

"BR+" Is a Plus for Your School

Your union has received an NEA grant for a pilot program designed to help a select group of MTEA Building Representatives strengthen their skills and knowledge. The "BR+" leadership development program offers substantial training in contract enforcement (including grievance initiation), conflict management, and other areas. The 30 participating BRs will also receive staff support and networking opportunities designed to enhance their ability to represent you!

Two all-day training sessions for the participating BRs are scheduled for **December 14** and **January 15**. They will be released from school both days (with pay covered by the grant).

Interested BRs need to apply by **Monday, November 15**. The form is at mtea.org (or call 259-1990 for a paper copy). Urge your BR to apply for a program that will be a plus for your school and your union.

Calling for a Substitute

To arrange for a substitute teacher, call one of the four phone numbers below. (North Avenue is the dividing line.)

Elementary

Southside - 238-6225

Northside - 238-6223

Secondary

Southside - 238-6226

Northside - 238-6224

Contract Votes Due Wednesday

MTEA Building Representatives (BRs) received contract ratification ballots and your school's MTEA Ballot Box, with today's Sharpener delivery. Ballots must be cast, before the end of the day on this **Wednesday, November 17**.

Our union's leaders recommend that you vote to accept what they have concluded is the **best contract possible** for the financial security and professional future of our members.

Moving Education Forward

November 2 was an important day for us to Move Education Forward by electing pro-public education candidates to office.

Our results were mixed. Among the most significant developments was the election of Scott Walker as our next Governor.

Governor-elect Walker's education agenda, while lacking detail, does not bode well for school communities across the state. Instead of discussing the need for comprehensive school funding reform that will enable districts to provide the programs and educational opportunities students deserve, Governor-elect Walker is more interested in priorities like:

- ◆ Grading schools on an A to F scale in an effort to "reform failing schools."
- ◆ Capping teacher compensation by reinstating the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO).
- ◆ Repealing legislation that made collective bargaining and arbitration a more fair and transparent process.
- ◆ Lifting the cap on student enrollment in voucher schools.

We also lost a great leader in Senator Russ Feingold, but we celebrated victories in the elections of:

- Chris Larson to Senate District 5 (replacing Sen. Jeff Plale)
- JoCasta "Joey" Zamarippa to Assembly District 8
- Elizabeth Coggs to Assembly District 10

Now, we must redouble our efforts to Move Education Forward as we prepare for School Board elections, the MPS and state budget processes, and the upcoming legislative session.

As educators, we know what works to improve our schools and make sure our students have every opportunity to succeed. We must tell our stories and be strong advocates for our profession and our students. Now, more than ever, it's critical to keep our stories at the forefront of the conversations about education reform and teacher quality.

Please continue on back...



A View on Reform Rhetoric

The August 6, 2010 Public Education Network Weekly *Newsblast* had the following synopsis of a blog by Claus von Zastrow.

For years, teachers were paid in good will rather than money or status, writes Claus von Zastrow on the Learning First Alliance's Public School Insights blog, but the new rhetoric of education reform suggests you won't get even that.

It would have you believe you need a missionary zeal and a belief in your own expendability after five or 10 years - not a great advertisement for long-term career viability. Von Zastrow fears that the growing tendency to describe older teachers as expensive deadwood may prompt young people to see teaching as a brief pit stop on the way to a 'real' career.

This is likely compounded by the high profile of Teach for America (TFA) in the media, which perhaps is making teaching cool again, but also disparages other, non-TFA teachers by comparison.

Pundits should consider the long-term effects on the teaching profession when painting scenarios in terms of mission: impossible.

"I'm at least as concerned by what's missing from the common rhetoric of school reform," writes von Zastrow. "Why can't pundits say more about the support teachers need to succeed, the climate they need to thrive, the career opportunities they need to grow, and the respect they need to maintain their sanity?"

To sign up for the Public Education Network *Newsblast*, go to publiceducation.org.

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Moving Education Forward: What's Next?

WEAC will be featuring the stories of "Everyday Heroes who are Moving Education Forward" in an advertising campaign that will begin during American Education Week, November 14-20. These are the stories about the big and small things you do every day to ensure quality public schools and build stronger communities.

The stories will be a vehicle for us all to share who we are, what we value, and why we are the best advocates for our students and what they need to be successful.

More information on how you can share your stories will be available at www.weac.org.

This is a Wisconsin Statute 11.29 communication for MTEA members only.

Don't Delay - Take the PHA!

The deadline for you and your spouse to complete the *annual* personal health assessment (PHA) is **December 15**. Just a month away!

Why Complete the PHA Every Year?

The PHA provides you with confidential information about your health status including risks. The results will include suggestions for voluntary and confidential health education/wellness programs, specifically for you.

Quick PHA Access - Go to mtea.org and click on the "Take the PHA" quick link.

Important Reminders - Be sure to hit "Send" and then for your records, print out the **confirmation number**.

Need to Motivate a Reluctant Spouse?

Taken the PHA yourself, but your spouse has not? We suggest that you stress the immediate, financial reason. If both you and your spouse do not complete the PHA by December 15, a **\$200** annual health care premium contribution will be deducted as follows:

- ◆ **\$100** from your February 18, 2011 paycheck.
- ◆ **\$100** from your March 18, 2011 paycheck.

Potentially a \$550 Difference

Taking the PHA can mean a big difference in your pocketbook in the first few months of 2011. Instead of a \$200 penalty, you could earn a \$350 incentive. That's a \$550 difference.

First, you should avoid the \$200 penalty noted above.

Second, if you complete a voluntary health education/wellness program(s) by December 15, 2010, you will earn a \$350 incentive. (The tentative contract agreement increases the \$250 incentive to \$350.) The \$350 will be deposited into your **tax-free** health reimbursement account (HRA) by February 28, 2011.

Calling All PDP Reviewers!

Our union is working on ways to help connect teachers who have been trained to serve on professional development plan (PDP) review teams with initial educators who are required to complete the PDP process for DPI licensure.

If you have received PDP reviewer training and qualify under PI-34, please join our union's list. Go to mtea.org (Members>Professional Development) to view our list and add your name.