
Support for Improving MPS Student Achievement

It seems that every time you pick up a certain daily newspaper somebody from outside of MPS is talking about how to “reform” us. Wouldn’t it be great if an outside organization offered to work with the educators of our district, supporting the positives and assisting in the hard work of change?

The Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC) is doing exactly that. The GMC is an organization comprised of business, labor, academic, philanthropic, non-profit, and civic leaders. Its mission is to “keep Southeastern Wisconsin the best community to live, learn, work, and play.”

For over two years, the GMC has invested time and money in MPS. It served as a catalyst in developing a five-year plan for MPS – and funded the process. The GMC continues to support the plan this school year – the second year of implementation.

Opening Up Communication Within MPS

There’s a communications gap in our district. Whether it’s implementing the MPS Strategic Plan, the latest DIFI edict, or the newspaper series on the Neighborhood Schools Initiative – educators and other staff members are often isolated and uninformed.

An Online Town Hall for MPS

This fall, a Web site will be established as one step toward connecting the MPS community through a variety of communication formats. The new site, called “Project X” because it is now a big unknown, will include blogs, video, forums and audio. The purpose is to help improve student achievement in MPS through communication.

Not the “Party Line”

Project X will provide a way for educators to share their views, concerns, questions, and criticisms of what’s going on in MPS. Success stories within classrooms, schools, and the system may be shared. (We all need to hear some good news!) But the problems will be aired. Frank discussion of issues (**not** personalities) is fair game.

Collaborative Effort – Not Top Down

Project X is being developed by representatives of the MTEA; the Administrators and Supervisors Council (ASC - a.k.a. the principals’ union; MPS; and GMC (see article to the left). The goal is open and honest dialog among employees – not management platitudes.

Your Ideas Are Welcome

This new communications source is intended to connect you to the rest of the MPS community. You can help shape the content **before** the site is launched (and after).

Send suggestions for what you’d like to see and hear on Project X to omaharp@mtea.weac.org.

MTEA Retirement Workshop

Each fall, the MTEA presents a workshop for teachers who are considering retirement. The workshop is especially valuable to those planning to retire at the end of the current school year.

Substitute teachers are invited to attend because they are covered by the same state pension plan as teachers - the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS). A large portion of the workshop is devoted to explaining WRS benefits.

However, information on topics such as severance pay, group health insurance eligibility, and the teachers' supplemental retirement plan will apply only to teachers. If you have questions on eligibility for MPS group health insurance as a retired substitute teacher, please contact Sandra Wilant at 259-1990 or wilants@mtea.weac.org.

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Insurance Reminder: September 30 Deadline

The open enrollment period for MPS group health and dental insurance will end on Tuesday, September 30. Applications must be received in Room 124 of the MPS central office by 5:00 p.m. that day.

The September 30 enrollment deadline applies to:

◆ **New Enrollments.** You must submit an application form if you did not have Board insurance coverage last school year but have earned it for 2008-09 - by working 90 or more days during 2007-08.

◆ **Switching plans** - MPS group health or dental.

◆ **Adding dependents**, due to marriage or the birth or adoption of a child.

Workshop Dates and Details

If you are considering retiring in June of 2009, you and your spouse should attend on Thursday, **September 25**, or Tuesday, **October 7**. The workshop will be held from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at **Serb Hall, 5105 West Oklahoma Avenue**. Don Ernest of the MTEA staff will present the seminar, and there will be ample time for questions.

We urge you to bring your spouse. If you plan to attend, please call the MTEA at 259-1990 to register by giving your name, number attending, and your choice of workshop date. If you prefer, register online at mtea.org (Events).

Key Steps in Preparing for Retirement

The MTEA workshop provides a broad framework to start retirement planning. We recommend two more steps to help determine your choice of WRS annuity payments, the timing of your retirement, etc.

First, you need to submit a WRS "Benefit Information Request" form. Copies of this form will be distributed at the workshop, and instructions will be given to help participants complete it. After you send in your form, the WRS will provide you with specific dollar amount estimates of your state pension payment options. (It could take up to 12 weeks.)

Second, after you have received your payment estimates from WRS, you and your spouse should make an appointment to meet with Don Ernest. This in-depth counseling session will provide answers to your individual questions. At the end of this session, all of your retirement paperwork will be ready to file.

Paycheck Problems

You should review each paycheck to make certain you receive pay for all of the time you work.

When you do not receive pay for all of the days you worked in a pay period, you need to notify the secretary who handles the payroll at the school involved.

If you worked at two or more schools during the pay period, the most efficient way to find out which school did not process your payment is to call the MPS payroll department at 475-8300.

There are only a few situations when calling your dispatcher about a paycheck problem is the right step. One good example - not being paid for a holiday.

If you encounter a pay problem that is not being addressed, please call Sandra Wilant at the MTEA Building at 259-1990 or e-mail her at wilants@mtea.weac.org.

Log Now! Avoid Problems Later.

We suggest that you keep a log of the school, teacher, date, and (if you don't work a full day) the hours of your assignments. The [MTEA 2008-09 Date Book](#) is handy for keeping your log.

For your reference, the MPS payroll schedule for substitute teachers for this school year is summarized below. Keep in mind that your paychecks are based on a two-week holdback.

The first number listed below is the pay date, followed by the number of **potential** days of pay in **bold** print. The first and last work dates during the two weeks covered by each paycheck are in parentheses.

9/19 - 7 (8/28-9/5)	2/20 - 10 (1/26-2/6)
10/3 - 10 (9/8-9/19)	3/6 - 9 (2/9-2/20)
10/17 - 10 (9/22-10/3)	3/20 - 10 (2/23-3/6)
10/31 - 10 (10/6-10/17)	4/3 - 10 (3/9-3/20)
11/14 - 10 (10/20-10/31)	4/17 - 10 (3/23-4/3)
11/28 - 10 (11/3-11/14)	5/1 - 4 (4/6-4/17)
12/12 - 9 (11/17-11/28)	5/15 - 10 (4/20-5/1)
12/26 - 10 (12/1-12/12)	5/29 - 10 (5/4-5/15)
1/9 - 5 (12/15-12/19)	6/12 - 10 (5/18-5/29)
1/23 - 5 (1/5-1/9)	6/26 - 10 (6/1-6/12)
2/6 - 9 (1/12-1/23)	7/10 - 3 (6/15-6/17)