

All-Member Sharpener

This newsletter is being sent to all MTEA members - teachers, EAs, subs, and bookkeepers - because all of us would be affected by the proposed cuts in next year's MPS budget.

The elimination of over 50 EA positions would mean layoffs of support professionals with 10 or more years of service. An injury to one is an injury to all in our union. And, the most vulnerable - the students of MPS - would lose as well.

The elimination of over 200 teacher positions would hurt schools and educators - even if teacher layoffs are avoided because of attrition.

**Looking Ahead
to April 7, 2009**

The four-year terms of four School Board members will expire next spring:

- ◆ Peter Blewett
- ◆ Danny Goldberg
- ◆ Charlene Hardin
- ◆ Jennifer Morales

The budget vote is perhaps the most significant decision School Board members make each year.

We need to speak out now, and ask Board members to do the right thing.

And we need to note how all nine Board members vote - especially those facing reelection in 2009.

Stand Up for Our Students

As educators, we need to send the nine members of the School Board a message as they consider the proposed 2008-09 MPS budget:

Put Children First – Not Politics!

Every school, every member has seen the impact of year-after-year budget cuts. While some look at figures on a spread sheet, we look at our students – and see how political decisions deprive them of:

- ◆ The EA who serves as a role model.
- ◆ The music teacher who provides classes and all-school programs where students can display talents and build self-confidence.
- ◆ The guidance counselor who has the time to listen, one-on-one.
- ◆ The librarian who finds the book opening a door to a new world.

Unfortunately, these examples hardly scratch the surface of what MPS students lose when politicians – local, state, and national – ignore those who need a great public school the most.

Making Our Collective Voice Heard on June 3

You can speak up for your students at the School Board’s public hearing on Tuesday, June 3. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. and takes place in the auditorium of the MPS central office, 5225 West Vliet Street. Even if you choose not to speak, your presence will help deliver the message to the School Board.

Contact Board Members Individually

Personal contact is another great way to communicate the needs of your students and school. Please contact the Board member who represents the district where you live; the one who represents the entire city – Bruce Thompson at 332-5768; and the Board member who represents the school where you work.

E-mail to governance@mail.milwaukee.k12.wi.us.

The MPS Office of Board Governance will forward your e-mail message to the Board member you specify by noting, for example, “Attention Charlene Hardin.” To have your e-mail forwarded to all nine members, state "Attn. School Board."

Who’s Your (School’s) Board Representative?

Politicians listen best to those who have power to elect them. Personal calls, e-mails, or U.S. mail letters are most effective when sent to the Board member for the district where you live and vote!

To access the name of your district’s rep and your school’s rep, go to mtea.org (Resources>Who Are My Representative?).

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Another Public Hearing on June 12

If you can't attend the June 3 hearing, there is another on Thursday, June 12. It also starts at 6:30 p.m. at the MPS central office.

School Board to Vote on June 19

The Board is scheduled to adopt the 2008-09 budget during the monthly meeting of the full Board on Thursday, June 19. The meeting takes place at the MPS central office, starting at 6:30 p.m.

Public testimony is not taken at full-Board meetings. You are welcome to join leaders of our union to witness the rhetoric and the votes.

We will report the outcome.

Why Bother? We Must!

As another challenging school year ends, you may feel that attending a School Board budget meeting and contacting your rep on the Board is not worth your time and energy. Why even bother?

The most compelling reason: Our schools are not adequately funded and budget cuts will worsen if the School Board continues politics as usual. If we don't speak up, individually and collectively, most of the children who live in poverty in our city will lose even more of the educational opportunities they need and deserve.

Politics First, Not Children

Here's one example of how some School Board members put politics first, not children.

Background: The revenue MPS receives from state aid and city property taxes has been limited (capped) by state law for several years.

Last fall, the School Board should have set a tax levy rate to the maximum revenue limit allowed by law, as it has in the past. That levy rate would have meant a 16.45% property tax rate increase. But Alderman Mike Murphy told the Board not to vote because only six people spoke at the meeting. So, the Board scheduled another public hearing meeting two nights later.

Media Beats the Tax Hike Drum

The next day, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel printed a provocative news analysis. The headline read: "Not even a tax jump stirs MPS families – Few bother to attend school events or important meetings." Talk radio went into high gear.

At the special meeting, hundreds of city residents turned out, most to protest the property tax hike. Earlier that day, six city alderpersons held a news conference, and Mayor Barrett sent the Board a letter – opposing the tax increase.

School Board Bends to the Pressure

The Board voted to cut the tax hike, resulting in \$17 million cut in the MPS budget. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported: "Voting in favor of the 9% figure were board members Michael Bonds, Charlene Hardin, Tim Petersons, Jeff Spence and Bruce Thompson. Voting against were Blewett, Terry Falk and Morales. Board member Danny Goldberg was out of town, but issued a statement criticizing state funding of MPS and saying he would not have voted for an increase greater than the annual increase in the cost of living."

As a result, our schools were shortchanged \$17 million this school year, **and**, MPS will receive \$6 million less in state aid for the 2008-09 budget year.

Board Trying to Head Off More Pressure

To lessen their political pressure over the 2008-09 budget, the School Board directed the superintendent to propose a budget that would raise the city property tax levy rate no more than a quarter of one percent.

The Bottom Line: Schools Would Lose, Again

Based on preliminary state aid estimates, the proposed MPS budget would shortchange our schools an estimated \$20 million in 2008-09.
