



SPRINGFIELD EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ACTION LINE

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ESPs - SEA's Super Friends - As a kid I never heard anybody ask, how much do you make as a super hero? But it looked like they were all doing ok to me. I am not sure that we can say that about our heroes of 186 though, our Super Friend ESPs. Today, our teaching assistants start at about \$13 per hour. This, combined with their minimization of hours creates a situation in which the average teaching assistant in our ranks makes \$21,000 a year (with over half of seventy five TA's having Bachelor's degrees). Our brailists, a skill that is mastered by just a minute fraction of the world, start at around a mere \$16 per hour. And our security professionals, men and women working in our schools with our most violent and mentally and behaviorally challenged students on a daily basis, start at less than \$15 per hour.



Those of us who work closely with ESPs or depend on them daily, realize the critical need for these professionals within our workplace. They make or break our schools. As I interviewed twelve staff members of a local elementary fortunate enough to have a security professional, they all vocalized that their security guard (ESP) was absolutely essential to improving the environment of their building, and this ESP's work with children is irreplaceable.

We have an ESP shortage affecting us all. If we do not stand as an organization to clearly prioritize the worth of paraprofessionals, our support members will continue to be minimized. From the survey results of the October 21 General Membership Meeting, it was made crystal clear that we absolutely stand united with our ESPs and that their financial welfare be prioritized now and into the future. Click on the links below to recognize any outstanding ESPs working in your ranks. As J.R.R. Tolkien so aptly wrote, "The praise of the praiseworthy is above all rewards."

ESP STARS Nomination Form - <https://ieanea.org/forms/esp-stars-nomination-form/>

ESP of the Year Nom. Form - <https://ieanea.org/members/esp/esp-of-the-year-award/>



HBCU College Fair - October 15, the Springfield Education Association donated our time and financial support to the Historically Black College and University College Fair at Union Baptist Church. Present were a multitude of colleges/universities, sororities, fraternities, military and community agencies. This is an event that we intend on doing annually from henceforth, to assist our students in their transition to college and to recruit new members in our educator and education support professional ranks. If you would like to join SEA in being a part of future community outreach efforts like this, please reach out to your ARs, SEA

Executive Committee, or your first and second vice president, Angie Meneghetti and Mary Tennant at aggetti@sps186.org and mtennant@sps186.org.

Heroes Need Help Too - Throughout our life, we ebb and flow through a variety of emotions. Some days we feel like we are on top of the world! We have a great cup of coffee; get to work early; all of our classes run smoothly; we are caught up on all of our grading; our bills are paid; and we couldn't be happier! Other days our child misses the bus (so no time for coffee); we get in the car only to realize it won't start and it is going to cost \$1200 that we don't have to fix it; we have a terrible headache; our best planned lessons don't work out the way we want while we are being evaluated; and we have a second job to go to after all of this. We feel overwhelmed! This type of ebb and flow is normal and happens to ALL of us. Some days are just plain better than others.

However, how do we know when our emotional well-being is disrupted and has become more than that of the typical ebb and flow? First we need to be able to define mental health. Mental health is the overall wellness of how we think, regulate our feelings, and behave. When we experience a change in how we think, feel, or behave that disrupts our life, this is a red flag that we may need support. These changes in our mental health can impact our life in a variety of ways including personal or family relationships, functioning in social settings, performance at work, and the ability to participate in other activities that we typically enjoy. There are many reasons we may experience mental distress including a family history of mental health concerns, chronic stress, trauma, life crisis, chemical imbalances in our brain, medical conditions, and social isolation. Some specific signs include:

- *Changes in personality, eating, or sleeping patterns
- * An inability to cope with problems or daily activities
- * Feeling of disconnection or withdrawal from normal activities
- * Excessive anxiety
- * Prolonged sadness, depression, or apathy
- * Substance abuse
- * Extreme mood swings
- * Excessive anger or hostility

