



July 1, 2014

Superintendent Ric Dressen  
Edina Public Schools  
ISD 273 District Office, Room 200  
5701 Normandale Road  
Edina, Minnesota 55424

Dear Superintendent Dressen,

We are writing as representatives of Education Minnesota and the Laborers' Union to draw your attention to a matter of grave concern regarding what appears to be the use of child labor on an elementary school construction job site in the Edina School District. This issue is of deep concern to both our organizations, and we hope that the district will promptly investigate and take appropriate action. Child safety is a top priority for the Edina teachers who belong to Education Minnesota, as construction worksite safety is a top concern for members of the Laborers' Union.

Over the course of the last two weeks, an individual who clearly appears to be a minor child has been observed on multiple occasions performing construction work on the new Cornelia Elementary School addition. The young person in question, who appears to be 13 or 14 years old, has been seen moving and placing concrete block, operating machinery, and cutting block with a saw. In all but one instance, these tasks were performed without required personal protective equipment (hard hat, vest, and eye protection).

Beyond looking much too young to perform construction, the youth's actions were furtive when another contractor representative visited the site, further solidifying our understanding that he is a minor child. We have included with this correspondence photos that were taken at the Cornelia Elementary School construction site on June 24 by Laborers' Union staff.

The matter has been reported to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry, but the Department's ability to investigate this child labor report is limited because we have not been able to identify the employer in question. The individuals observed working at the project, including the apparent youth, have used unmarked equipment and unmarked vehicles. While our research indicates that the general contractor is Derau Construction, and an individual driving an Interstate Companies truck has been observed briefly visiting the site, it is not clear whether either of those companies is in fact the employer.

We request that the Edina School District immediately begin an investigation to identify the affected young person working on the project, determine his age, identify his employer, and determine the employer's relationship to the project. As the owner of the construction project, the district has a legal and a moral responsibility for what happens on the construction site, and the district is also better able than the state to obtain information about and from the contractors that have been retained by the district to perform the work.

If and when the district verifies that the individual in question is a minor child who should not be working on a district project, we would further request that all of the contractors in the chain of responsibility, up to and including the general contractor or construction manager, be immediately removed from the project and replaced with responsible contractors. Whether they knowingly used or permitted the use of child labor or failed to properly vet and supervise subcontractors, they are ultimately accountable and their failure to keep children off the construction site should be sufficient proof that they cannot be trusted with the job.

State law requires public entities such as the district to employ responsible contractors, and no responsible contractor would employ a child on a public construction project, much less allow a child to perform dangerous work without using required safety equipment, nor would a responsible contractor employ a subcontractor that uses child labor. As unions that represent teachers and construction workers, we have an obligation to ensure that no contractor is ever allowed to put a child in harm's way, and we intend to meet that obligation.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience what action you plan to take to address the problems and how we can assist you and your staff with your investigation.

Regards,

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