

Solidarity in our Schools

What is “The Union”?

What is a union? They are important right? Working in the US today, there are over 14.3 million people belonging to unions; the four largest unions in the US are the National Education Association, the Service Employees International Union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and the Teamsters. According to NEA, an association/union is “A group of employees who unite and have legal rights to form a democratic group that advocates for better conditions at their workplace on behalf of themselves and others.” What does that mean to us here in Allegany County Public Schools?

The union is not an outside entity. So often we hear, “The union will (fill in the blank with an action from Santa’s wish list of items),” like it is a force that works from the outside. Not at all- the union is YOU! Any employee who is a member is the union and can make changes for better working conditions for themselves and others. The union does nothing without prompting from the membership, and you can make the change you want to see at your workplace because you have the power!

A union membership is like a gym membership-you get out of it what you put into it. Just like a gym, unions need active members who want to see the best outcome in the long run. Ways you can participate in ACEA (our local affiliate of MSEA and NEA) is to get active: come to a 10-minute meeting, become a building representative, attend an ACEA sponsored event after hours, or communicate needs in your building to the ACEA office through email or a call. Union membership and participation has monetary benefits, and we can point you in the right direction with what MSEA and NEA have to offer you for savings in monthly budget as well!

Mahatma Gandhi’s famous quote “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” is very fitting to the union conversation because the union is the members; no change happens in our schools without member participation and activation. There have been some differences made in just the past month, and I am emboldened by the changemakers joining in the work. I hope to see you become an active participant of ACEA and make our union the strongest source of support for educational professionals working in our schools.