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness 43.8 million adults (1 in 5 adults) experience mental illness in a given year! We as a district understand the importance of mental health supports for our students. We also need to understand the importance of mental health supports for our adults. When we as individuals recognize these red flags in ourselves we can seek out support from our family, doctor, and mental health professionals. Additionally, the Crisis Hotline (1-800-273-8255) and Crisis Text Line (Text TALK to 741-741) can provide anonymous support and guidance. When we are unable to seek this support for ourselves we may be reliant on others to help us gain the support we need. Just like with our students, educators are often the first to notice red flags. If you notice changes in your colleagues behavior that are concerning talk to someone who can help. Seek out the resources in your building that can provide assistance including your School Social Worker, School Psychologist, and Administrator.

Ultimately, we are responsible for and need to be vigilant in our care for one another. We need to support each other by the way we interact, care for, and respect each other on a daily basis. We never fully know what a person is going through in their life. Together we can be each other's greatest support team.

-Angela Koerwitz, MEd, EdS, LCPC, NCSP, MA (and proud SEA Member)





Eye on the Prize- Just a simple reminder to all SEA members that a basic call to your board member, your local alderman, or your legislator matters. Elected officials are bound to listen to their constituency, and every call is logged in their catalogue of reality. SEA, we are the troops on the ground and we see it as it really is. You are well within your rights as a union member to reach out and respectfully share your gratitude, concerns, or questions. In the end, we all have the same mission and the same goal... an environment that is conducive to an educational process in which all students, staff and community feel safe, supported, happy and engaged. Union strong!

Calling All Leaders - You have heard me say time and time again, that this is your union. It is something that I believe to my core. Vince Lombardi once said, "Individual commitment to a group effort - that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." Within the SEA, we have a multitude of leadership positions. We have Vice President(s), Secretary and Treasurer roles. We have chairs for our Special Ed, Elementary, Minority, Middle and High School realms. We have leaders for our Sick Bank, bargaining, new membership population, alternative ed, insurance, social functions, political, grievance, and professional development positions. Many of these, manned and chaired by union members 2-4 years from retirement.

Currently, we are missing some key spots and are looking for volunteers, now. We need additional members on the Sick Bank Committee to help manage days allotted to those who found themselves in difficult life situations. We need members for the Elections Committee who may feel strongly about ensuring our current elections, and all future elections, run smoothly as part of the SEA Election's Committee. We need people who understand that our board members need continued insight into school happenings, and might like to take the lead in local lobbying efforts with our school board members and local politicians as part of S-PACE. We need those who feel that there can be some improvements to our contract, outside of things bargained, as part of our Contract Improvement Team. We also have a core of people for our Professional Development and Alternative Ed Teams, but are looking for additional members who may like to be part of these as well. If any of these pique your interest, please reach out. Your leadership awaits.



\$10 Million Dollar Man - According to ISBE, [Title I](#) funds "provide additional academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving children master challenging curricula and meet state standards in core academic subjects. Funds may be used to **support extra instruction in reading and mathematics, as well as special preschool, after-school, and summer programs**, to extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum." District 186 receives around **\$10 million** in Title I money, annually (\$9,775,067 to be exact). And, it is the current bargaining team's contention that this money is not a "separate pot of money" as as been circulated for years, but rather a "large portion of money" that should be used very carefully, along with the other \$180 million in District revenue, in order to reduce class size and help assure that we have the best trained

and compensated teachers in the area. SEA highly encourages the vetting of our concepts and the analyzation of the District 186 Title I and Title II budgets.

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/TitleII-Allowable-Unallowable-Costs.pdf>
<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Title-I-II-IV-Nonpublic-allowable-costs.pdf>

Both Sides of the Coin - Scott McFarland (SPS Board of Education VP and Chief BOE Bargainer) and Aaron Graves (SEA President) speaking live on the Jim Leach Show. Take a few minutes to listen to both the union and the District take on financials. The rhetoric is there. Is the desire?

