHERS: “FT Dues are \$800+, what do I get back?”</p> <p>SEA Negotiated Items (examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Teacher Week pay \$800 403b Match (avg) ~\$400 Removal of steps 1+2 (avg) ~\$2400 <p style="text-align: right;">TOTAL ~\$3600</p>
--

Statement: “The dues are too high.”

Your return on investment far outweighs what you pay in dues. Workers in unions generally earn about 20% more than similar workers without unions. In the states near Minnesota where unions are weaker, teachers’ average salaries are thousands of dollars less. For example, the median compensation for Wisconsin teachers dropped \$10,483 within four years of Act 10 passing (removing the right of collective bargaining). The value of membership goes far beyond better wages and benefits, however. Our collective power allows us to fight for better working conditions and the things our students need.

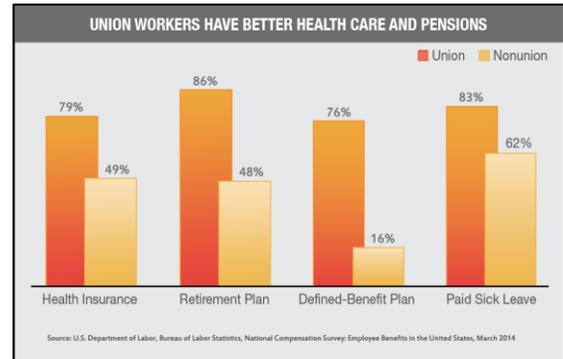


Statement: So much money goes to Education Minnesota and they don’t do anything for me.

Education Minnesota has helped SEA with negotiations preparation, field staff support, legal support, community engagement, organizing and supporting phone banking and door-knocking for levies and referendums, coordinating lobby days at the State Capitol, and making sure our collective bargaining rights stay intact here in Minnesota. Without that everything would change overnight – just ask any teacher from Wisconsin or Iowa.

Statement: Why does the union work on social issues?

Out-of-school factors have a significant impact on students’ ability to learn, and so we need to use our expertise to speak into these issues on behalf of our students. Your union protects teachers who speak up and fight for the needs of their students.



Statement: Unions protect bad teachers.

We defend teachers’ rights to due process. Ineffective teachers are identified by administrators, given opportunities to improve, and if that doesn’t happen, disciplined, counseled out of the profession, or let go. These actions may not make headlines, but they happen every day. The union is virtually always involved in that process. Administrators have the power to remove ineffective teachers. If they’re not doing that, they aren’t meeting their responsibility to students and the community to have effective teachers in every classroom. The union protects good teachers from bad administrators and Education Minnesota is and has been a key partner in helping create a fair and honest teacher development and evaluation system in Minnesota, a system which requires “underperforming” teachers to improve (with support) or be disciplined (up to and including termination).

Statement: Unions always support Democrats, and I’m a Republican.

Whether identifying as a Republican, Democrat, or member of some other political party, we all have to make difficult decisions around who we support because NO candidate fully aligns with our individual political perspectives. So, ultimately, all of us have to make compromises with our priorities to support political candidates, regardless of party. We believe that priority should be placed on supporting candidates who support students’ and teachers’ interests politically and economically. EdMN endorses candidates whom they believe offer the best support for education and union issues and they believe are “electable.” EdMN invites ALL candidates to screen, provide the same screening questions, and decide who we should endorse based on candidates’ responses. They have endorsed candidates in both parties. Unfortunately, most Republican candidates do not currently demonstrate strong support for public schools; instead they are frequently focused on implementing vouchers (which transfers money from public schools to unaccountable private schools), removing teacher protections such as seniority and tenure (which incentivizes removing older, more expensive teachers and replacing them with younger, less expensive ones), reducing funding for schools (which undercuts the needs of students and teachers), and generally demonstrating a lack of respect for teaching as a profession.

A concern of some teachers is that they can support the local union activities, but they can’t be a party to the state and national unions’ support of organizations or politicians that they do not support. EdMN provides members the right to opt out of paying the portion of dues that goes to the Political Action Committee (PAC).

Why do we still need unions?

In this climate where public schools and their teachers are routinely marginalized, teachers unions are imperative. The union gives educators the power to stand up to heavy-handed administrators or bad decision-making. Unions amplify the educator voice, your voice, at the local, state and national level to fight for what students, teachers, and their schools need.