

Thank you to everyone who shares our values to attract and retain educators of color in MPS. MFT59 continues to fight for students and educators of color and we want to provide you with facts, so that you can continue to advocate for students and educators of color alongside us.

The data:

We have lost 48 teachers of color to layoffs over the last 15 years in the Minneapolis Public Schools. (Broken down: 21 Black, 13 Asian, 9 Hispanic/Latino, 4 multi-cultural, 1 American Indian/Alaskan Native).

In the last 18 months, 120 teachers of color have left Minneapolis Public Schools for surrounding districts that pay more, taken early retirement, changed professions, or have been fired. In fact, Black teachers are 7.9 times more likely to be fired by MPS (MFT has no hiring or firing power) than white teachers. There is an accountability system for educators and students, but there is not one when it comes to MPS administrators and leaders disregarding and discarding educators of color. And while MPS would like to say otherwise, the data does not lie. Something must change.

Over the years, MFT59 has proposed meaningful solutions to supporting and retaining educators of color through agreements that should be made in our contract.

Some of our proposed solutions include:

- Improve working conditions and staffing levels now through smaller class sizes, added mental health supports for students, and better pay.
- [A robust mentorship program](#) for newer educators of color, led by educators of color currently in MPS. This was written by educators of color for educators of color.

- MFT59 has proposed a solution to retaining educators of color if MPS chooses to destabilize our schools and cut staff from buildings.

MFT educators of color wrote this [Memorandum of Agreement](#) that includes retaining:

- Educators in any of the 15 Racially Isolated Schools
- Educators who work in Native and Heritage language literacy programs
- Educators who are graduates from the District's Grow Your Own programs
- Alumni of Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, and/or Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) programs.

*It's important to note that we have to list categories (like the ones above) because MPS says that legally the agreement cannot name "teachers of color."

In addition, MPS has never had more money than now! They have doubled their general fund balance in the last three years and have hundreds of millions in federal dollars that should be invested into our schools and students.

Scare tactics aside, they do not have to lay off anyone.

In fact, if they are worried about enrollment, our proposed solutions will only increase enrollment, ensuring that budget cuts do not have to take place. They cannot afford to not invest in our schools, students, and those who are closest to them.

It is also important for you to know that even if MPS chooses to lay off teachers (despite there being a massive teacher shortage and we are already short-staffed) that they can already lay off anyone in their first three years of teaching in any order. Anyone.

They have NO EXCUSE to lay off any educators of color and we must all hold them accountable if they do that to our students and educators.

Again, the solutions above are our proposals, not MPS'.

Additionally, this is not the first time we have put this on the negotiating table. The Educators of Color MOA was first presented to the district during the Fall of 2019. The district stated they were not interested in the MOA. During the current round of negotiations, the MFT opened negotiations with a Retention of Educators of Color MOA proposal on March 4, 2021, to which the MPS did not respond with a counterproposal until May 27, 2021. Previous rounds have included MFT proposals on the issue of retaining educators of color through exemptions to existing layoff procedures.

MPS has countered with exemptions that are so broad they would have benefited more white educators than people of color. For example, MPS proposed exempting from layoff all educators who live in Minneapolis, even though most of these educators are white. (In fact, St. Paul and several suburbs are more diverse than Minneapolis.)

MPS also proposed exempting from layoffs all educators who are MPS graduates, even though most MPS alumni educators are white. At the same time, this proposal would have disadvantaged immigrants and others who moved to Minneapolis after high school.

If MPS truly wanted to retain more educators of color they would improve conditions now by increasing pay, reducing class sizes, adding more mental health supports, and supporting educators of color with mentors of color. If that were true, they would be treating the over 120 teachers of color that have left this district in the last year and a half as an emergency.

Instead, MPS is pretending that seniority is the problem so they can run our schools with a corporate, top-down model, and let go any teacher they want when they slash budgets, as many charter schools do. Seniority is an objective process that protects all staff from subjective/arbitrary layoffs if MPS slashes building budgets and terminates staff.

Their real focus should be on supporting, recruiting/retaining educators of color, increasing enrollment, improving our schools, and fighting for more funding from the legislature. Their objective is to persuade you that seniority is the problem so that they can attempt to dismantle our union/our contract, leaving us no protection for our students or educators, especially our educators of color.

If you want to support educators of color, write to Ed Graff and the School Board, telling them to agree to our safe and stable schools priorities now.

Overall, MFT59 has been fighting to make sure we have excellent working conditions and pay, in addition to a robust mentorship program involving experienced MPS educators of color. For we know that if our union and our District want to retain educators of color, MPS must do all of the above, PLUS move up the hiring timeline to occur at the same time as all of the other surrounding school districts.

Our students cannot afford to lose any more educators this year or next, especially our educators of color. MPS needs to stop playing politics and putting \$ before students.

Join us in this fight by:

- Staying informed and educating those around you.
- Writing to Ed Graff, the school board, telling them to put students first by settling our contracts now.
- Sign [our petition](#) now.
- Support educators as we continue to fight for safe and stable schools through a strike authorization vote and anything that may come after that.

And just to reiterate, if MPS actually wanted to retain or recruit more educators of color, they would:

- Pay ESP a living wage now.
- Agree to our class size and caseload proposals which would only ensure hiring more staff, not letting staff go.
- Improve working conditions now.
- Hire at the same time as surrounding districts. MPS CHOOSES to hire a month later than the surrounding districts, therefore many educators of color looking for teaching jobs, secure positions in other districts first.
- Support educators of color through the robust mentorship program we have put on the table.
- Pay competitive salaries with surrounding districts.

At any time, MPS can agree to some or all of our proposed solutions for the schools our students deserve. To date, they have offered Band-aids as we seek to make systemic changes.

OUR STUDENTS CAN'T WAIT.

In Solidarity,

MFT59 Educators of Color Bargaining Team Members

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