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Congratulations! Dennis Oulahan

When Dennis Oulahan handed the MTEA President's gavel to Mike Langyel on June 3, Mike announced that Dennis recently received a prestigious award - and tried to keep it quiet.

As MTEA President, Dennis received an Education Advocacy Award from Marquette University's College of Education. The award recognizes individuals who make significant or systemic contributions to the local, state, or national education landscape through their work. The honor was bestowed on Tuesday, May 5, as part of the College's first Mission Recognition Evening, an event which acknowledged individuals and groups from within and outside the Marquette community who have made a significant contribution toward advancing its social justice mission. In particular, Dennis was celebrated for his uncommon leadership abilities and his tireless championing of the causes of children and teachers.

Still No Calendar Agreement

When Sharpener went to press, there was no resolution on the school calendars for 2009-10 (traditional, IB, and year-round). We will keep you posted, and recommend that you sign up at mtea.org for e-mail updates on calendar and contract negotiations.

Banking Time Vote Reminder

The June 1 Sharpener provided information to consider before voting on whether or not to do banking time in 2009-10. We asked BRs to conduct the voting on June 8, 9, & 10 - and to send us a special sheet to report the voting results by **Friday, June 12**.

Moratorium on Interviews

After schools conclude interviews on mid-June, teacher vacancies will **not** be filled by interviews until after October 2, 2009. Instead, the MPS Human Resources Department will assign teachers to complete the staffing of schools for the start of the next school year. The goal is to send out assignment notices as soon as possible.

Assignment Steps This Summer

First, MPS will assign teachers without assignments for 2009-10 (excessed, returning from leave, and day-to-day) by a meshed seniority list. See article below.

If reassignment preferences cannot be accommodated, the MPS Human Resources Department will call the unassigned teachers, by seniority, to find out their choices among the available vacancies. MPS will need to make assignments for any teachers not reached by phone.

After assigning senior teachers, Human Resources will assign newly-hired teachers (unless they have already obtained assignments through school interviews), interns, and permit teachers.

No School Assignment for 2009-10?

If you do not have an assignment for next school year when interviews are completed in mid-June, you should apply online from June 18-30.

On June 17, a week after interviews are completed, MPS will post the remaining vacancies. You will be able to apply for as many positions as you wish - to maximize your chances of obtaining an assignment of your choice.

Be certain to apply for positions in the order of your preference.

You may also apply for schools **without** "known" vacancies. This is advisable because vacancies may arise after June 17 (retirements, leaves, registrations, etc.) In July, MPS will fill additional vacancies by seniority from the meshed list of teachers without assignments.

Teacher Evaluation: Your Rights as a Professional

Introduction

Teacher evaluation should be an on-going process, consisting of observations and feedback during the school year.

The process starts with teachers receiving written notice of the administrator(s) responsible for their evaluation and who will sign the form. By contract, teachers must be notified within 30 days of the start of the school year.

The process ends with teachers receiving a "Teacher Evaluation Form," usually in May or June.

Observations/Feedback

To make evaluation a meaningful process, principals and other administrative evaluators provide teachers with written feedback after each observation during the school year. For each formal observation, most principals use the MPS "Instructional Observation Form," which details 11 areas of teacher expectations. As an alternative, a few principals use a narrative summary that separately addresses each "expectation" listed on the form.

In addition, if requested by the teacher or the principal, a post-observation conference must be held for formal observations.

Conclusions on MPS Form Based on a sufficient number of observations, the principal's evaluation conclusions are made on the MPS "Teacher Evaluation Form." Principals typically give these forms to teachers by the end of May. Most teachers receive very positive evaluations. They generally find a check mark in the "exemplary" or "satisfactory" category on the evaluation form they receive.

"Needs Improvement" and "Professional Growth Plan"

A check in the "needs improvement" category on an evaluation form indicates concerns about performance that should be seriously considered and addressed. In fact, MPS has directed principals to do a "professional growth plan" for "needs improvement" evaluations.