<https://www.wmay.com/jimleach/>



Power to the People - According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018, the number of striking workers ballooned to nearly 500,000, up from about 25,000 in 2017. This is the largest number since the mid 1980's and continues to trend upward. In Illinois alone, educators and educational professionals have gone on strike in Geneva, Murphysboro, Chicago, Mendota and Decatur. Additionally, Carbondale, Addison, and Evergreen Park filed intents to strike but found resolution in the nick of time. As you well know, this is not just a local trend and, in the last two years more people have taken to the streets over their educational concerns than at any point in the past 35 years.

Many would ask, what is this trend? Is it local/societal unrest? Is it members gaining confidence as the job market tightens? Is it the realization that the schoolhouse has become a job with similar stress levels to those of emergency rooms and military, with increased supports needed to offset its difficulty level? Whatever it may be, the power of this is not lost on the Springfield Education Association members or the community.

And not only are people striking, but the number of people who have voluntarily quit their job is drastically rising. The quits rate is viewed by policymakers and economists as a measure of job market confidence. According to Reuters, the number of workers voluntarily quitting their jobs increased 130,000 to an all-time high of 3.6 million in July (September 2019). The quits rate increased to 2.4%, the highest level since April 2001, from 2.3% in June. And, we have these too, in our ranks. Although bursting with pride in our professions and desire to work with kids; as things get increasingly tougher some say that state jobs and positions in other districts look increasingly enticing. You don't have to look far to find a colleague who has quit, and is has found joy in their new employment.



UNIONS



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Working
People**

Financially, per the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, "In September, the unemployment rate declined by 0.2 percentage point to 3.5 percent. The last time the rate was this low was in December 1969, when it was also 3.5 percent. Over the month (of September), the number of unemployed persons decreased by 275,000 to 5.8 million."

In Illinois, "median sales prices of realstate continue to rise and the average number of days on the market continues to decrease," according to the Illinois Realtor Association. The investment market returned 5.5-6.5% on average in 2018, and CDs are returning 2.1-2.2%, and mortgage rates are hanging

steadily in the 3% range. According to bestplaces.net, "the average rent for a two bedroom apartment is \$846 per month and the cost of a home \$105,000 in Springfield". These are good signs for most, however many of our members are still in crisis, unhappy with their life conditions and their financial forward movement in SPS186 and are speaking out

Last week alone, I spoke with three members of the union who were either single mothers, bread-winners, or main insurance providers of their family unit. They shared similar stories of being in desperate financial situations and doubting their ability to find a way forward while continuing to work for the District. They are staring down high interest rates, garnishments, and bankruptcies, and cannot find a way out of the financial hole that they have been sucked down for the last decade. These are hard realities.

If we are going to get back on the good side of this, the time is now. Together, we have a collective voice that can bring back increasing respect for the profession, make the school house less chaotic, and help to end the educator, educational professional and substitute crisis that is plaguing our community.

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/9/20/20873867/worker-strike-walkout-stoppage-firing-job>

Mediator Mediocrity - Under federal mediation, our SEA Bargaining Team met October 16, October 24 and again October 30, under federal mediation. We have continued to inch forward slowly and the mediator is bound to stay involved as long as it takes to reach a settlement. However this slow drag does not benefit our members as it benefits the District and the BOE. Our team has asked you to reserve November 4th as a rally or ratification. The bargaining team would like nothing more than to bring you back a contract to ratify, but are concerned it may prove otherwise. This process CAN work, but only if the District is willing to allow it to move to where you feel acceptable.

Self Care Isn't Selfish - Did you know that statistically and anecdotally, October is considered the most difficult month of the school year? Did you know (I am sure you do!) that during this month we see the most challenging of student behaviors and that terms like "October Blues" and "October Slump" have come about because of what often times happens to teachers and staff and students during this month? Therefore, we have to take good care of ourselves as well as each other.

