

Lesson Plans

Two grievance arbitration decisions have clarified the contractual rights and duties of teachers in regard to lesson plans. The guidelines are:

- ◆ All teachers prepare lesson plans for their own use.
- ◆ The teacher must provide lesson plans for a substitute teacher's use.
- ◆ The principal may not require a faculty to submit lesson plans weekly nor on any other periodic basis.
- ◆ The principal may check the lesson plans of all teachers occasionally.
- ◆ The content of the lesson plan is determined by the teacher, except in the two situations described below:

During the first period of employment, a principal should review the new teacher's lesson plans to determine if he/she requires assistance.

If the principal has evidence that a teacher is not planning satisfactorily, the principal may require the submission of lesson plans for periodic inspection and approval.

TEAM Helps Experienced Teachers

By contract, the MTEA and school board collaborate to offer the Teacher Evaluation and Mentoring (TEAM) program. TEAM provides a fair and workable way to identify and help tenured teachers who demonstrate a need for assistance in their classroom performance.

TEAM participants receive intensive assistance from peers (mentors) for at least two full semesters. Peer assistance includes: planning sessions, observations and follow-up conferences, modeling, coaching, providing resources, etc.

Key Points on Referrals

- ◆ Candidates for the TEAM are identified by referrals from principals, fellow teachers, or self-referrals.
- ◆ All referrals are reviewed, and about half result in teachers being offered TEAM program support. **Participation is strictly voluntary.**
- ◆ The deadline for referrals is Wednesday, **October 15**.

Eleven Years of TEAM - Summary of Results

Of the 185 teachers who have entered the program, 59 completed at least two full semesters of TEAM support, exited successfully, and are now performing effectively in the classroom. Eighty-five TEAM participants have resigned or retired from MPS. This school year, 20 teachers are participating in the program.

About half of over 400 referrals to TEAM have **not** resulted in teachers participating in the program - for a wide variety of reasons. For example, 51 of the past referrals were invalid because the principal did not submit the required observation data or the teacher did not have three or more years in MPS.

More Details on the TEAM Program

For more information, please call Jennifer Jones-Miller at 212-3172. Jennifer is a teacher who coordinates the TEAM program. Additional statistics on the program are at mtea.org (Contracts).

A copy of a brochure describing the program was sent to the BR in each school with today's Sharpener. Please ask your BR or call us at 259-1990 if you would like a copy.

"Our Lights Are On" Grievances Resolved with \$40,000 in Back Pay

Background on Grievances

In January of 2001, MPS initiated its districtwide student recruitment nights, known as "Our Lights Are On." Our union filed a group grievance because the district failed to bargain compensation for teachers who worked these nights.

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More Spendable Income Avoid Taxes – Legally!

Does your heart sink every time you look at the tax deductions withheld from your paychecks? Well, a new healthcare Flexible Savings Account (FSA) can ease some of your pain.

An FSA allows you to set aside part of your earnings before federal and state income taxes and Social Security contributions are withheld. These **pre-tax** dollars are placed in your individual FSA to be spent on a wide range of health-related expenses. IRS regulates FSA's, and you must spend the total pre-tax amount you decide to set aside in a calendar year on health-related expenses incurred that year.

Example Illustrates Value

The value of an FSA depends on factors such as your tax bracket and how much you set aside. The following example of a single taxpayer with no dependents is taken from the SHPS Web site. SHPS administers the MPS FSA program.

With an annual FSA amount of \$1,500 and an annual salary of \$35,500, this taxpayer increased his annual spendable income by \$490. The increase was due to not paying federal income tax and Social Security contributions on \$1,500 set aside in an FSA account. (Spendable income would increase even more by not paying state income tax - 6.9% in Wisconsin.)

Worth Investigating

The September 3 Sharpener provided basic information about FSAs. We also recommend reviewing the MPS booklet on healthcare FSAs which spells out how to enroll online.

September 30 Deadline

If you'd like to try an FSA in 2009, you need to enroll by the September 30, 2008 deadline. To sign up online, go to the MPS portal home page and click on "Employee Self Service."

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Arbitrator Robert Callaway conducted a hearing on the grievance in May of 2002 and issued his decision over two years later in 2004. Additional group grievances were filed during the school years prior to his decision – 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04.

Ruling: Work Is Voluntary and Paid

The arbitration decision sustained our union's position that working "Our Lights Are On" evenings is strictly voluntary and volunteers are paid for their time. The arbitrator determined that the part-time certificated hourly rate was appropriate for this service.

Lengthy Process to Identify Affected Teachers

To implement the arbitrator's ruling, the teachers who worked "Our Lights Are On" nights without compensation had to be identified and their time verified. However, school and district administrators did not maintain comprehensive lists. MTEA and MPS representatives agreed that the first step would be to ask the affected teachers to identify themselves.

An article and tear-out form were printed in the December 8, 2004 Sharpener and repeated in the January 12, 2005 edition. Subsequently, an arduous process of cross-checking records was undertaken.

Agreement Reached on Final List

After months of investigation, MTEA and MPS representatives reached agreement on a final list of teachers due back pay. To conclude all of the grievances on an issue raised over seven years ago, it was agreed that only the teachers who identified themselves in 2004-05 and whose participation was verified will receive back pay.

Majority of Payments on September 19 Paychecks

As a result of the persistence and painstaking work of our union's staff, 510 teachers are receiving a total of \$40,152.09 in back pay.

Affected teachers who are actively employed by MPS are being paid on their **September 19** paycheck. The payment is coded as "(+) PAY ADJUSTMENT-PEN (T)." Per IRS rules, federal income tax is withheld at the rate of 25%.

Affected teachers who have retired or resigned from MPS will receive their payment on one of three paydates in October. MPS has not completed verification of their addresses and other payment logistics.

Insurances - Important Reminder

September 30 is the deadline for open enrollment in the MPS group health and dental insurance plans. It's not only an opportunity for new teachers to enroll for the first time. It's also important for veteran teachers in two situations.

#1 - Returning From Leave - If you returned from an unpaid leave this fall, you must re-enroll to obtain both health and dental insurance coverage. Coverage does **not** automatically resume!

#2 - Adding Dependents - If you did not add a dependent at the time of birth or marriage, you should add your "new" dependent during open enrollment. Even if you have family coverage, new dependents are **not** automatically covered.

Bring to MPS for Time Stamping

We strongly recommend that you bring your insurance enrollment application form to Room 124 of the MPS central office. You should ask for a time-stamped photocopy of your form to document your timely submission.