When facing layoffs for budget reasons, LIFO (Last In First Out is the fairest system because it

* Recognizes years of paid and unpaid service
* Is objective
* Includes all licensed staff in all sites
* Is transparent
* Is predictable
* Attracts excellence
* Protects academic freedom

**Seniority represents experience in the district.**  Numerous studies confirm that teachers are more effective as they gain experience. Further, every MPS teacher is (or should be) observed formally and informally every year. Senior teachers have proven their effectiveness repeatedly.

MFT59 recognizes that life experience matters, also. In order to retain diverse staff, MFT59 proposed that teachers of color be exempt from district lay-offs in their first five years of teaching. (Teachers with more than five years of experience are rarely subject to lay-offs.) MPS rejected our proposal in the most recent round of contract bargaining, citing legal concerns.

**Seniority represents service to MPS children**. Recently the district has recognized teachers' years of service with service pins. MPS said that they valued teachers' experience and service to Minneapolis children. Senior teachers have developed years of experience in urban education and have formed close ties with families and communities.

In addition to our paid service, the average teacher works many more unpaid hours grading, planning, contacting families, attending school activities, picking up free supplies, writing grants and so much more. If a teacher works 50 hours a week during the school year (and many work more than that) they have donated 10 hours a week, or 380 hours by June. That’s equal to 9.5 full time weeks.

A teacher who has 5 years of seniority has donated at least 47.5 weeks or 95 weeks a decade. A teacher who has worked 30 years has donated the equivalent of more than 5 years of full time work.

**LIFO is objective.** Teaching is an art. In education, as in health care, it is impossible to measure value added, or compare teachers to each other objectively. LIFO is objective, in measuring years of service, beginning with the seniority number assigned when hired. LIFO prevents conflicts, misunderstandings, and lawsuits.

**LIFO is inclusive.**  It includes all district licensed staff in one system, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, or site.

**LIFO is transparent.**  The seniority list is on the district website. Staff members can find their name, see how many staff are above or below them, and follow interview and select processes as they play out. At the same time, LIFO is consistent with data privacy practices.

**LIFO is predictable.** Job security informs our decisions about where to live, when and where we buy a house, or how much money we spend or invest. This is especially true for teachers and ESPs, whose wages have not kept up with inflation for decades.

**LIFO helps MPS attract excellent teachers.** Fortunately, MPS respects experience when making difficult decisions about staff reductions. Some highly effective MPS teachers came to us from charter schools, many of which routinely lay off high-performing teachers after a year or two, in order to avoid paying higher salaries for experience or advanced degrees.

**LIFO protects academic freedom.** We are concerned about teachers outside of MPS who are subject to arbitrary lay-offs in retaliation for union activity or honest, respectful professional disagreements with administration. We are concerned about the loss of academic freedom if teachers can be laid off for maintaining rigor or for teaching controversial subjects required in Minnesota standards.

For those who seek to end LIFO, we ask “what problem are you attempting to solve?”

If there is a perception that some senior teachers are not effective, then we should examine our observation and mentoring systems. We do not believe that we should wait until lay-offs occur to counsel an ineffective teacher to change positions or, in some cases, to leave the classroom entirely. We can adjust the principals’ workload so they can spend less time on district demands, and more time as instructional leaders supporting and observing teachers. We can also create retirement incentives and severance pay proposals that pay teachers for donated time over their career.

If we are seeking to increase staff diversity, we need to look for ways to retain teachers of all backgrounds. MPS has a retention problem. MPS has been hiring diverse staff even before the first class size reduction referendum in 1991. Many transfer to other districts mid-career, or leave the profession entirely.

If we are seeking to balance experience within a site, let’s create coaching positions where experienced teachers coach in the schools where they also teach every day.