As a result of increased stressors of work, family and outside obligations, it is very likely that at some point we will begin to experience overwhelm. When this happens it is critical that we are able to identify it and then hold space for ourselves, our colleagues and our students. Overwhelm can be a tricky experience because it usually has its grip on us long before we realize it has happened. Overwhelm is "a deep emotional response to countless thoughts and experiences." It does not follow the lines of logic so it can be very hard to identify. It can become so large that it overtakes our capacity to find joy and contentment in our personal and professional lives. It's not an emotion that you can check at the professional door and it can be easy to be swept away by this feeling. So here are a few signs that you may have slipped into overwhelm; you begin to dread things and everything seems like a chore; you may begin to experience more periods of indecision and jumping back and forth between one thing or another; you may be rushing through things just to get them done or find yourself procrastinating which in turn brings on greater overwhelm; and finally you may also find yourself having difficulty focusing on tasks.

The most important step is to recognize that you (or a colleague or student) are overwhelmed. This recognition goes a long way in your ability to shift the feeling into actions that are more supportive. There are a number of things you can do to hold space for yourself, colleague or student when overwhelm is present. Here are a few things you can do:

1. **Ground yourself with deep breathing** (there are lots of great apps that you can use).
2. **Hydrate and eat healthy** (reaching for those comfort foods/high carb snacks will temporarily feel wonderful but the aftereffects won't be).
3. **Get outside and connect with nature** (take a walk at lunch, sit in the sun, be still).
4. **Share your feelings with someone you trust** (this always lessens the burden on your soul).
5. **Make lists/prioritize/delegate** (super helpful when the thoughts are swimming around constantly in your head).
6. **Schedule time throughout your week just for you** (there is a great deal of research about the positive effects of making time just for ourselves).
7. **Be mindful of your expectations of yourself and others.**
8. **Find little things to do that aren't expensive that bring you great joy.**

As we proceed deeper into the school year, it is important to develop routines for self-care so that when we are overwhelmed, hungry, angry and exhausted, we have established go-to supportive actions to self-regulate and take good care of ourselves.

-Gail Kolbeck
Behavior and Trauma Informed Practices Strategist (and proud SEA member ;)

SUPERHERO YOGA



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The Fantastic Fifteen - Your SEA Bargaining Team - There is no secret recipe to a great team; no perfect design, or magic ingredients. In fact, many great teams are made up of assorted parts and pieces, and may look more like an ingenious all-purpose vehicle or a beautiful Frankenstein than a sleek sports car or Divaesque Superheroine. Your SEA bargaining team is a varied group of union members. They are anywhere from 34 years young to one year away from retirement. They are made up of teacher's assistants, psychologists, classroom teachers, resource, and security guards. They work in pre-k buildings, alternative education buildings, special education, elementary, middle and high schools. And they are from schools in every pocket and side of SPS186.

The team's members are Jane Caruthers, Joey Gobble, Dave Isham, Kim Johnson, Angela Koerwitz, Ben McKinney, Angie Meneghetti, Christine Sanders, Susan Smith, Dawn Swaggerty, Denise Whiteman, Ray Zinnen, Jeanne Stash, Larry Hale, and Aaron Graves; all accompanied by your IEA Uniserv Director, Sean Burns and our newly appointed Bargaining Support Chair, Tiana Durr.

We know that you appreciate your team, and we feel the immensity of support from the membership. The lunches, cards, cookies and personal messages have been appreciated and inspiring. Our team wants to thank you for this, and encourages you to consider the merits of being a part of the team in the future. There is no union without "U"!

American Education Week - The National Education Association's 98th annual American Education Week—November 18-22, 2019—presents all Americans with an opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child receives a quality education. Our AEW tagline, "Reach. Educate. Inspire.", reflects NEA's vision of calling upon all Americans to do their part in making public schools great for every child so that they can grow and achieve in the 21st century.

The weeklong celebration will spotlight distinguished individuals who are critical building great public schools for the nation's 50 million K-12 students. American Education Week's celebration is mapped out on the following calendar.

