

Join the MTEA Book Club

Join the MTEA SpeakOut! Committee for an engaging book club event! We are reading **The New Teacher Book**, a collection of essays by multiple authors, published by *Rethinking Schools*. The essays will resonate with new and veteran teachers alike, offering practical advice on how to:

- ◆ Effectively navigate the school system.
- ◆ Form rewarding professional relationships with peers
- ◆ Connect with students and families from all cultures and backgrounds.

Two discussions, facilitated by essay authors will take place at the MTEA Building. The first will be on **Monday, February 4**, and the second is on **Monday, March 3**. Both are from 4:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Books Available Here

There are 25 books now available at the MTEA Building. Members who plan to join the discussions will pay \$15 for the book up front and receive a partial rebate at each discussion. Please pick up your copy by **January 18**.

For questions, contact Kris Collett of the MTEA staff at kcollett@mtea.weac.org or 259-1990.

Congrats on Your Healthy Start!

If you are one of the thousands of MTEA members who completed the personal health assessment (PHA), we would like to express our congratulations. You've taken an essential first step toward learning more about maintaining and improving your health.

Your PHA results provide you with key personal health information and guidance on which GoodHealth programs can benefit you.

Participation in any of the programs is strictly confidential and totally voluntary. It's now up to you (and your spouse) to take advantage of the programs - if you wish.

Quick Review of What's Next

- ◆ If you and your spouse both completed the PHA by December 15, you will **not** have to pay a \$200 annual health premium contribution in 2008. You will **not** see a \$100 deduction on your February 22 and March 21 paychecks.
- ◆ You can now earn the **\$200** financial incentive by completing a GoodHealth program by December 15, **2008**. (Your spouse can do the programs too, but only you can earn the \$200 incentive.)
- ◆ After the winter break, we will explain the wide range of voluntary GoodHealth programs at mtea.org and in Sharpener.

Miscue on Initial Education Module

The optional GoodHealth programs are explained in the MPS video which most teachers should have seen during the "principal's portion" of the October 5, 2007 banking day. Unfortunately, MPS did not follow through with principals on this key, first education module.

Our bargaining team carefully researched wellness/health education programs and found that successful programs include extensive education opportunities for participants. To achieve this element of an effective program, our union proposed that high-quality information modules be presented to all teachers, three to five times each school year, for a period of 15 to 45 minutes each.

By contract, the modules may be presented during faculty meetings (within the two hours per month) or "during the principal's portion of banking time days." Upon a teacher's request, the modules may also be viewed on a parent-teacher conference day or during the teacher's portion on banking days.

Working for Better Results

We are working to insure that MPS complies with the education modules component of the joint GoodHealth program. We expect much better results on the January 28 banking day. The topic will be managing stress.



Unique Master's Opportunity

UWM offers a 27-credit Masters of Liberal Studies (MLS) which emphasizes breadth of learning across disciplines; critical thinking, effective communication; and genuine integration of knowledge.

Each student's course of study is individually designed and built around small, evening-only seminars specifically created for the MLS program by leading members of the faculty. Credits may also be earned through independent study, study-abroad, and a final project that entails original research, creative work, and professional development.

For details, contact Professor Jeffrey Hayes at 229-5963 or at jhayes@uwm.edu, or go to uwm.edu/Dept/MLS.

Tax Note on 2007 Dues

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." Under the federal tax code, union dues spent on legislative lobbying, as well as political action contributions are not deductible expenses. In fact, the IRS requires unions to notify members of the deductible portion of union dues.

To comply with the IRS requirement, our attorney is reviewing union lobbying expenses to calculate the allowable portion of dues. We will have the allowable percentage for the 2007 tax year at mtea.org and in Sharpener in early January.

To prepare for claiming a union dues deduction, please retain your December 28, 2007 paycheck. You will need the year-to-date dues amount listed on it to calculate your deductible amount.

WAA Inservice Video: Know Your Rights

The state has developed a new version of the Wisconsin Alternative Assessment (WAA), and DPI has a training video on its Web site. The new WAA tests will be given to qualifying students during the statewide WAA testing window, January 7-31.

The November 9 issue of the **MPS School Administrators' Bulletin** provided principals with an action item on the new WAA which states: "All MPS special education teachers who administer the WAA are required to view this video." This directive is causing confusion in several schools.

MTEA Audit to BRs

Each year an audited financial statement for the prior school year is presented to MTEA Building Representatives. Our union's audit for 2006-07 was mailed to BRs with the agenda for their December meeting. The audit will be formally presented to the BRs next month at their January 16 meeting, and the CPA who authored the audit will be present for any questions.

Clarification on Mandatory vs. Voluntary

MPS may mandate inservice training **only** if it is scheduled during the regular teacher day. This does **not** mean during your lunch or prep. Unless your school releases you from responsibilities during your teaching day, this training is **voluntary** and **paid**.

We recommend that you ask your principal to release you for two hours to view the DPI's WAA video online. If your principal does not arrange for your released time, you are not required to view the video on your own time.

If you wish to volunteer to watch the DPI video on your own time, you should notify the principal of your intent and request that you receive two hours of pay at the part-time rate ($\$24.33 \times 2 = \48.66).

Action Research Fellows

Ten teachers from NEA Focus schools are networking with teachers, locally and nationally, on classroom-based research. There is one change in the roster of the Action Research Fellows who were announced in the January 25, 2007 Sharpener. For 2007-08, **Susan Mildren** at Browning Elementary has replaced one of last year's fellows.

To learn about the action research fellowship and other NEA Focus school opportunities, contact Dr. Christine Anderson at canderso@milwjobs.com or call 270-1701. She is the principal investigator for the NEA Foundation grant program in MPS.

*We wish you and
your family a joyous
holiday season and a
happy new year!*
