MFT continues to bargain with MPS to reach an agreement for a successor contract, now over a year into that 2019-2021 contract period. The July 20th sidebar session was cancelled due to illness. A sidebar session on Monday, July 27 resulted in a tentative agreement on language related to cost reimbursement for annual required training for our licensed school nurses. Extensive discussion on language proposals regarding quarantine provisions, effective support for instructional technology, and specialist professional development and staffing occurred between the teams, however, agreement on proposed language is yet to be reached.

We will officially begin mediation in early August with hopes of having a few full day sessions with our assigned mediator - Bureau of Mediation Services (BMS) mediator Todd Doncavage - focused on the remaining outstanding issues, which are as follows:

* Salary improvements
* Benefits improvements
* Language proposals specific to (awaiting district counter proposals):
  + Quarantine and/or Isolation in Place provisions
  + Supports and professional development expectations for instructional technology
  + Supports, professional development, and staffing ratios for specialists
* A Nurse in Every Work Site MOA (awaiting a district response and/or counter proposal)

As the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also begun discussing some of the specific working conditions we face in the fall. We may seek some Memoranda of Agreement as such topics come up. Agreements between MFT and MPS related to COVID-19 may also occur through Contract Administration as necessary.

MPS applied for mediation in late June. Mediation is often requested by one or both parties at the bargaining table when progress toward a tentative agreement slows or relationships between the two parties become strained. While we continue to disagree at the table, we do not currently consider our relationship with the district strained. That said, we remain quite far apart on the outstanding issues, particularly on salary and benefit improvements.