◆ **Celebrate National ESP Day** ◆ **Nov. 20**

**American Education Week 2019
November 18-22**

<p>MONDAY 18 Kickoff Day Encourage students, staff and parents to celebrate great public schools.</p>	<p>TUESDAY 19 Parents Day Invite parents and family members to school for a first-hand look at a typical school day.</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY 20 Education Support Professionals Day Wear #RedForED to recognize and celebrate ESPs who meet the needs of the whole student.</p>	<p>THURSDAY 21 Educator for a Day Encourage elected officials and community leaders to serve as "educators for a day" for a hands-on school experience.</p>	<p>FRIDAY 22 Substitute Educators Day Honor and celebrate educators who are called on to substitute for regular classroom teachers in their absence for their services.</p>
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#aew2019 | www.nea.org/aew

* Please pay particular attention to Thursday, the 21st. This is NEA "Educator for a Day". This is a formal opportunity to invite all community power brokers and stakeholders into your educational environment to be a "hands-on" part of and witness the reality of public education. SEA will be having another contest, centered around "Educators Holding Hands With Our Community". More details to follow soon.

Pavement Particulars - Over the last month, a myriad of questions from members and media regarding a strike have surfaced. Details have been avoided so as not to overly burden or stress our members, our students or our community. However, that time is past. If the offer presented by the District November 4 is voted down, we will have to make the collective decision to fish or cut bait. And at that point, we want every member to know what that means.

First, this decision will never be made by the Bargaining Team autonomously. This is a decision that requires a vote by the SEA General Membership. Any actions taken would be taken together, and no one should ever be strong armed into voting against their conscience. Next, if it is voted down, the fight is not over and your team is not either. Our last best offer and the District's will be publicly posted and we will continue until the membership decides otherwise. At that point, voting an intent to strike is an option. There are requirements and timelines that would not allow a strike to occur any sooner than early December. Fourth, low interest loans can be secured through union vetted organizations and payday and health insurance considerations have been carefully mapped. Finally, remember that everything is negotiable. No two organizations take the same route, and we decide our pathway together.



Hero Grading 101 - According to the SEA / District 186 Contract - Article 11.6 GRADES, "The teacher shall maintain the responsibility and right to determine grades and other evaluations of students within the grading policies of the District based upon his/her professional judgment of available criteria pertinent to any given subject area or activity to which he/she is responsible. No grade or evaluation shall be changed without notification to the teacher concerning the nature and reasons for such change; and if such a change is made, the person making the change shall assume such responsibility for determining the grade or evaluation, and shall mark as administratively assigned and shall initial such change."

SEA maintains a firm stance on this and any other negotiated stances around professional autonomy that have long served educators of 186 and the rest of the nation well. Please reach out to the union if you should have any questions or feel caught up in the grading web.



CIRC 50th Anniversary - The Central Illinois Reading Council is celebrating its 50th year with a "Teacher's Night Out" at Donnie's B's Comedy Club (west of Target). The comedian will be Rob Little, past comedian of the year, and there will be a roast of some local educators like SEA President, Aaron Graves and other District personnel.

It will be held November 7th, from 5:00-8:00 p.m. There will be eight appetizers and a cash bar from 5-6:30 p.m. Seating at 6:30 p.m. Show time at 7:00 p.m. Ticket cost is \$18.00 and they can be purchased at Keefner's at 1941 W Iles or Terri Colyer at 217-414-4071 and tcolyer@auburn.k12.il.us. Hope to see you there. It is going to be a great celebration for a cause none better... reading and our kids.

Calendar of Events

November

- 1-3 - IEA EMELT
- 7- Sick Bank, 1900, 4:00 p.m.
- 9- ESP Assembly, Champaign 10 am
- 12 AR Meeting, PDC, 4:20 p.m.
- 4 & 18 BOE, 1900, 6:30 p.m.
- 19 Grievance, PDC, 4:00 p.m.
- 18-22 American Education Week
- 20 National ESP Day
- 26 Exec Meeting, PDC, 4:20 p.m.
- 28 Thanksgiving

* All meetings at IEA PDC (3440 Liberty Drive) unless noted.