The purpose of a professional growth plan is to facilitate performance improvement by helping teachers focus on areas they need or wish to broaden and/or improve. The plan should include goals, areas of concern, and suggestions for remediation, assistance, and resources. Although the plan becomes a part of the teacher's local school file, it is **not** placed in the teacher's central personnel file.

If the "professional growth plan" line is checked on the evaluation form, the teacher and the evaluator should meet to **jointly** develop a plan. However, if they are unable to agree on a plan or the teacher is not willing to participate in its development, the evaluator will develop a plan for the teacher.

The plan may be developed shortly after the evaluation form is given to the teacher, but no later than the beginning of the next school year (within the first month). The evaluator and the teacher are to meet periodically during the school year to review the teacher's progress with this plan.

Enforcing Your Rights

The teacher contract defines the evaluation rights of teachers. For a negative/questionable evaluation, you can exercise your rights by following these steps:

1. Call the MTEA at 259-1990. An MTEA staff member will explain your due process rights under the contract and provide you with advice and representation as needed.
2. Find out what the evaluation means. You have a right to receive an explanation of what each statement on the evaluation form means, as well as the overall status category checked by the principal (evaluator). A meeting must be held to give you this information unless you do not want to meet. You have the right to representation at the meeting.
3. Study the evaluation before signing. The contract provides a 48-hour period for you to study (and make a copy of) your evaluation form before signing and returning it. If you choose to meet with the evaluator for an explanation of the form, the 48-hour period to study the form begins **after** the meeting.
4. If you desire, respond to the evaluation in writing. By contract, your written response is made part of the evaluation report and is kept with the form in your permanent personnel file at the central office. Before submitting a response, you should consider an MTEA staff member's advice.
5. Sign the evaluation form. By contract, your signature means only that you have reviewed the form. Your signature does not indicate approval nor agreement with the evaluation.



Information for Permit Teachers

If you have worked as a permit teacher in MPS this school year, and have completed the college courses needed to obtain an initial educator's license (or will have completed the courses prior to the start of the coming school year), you have the right to remain at your school. You do **not** need to interview to remain.

In addition, you have the right to obtain an assignment at another school for next year through the interview process.

However, to remain at your school or to interview at other schools, you must provide a letter or "Professional Education Certificate" from the certifying officer at your college/university to the MPS Human Resources Department. The letter must confirm that you already have or will complete the courses required for your DPI initial educator's license prior to the start of next school year.

For Permit Teachers Without Certification

As a permit teacher, you are required to satisfactorily complete six semester credits toward licensure in a state-approved education program before MPS will ask DPI to renew your permit. The DPI permit renewal form includes a section for "institutional verification" that your six credits have been completed during the past year.

In addition, MPS must attempt to employ fully-licensed teachers before it requests permits. On your DPI permit renewal form, MPS is required to justify its request. After the third Friday of September, MPS will request permit renewals - provided it can justify each request, and completion of the six credits has been verified.

MPS will **not** assign you to a school for 2009-10 until you provide Human Resources with documentation of earning six college credits.

Especially for Excessed Teachers

Most teachers identified for excessing will not return to their current school in the fall. However, changes may occur that could allow some excessed teachers to return.

For example, the need to excess the least senior English teacher from a school may change **if** a more senior English teacher at the school retires, takes a leave, transfers, etc.

Student enrollment in the fall could also eliminate the need to excess a teacher. For example, the number of students who enroll at an elementary school by the third Friday in September may mean **two** fourth grade teachers, instead of **one** projected in the spring.

By June 19, Submit Form to Exercise Rights

If excessed, you have a contractual right to return to your school if a position for which you are licensed becomes available through the third Friday of September. To exercise return rights, you must submit a "Return Request for Excessed Teachers" form to the MPS Human Resources Department by Friday, June 19. You waive your right to return if you do not submit this paper form on time.

If a position for which you are licensed opens at your school at any time through the third Friday of September, you will automatically return to your school. You **must** return to your original school even if you have obtained a new school assignment.

