
The Next MBSD

What will the Milwaukee Board of School Directors stand for after this spring's election? Leadership in advocating for public schools in our city? We believe the MPS Board should be a major partner in the SFN push to reform public education. (See "We are not alone" below.)

Overwhelming Support for Recommendations

Over 3,400 members voted on our union's Political Action Committee endorsement of four School Board candidates. Each recommended candidate received the support of at least 94% of the educators who voted.

The recommended candidates are:

- District #4 - **Gloria Gaston**
- District #5 - **Larry Miller**
- District #6 - **Peter Blewett**
- District #7 - **Felicia Owen**

On **Tuesday, February 17**, there will be a primary contest in two of the four districts, #4 and #7. Members in these districts are urged to get to the polls that day, and ask family and neighbors to join them in voting for Gloria Gaston and Felicia Owen.

State Recommendations

WEAC members have voted to support two statewide candidates in the February 17 primary:

For State Superintendent
- **Tony Evers**

For State Supreme Court
- **Shirley Abrahamson**

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

What About My Pension?

The global economic crisis has triggered widespread anxiety over pensions/investments. Even though the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) is one of our nation's best-run pensions, many teachers and retirees have questions about their financial future.

We have arranged for an after-school session led by state pension experts, to provide answers. This informational meeting is open to all MPS employees in the WRS. Teachers, substitute teachers, and administrators. Newly-hired, seasoned veteran, or retiree. Everyone is welcome!

When: 4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. on Monday, February 23

Where: Auditorium of MPS Central Office, 5225 West Vliet Street

What:

- Brief presentation on WRS pension benefits.
- Open session devoted to answering your questions.

This is a great opportunity to learn more about the state of your state pension funds.

SFN - We Are Not Alone!

The School Finance Network is a statewide coalition of education, religious, and community organizations committed to strengthening the public school funding system in Wisconsin.

SNF member groups include: American Federation of Teachers - Wisconsin, Fair Aid Coalition, School Administrators Alliance, Southeastern Wisconsin School Alliance, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators, Wisconsin Education Association Council, and Wisconsin Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

SNF Legislative Campaign Launched Statewide

On February 3 and 4, SNF held news conferences at 10 schools across Wisconsin, from Racine to Superior but not Milwaukee. This was done to make a key point: Hundreds of school districts desperately need school funding reform, now - not just MPS.

We are not alone, and you can help get something done for public schools for a change. Your personal stories on how a more effective financing system can help your students are powerful persuaders. Go to mtea.org, for details on the new possibilities for fixing school funding this legislative session.



Introducing PBIS

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports is a program for teaching students how to behave - instead of a punishment-based approach to discipline. PBIS is structured for minimal interventions with most students and intensive levels for a few students.

MTEA and MPS representatives have worked together for several months to introduce PBIS to school staffs. The steps are outlined below.

January 21 - All MPS staff received a letter explaining PBIS with paychecks.

February 4 - Principals briefed and given direction for faculty discussions.

February 5 - PowerPoint PDF e-mailed to principals, to share with the BR, for use with PBIS introductory video.

February 9 - 13 - Faculty meetings held to view the jointly-developed video. (It's on the MPS media site.)

- After viewing, principals will lead staff discussion, record questions, and initiate consideration of threshold question: Does the school staff want to learn more at this time?

If interested, school teams formed for further exploration.

February 13 - Due date for principals to submit team forms to central office.

March 16 - School teams learn details at sessions at the Italian Community Center.

After March 16, teams bring back information to schools. Entire staff decides on applying to become a PBIS pilot school next fall.

New Legislature, New Possibilities

With pro-education majorities in the Assembly, the Senate, and the governor's office, we have new opportunities to advance the MTEA's priorities. In addition to school funding reform, there are new possibilities for establishing voucher school accountability, improving the bargaining law, and eliminating the residency requirement for MPS.

There are great challenges. We are in a recession and our state faces an estimated \$5.4 million deficit.

But our time for change is now. Each of us needs to be an active and strong advocate for change. We can make changes happen. **Yes, we can!** Go to mtea.org for details.

Claiming a Tax Deduction for Union 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." The IRS allows a deduction for miscellaneous expenses which, in the aggregate, exceed 2% of your adjusted gross income.

For example, suppose your 2008 adjusted gross income was \$38,000, and the aggregate amount you spent on items which qualify as miscellaneous deduction expenses was \$1,000. On Schedule A of your federal tax form, you would detail the \$1,000 in expenses and then subtract \$760, which is 2% of your \$38,000 income. The result would be a net "miscellaneous" deduction of \$240.

Some 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 requirements, our attorney has calculated the lobbying expenses of the MTEA, WEAC, and NEA for 2008, as well as the MTEA and WEAC political action contributions. After deducting these expenses, our attorney has determined that 71.02% of the MTEA/WEAC/NEA dues teachers paid during 2008 qualify as miscellaneous deduction expenses.

Typical Allowable Dues Amount - \$677.57

For most teacher members, the total amount of union dues deducted during 2008 was \$954.04. If you paid this amount, IRS allows you to claim only **\$677.57** in union dues as a miscellaneous deduction expense ($\$954.04 \times 71.02\% = \677.57).

Determining Your Amount for 2008

To claim the allowable portion of the union dues you paid during 2008, you should take two steps:

1. Check your December 26, 2008 paycheck to find the total amount deducted for union dues during 2008. It will be in the "After-Tax Deduction Box," noted "YTD" (Year-to-Date).
2. Multiply your amount by 71.02%.

Extra Step Required If You Requested a Rebate

If you requested a rebate for your 2008-09 MTEA PAC contribution (\$9.20), your WEAC PAC contribution (\$19.99), or for WEAC/NEA fair share, you need to take an extra step. You must subtract any rebates you received in 2008 **before** you multiply your 2008 dues deduction total by 71.02%.