

Thinking Seriously About Retiring?

A retirement workshop for substitute teachers will be held at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 18, at the MTEA Building. Registration starts at 4:00 p.m. and snacks will be served.

Two Main Topics

Information will be presented on:

- ◆ Health insurance benefits - eligibility, future premium costs, etc.
- ◆ State pension benefits.

Cheryl Barczak, a retired MTEA staff member, will explain board-paid health benefits.

Don Ernest, the MTEA staff member who assists teachers and substitute teachers with state pension questions, will present a seminar similar to what he provides in the fall of each school year.

Who Should Attend

If you are planning on retiring at the end of this school year, we urge you to attend with your spouse.

If you are thinking about retiring in the next year or two, we also recommend that you attend.

Pre-Registration Please

If you plan on attending, please pre-register at mtea.org (Events) or call 259-1990. Be sure to let us know if you're bringing your spouse.

Seeking the Facts Behind the Draconian School Budget Cuts

On February 2, MTEA President Mike Langyel wrote Milwaukee School Board President Michael Bonds. The text of his letter is below.

The MTEA is receiving reports from our members regarding the drastic school budget cuts being proposed by the administration. We have also learned that the building administrators must submit a budget for their school by February 11, 2010.

We believe many questions need to be answered. How were the budget amounts determined for each school? How did MPS spend the stimulus money? What cuts are being made at the central office to prevent services to students from being eliminated? This is just a sampling of the many questions being raised by our members.

We are writing to request that you convene a meeting with MTEA and ASC representatives where the MPS administration will explain how the budget was developed and what assumptions were used in the development of the budget, and address related questions.

We are also requesting a delay in the date by which schools must identify cuts and submit their budget to the central office

Your prompt consideration of these requests will be appreciated.

MTEA Organizing Workgroup - February 18

On February 3, the MTEA Executive Board voted to create an MTEA Organizing Workgroup for two reasons:

- ◆ As a key step toward building an organizing culture within our union.
- ◆ To position our union to respond to current and future issues, such as the proposed MPS Budget reductions.

Participation in the MTEA Organizing Workgroup is open to all MTEA members. Its first meeting will take place at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 18, at the MTEA Building.

No formal registration is needed. Just bring your energy and ideas!

Don't Transport Students

You should not transport students in your car because of the risks. If an accident occurs, the primary coverage will be the responsibility of your personal auto insurance carrier. The School Board's liability insurance provides strictly "excess" coverage. As such, the Board will **not** pay for any claims unless your auto insurance coverage limits are exhausted. The fact that you are on authorized school business - such as taking home students who missed their bus - does **not** relieve you of any responsibility if an accident occurs.

Strict Limits on the Use of Physical Force

Physical force may be used only in student discipline situations narrowly defined by the teacher contract, quoted below:

"Any reasonable and appropriate means, including the use of physical force, may be used by school personnel to prevent a threatened breach of discipline or to stop a continuing breach of discipline. It is expected that physical force will be used **only when other means for preventing a breach of discipline or stopping its continuance have been ineffective.**"

No Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment may never be used. Once a breach of discipline is completed, you may not use physical force as a form of punishment.

Self-Defense Situations

The teacher contract spells out the limits on using force for self-defense. "... reasonable physical force may be used in self-defense. Self-defense is permissible where a teacher finds it necessary to defend himself/herself or a third person, where a teacher reasonably believes that such action is necessary for the safety of himself/herself or a third person. Self-defense means the **use of such force as is necessary to protect oneself.** It does not mean that any additional force may be used or that force may be used after the individual is no longer in danger."

Our Advice: If you are in doubt as to whether the use of physical force is appropriate in a student discipline situation, do **not** use it.

Claiming a Union Dues Tax Deduction

If you itemize deductions on your federal income tax return, you can include a portion of your union dues along with other expenses that are defined by the IRS as "miscellaneous deductions." The IRS allows a deduction for miscellaneous expenses which, in the aggregate, exceed 2% of your adjusted gross income.

For example, suppose your 2009 adjusted gross income was \$18,000, and the aggregate amount you spent on items which qualify as miscellaneous deduction expenses was \$600. On Schedule A of your federal tax form, you would detail the \$600 in expenses and then subtract \$360, which is 2% of your \$18,000 income. The result would be a net "miscellaneous" deduction of \$240.

A Few Union Expenditures Are Not Deductible

Under the federal tax code, union dues spent on legislative lobbying and political action contributions are not deductible expenses for income tax purposes. To comply with the IRS notice requirements, our attorney has calculated MTEA lobbying and political action expenses for 2009. After deducting these expenses, 96.5% of the dues substitutes paid in 2009 qualified as miscellaneous deduction expenses.

Typical Allowable Union Dues Amount - \$299.77

For many substitute members, the total amount of union dues deducted during 2009 was \$310.64. If you paid this amount, IRS allows you to claim **\$299.77** in union dues as a miscellaneous deduction expense ($\$310.64 \times 96.5\% = \299.77).

Determining Your Amount for 2009

To claim the allowable portion of the union dues you paid during 2009, you should take two steps:

1. Check your December 25, 2009 paycheck to find the total amount deducted for union dues during 2009. It will be in the "After-Tax Deduction Box," noted "YTD" (Year-to-Date).
2. Multiply your amount by 96.5%.

Additional Step Required If You Requested a Rebate

If you requested a rebate for your 2009-10 MTEA PAC contribution, you must subtract the \$4.60 rebate amount you received in 2009 **before** you multiply your 2009 dues deduction total by 96.5%.

Available at mtea.org

Our union dues and tax deduction information is at mtea.org. It will be there from now until April 15, for your quick reference.

Milwaukee Graduation Project Summit

The dropout crisis is not just a school problem. It's a community problem that requires community solutions.

Our union - in partnership with local businesses, non-profit organizations, parents, youth, and others - is convening a summit on Friday, **March 19**. Stakeholders representing our whole community will come together to learn more about dropout prevention, and develop a community action plan to increase graduation rates in Milwaukee.

Educators will have a place at the table, but space is limited. If you would like to represent MTEA at the summit, please complete the interest form at mtea.org. Our delegation will be selected by MTEA President Mike Langyel.