

MTEA Legislative Breakfast - May 1

All members are invited to our union's annual Legislative Breakfast, Saturday, May 1, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. This year, educators from nearby WEAC locals will join in our conversations with legislators.

The event will be held at Greendale Middle School, 6800 Schoolway. This is an opportunity to talk to area legislators about issues which affect educators and students.

Please pre-register at mtea.org (Events) today. We need to order food in advance.

For questions, contact Andy Reid of the MTEA staff at 259-1990 or reida@weac.org

Legislative Alert!

When Sharpener went to press, the State Assembly was scheduled to vote on Senate Bill 437, which had passed the Senate last week. The bill would give the DPI a substantial role in improving student achievement in MPS. You can read the bill at mtea.org.

MTEA at the Table

Since just before spring break, MTEA and WEAC leaders and staff have been working to shape a bill that can help MPS:

- ◆ Improve student achievement.
- ◆ Attract and retain highly qualified educators.

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What's Next for MPS?

Our union's membership has identified several changes needed to help improve teaching and learning in MPS. Some measures would require additional funding, such as:

- ◆ Class sizes that support more effective teaching, to reach students who need differentiated instruction.
- ◆ Art, music, and physical education for all grade levels, in all schools - taught by teachers licensed in these fields.
- ◆ Library/media specialists serving students directly in all schools - a critical difference maker for student gains in reading and language arts.
- ◆ Educational assistant support to reinforce instruction and maintain a safe and caring environment.

Politicians Avoid School Funding Issue

There is a critical need to reform how the state funds public schools - especially in Milwaukee and other districts where property taxes are more than some citizens can afford. While local and state politicians now blame the economy for their inaction, they have not seriously dealt with funding issues for years (including when the stock market was booming).

School Board Leads, in the Wrong Direction

Initiating steps to fix the state's broken system of funding public schools, including the extra burden vouchers put on city taxpayers, must come from the Milwaukee School Board. To date, the Board has not made a well-reasoned, data-driven case for funding changes. It has resisted even baby steps which might lead to a level playing field for MPS students.

Instead, the Board blames its financial woes on the negotiated benefits of its employees. The truth is that, for decades, the Board has failed to adequately budget for future costs it was repeatedly told were coming - such as retiree health care benefits.

Despite actuarial studies, recommendations of past administrations, and the urgings of our union's leaders, MPS legacy cost gaps are largely the result of short-term, politically-safe Board decisions.

President Bonds Sends the Wrong Message

On April 7, representatives of MTEA, WEAC, and the School Board met with State Superintendent Tony Evers, key members of his staff, and staff members from Governor Doyle's office and the Legislature. The goal was to reach consensus on legislation that would give DPI a role in supporting changes to improve student outcomes in MPS. (See the status of the legislation in the left-hand column.)

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◆Lead to increased funding to meet the needs of students - in schools identified for drastic changes and districtwide.

Bill Reflects Federal Mandates

The bill includes measures which President Obama and Secretary of Education Duncan have made mandatory for school districts and states to qualify for a number of federal funding programs. For example, MPS could qualify for \$45 million over three years in School Improvement Grants (SIG). The funds would go to a dozen Tier I and II schools. These senior highs have been identified as "the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State."

SIG Funding Requires

- ◆Increased learning time.
- ◆Implementing the "turn-around" model, used in a small Rhode Island district. In MPS, it would mean replacing the principal in a few schools, removing instructional staff, and returning no more than 50% of the staff to the school.
- ◆"Job-embedded" professional development.
- ◆Evaluations based on multiple criteria, including improvement in pupil academic achievement as a significant factor.
- ◆And additional mandates!

Breaking News

As soon as possible, we will post the outcome of the Assembly vote at mtea.org.

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DPI made it clear that the bill did not call for additional state funding for MPS. At that point, Dr. Bonds told DPI he saw no problem with the finances. He stated that MPS financial management was bad in the past, but was no longer at issue

After the DPI meeting, Superintendent Evers met with Senator John Lehman and other legislators at the State Capitol. MTEA President Mike Langyel and Board President Michael Bonds were at the table.

When the funding issue was raised, Dr. Bonds said he had not requested any additional funds for MPS from the Legislature. He told legislators that MPS need only to spend its current resources more wisely.

There Is No Conclusion Yet

This has been a tumultuous year for MPS. President Bonds demonstrated courage and conviction in the fight against mayoral control. But his recent funding statements are out of touch with the needs of MPS.

MTEA, WEAC, and an unprecedented coalition of community groups also fought to defeat mayoral takeover. At one point, it appeared there was a solid opportunity for working together with the School Board.

But little progress has been made in bargaining, and the prospects for genuine cooperation to win federal funds is unclear. Please stay tuned.

MTEA Tailgate Party

MPS employees and retirees (and guests) are invited to the Fourteenth Annual MTEA Tailgate Party/Brewers Game on Friday, **May 14**, at Miller Park. The tailgate party starts at 4:00 p.m. The Milwaukee Brewers will play the Phillies at 7:05 p.m.

The \$11 cost of the tailgate party includes: beer, wine, and soda; hamburgers, brats, hot dogs; salads; chips/snacks; and cookies. The tailgate and game package costs \$27 for loge bleacher seats (with contoured backs) and \$22 for terrace box seats.

Form and Payment Due April 30

To join in the fun, please return the form below with your check to Sue Dean c/o WEB DuBois High School by **April 30**. You will receive confirmation, via e-mail if feasible.

Game tickets will be distributed at the tailgate party. For advance pickup, please call Sue Dean at 352-7066 or e-mail her at sdean3@wi.rr.com. Seats are limited, so sign up now!

Fourteenth Annual MTEA Tailgate Party and Brewers Game

Name _____ School _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

Please attach your check, **made payable to Sue Dean**, and note how many packages (or tailgates-only) you are purchasing:

___ Tailgate/Loge Bleachers (\$27)

___ Tailgate/Terrace Box (\$22)

___ Tailgate ONLY (\$11) **Send form and check to Sue Dean c/o WEB DuBois by April 30.**

(No game tickets are available without tailgate participation.)