Limit on Voluntary Transfers Does Not Apply

By contract, teachers who have a school assignment for the next school year and, choose to transfer **on a completely voluntary basis**, cannot exercise their voluntary transfer rights for three school years.

However, excessed teachers, who obtain a school assignment through an interview, do **not** have to wait three years to exercise their right to a voluntary transfer.

Insurance Coverage If You Resign

If you work through the end of this school year, your coverage under the negotiated, board-paid insurances (health, dental, and life) continues through **August 31, 2009**.

You should make your resignation effective at the close of business on **June 17**. There is no advantage to a later effective date.

Exceptions to Note

If you are not on the regular 191-day calendar, you need to adjust your resignation date to fit your calendar. For example, teachers on a year-round calendar resign at the end of the day on **June 27**.

School social workers are another exception. They should make their resignation effective on their last scheduled workday, **June 20**.

Cobra Rights

The federal COBRA law provides for continuing insurance coverage, **self-paid**, for at least 18 months after board-paid coverage ends. If you have questions about maintaining insurance coverage, please call an MTEA staff member at 259-1990.





Salary Schedule Advancement: What You Need to Know

Unless you are grandfathered, you are required to earn a master's degree to advance to the master's (MA) division and beyond on the teacher salary schedule (191-day).

Credits Required for Advancement Explained

By contract, you are required to earn 16 credits, at least nine of which must be college credits and seven of which may be MPS inservice credits for all salary schedule advancements - except the earned master's. Earning a master's degree requires all college credits, as established by your college or university. However, once you have earned a master's, you can advance with a combination of college credits (at least nine) and MPS inservice credits (a maximum of seven), totaling 16 credits.

Timely Filing of Credits

The teacher contract spells out the following timetable for filing documentation with the MPS Division of Staffing Services, Compensation and Records, for salary schedule reclassification:

◆For credits earned **during the spring semester**, reclassification is retroactive to the start of the MPS spring semester - if documentation is received before the first day of the immediately following fall MPS semester. For example, if you attain enough credits to advance on the schedule by completing a college course this spring, you must file a transcript with MPS before organization day in the fall.

◆For credits earned **during the summer**, reclassification is retroactive to the start of the following MPS fall semester if documentation is received prior to the end of that MPS fall semester.

◆For credits earned **during the fall semester**, reclassification is retroactive to the start of the MPS fall semester - if documentation is received before April 1 of the immediately following spring semester.

College Course Documentation

As to documentation, the contract states: "The documentation required for a college course is an official transcript from the school at which the course was taken. However, if the completion of a course will result in a reclassification, the teacher may temporarily use an official grade report. When a grade report is used, an official transcript must be submitted before the end of the semester following the semester in which the course was taken. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in retroactive withdrawal of reclassification."

Key Points of Advice

◆In the past, there have been cases in which college transcripts have been "lost" at the MPS central office. To avoid such problems, the MTEA recommends that you personally bring your college transcript to Room 124 at the

MPS central office and submit an extra copy for contemporaneous time stamping. You should retain the stamped copy of your transcript as proof of the filing date.

◆You should file transcripts whenever you earn college credits. Do not wait until you believe you have attained enough credits to advance on the schedule. Frequently, with MPS inservice credits accumulated and/or with credits new teachers have earned beyond their BA which may apply toward advancing to the BA+16 division, teachers attain the credits they need to advance sooner than they expect.

◆Not all college courses count toward advancement. Approval guidelines have been established as a result of several MTEA group grievances. The "Guidelines on Courses Recognized for Salary Schedule Advancement" are available on our Web site. Go to "Contract A to Z" and click on "Salary." A copy of the guidelines is also available by calling us at 259-1990.

◆If you want assurance that a particular course will count, you should submit a written request for preapproval from MPS. The information needed for such a request is included with the "Guidelines" noted above. Requests should be sent to MPS at least a month prior to course registration.

