

School Improvement Grant Approved

On July 12, DPI informed MPS that its application for a federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) had been approved. MPS will receive a total of \$45,000,000 over the next three school years. A major portion of the SIG funds will assist seven "lowest-achieving" high schools.

Strict Requirements

MPS had to meet numerous, rigid specifications to apply for SIG funds. Some of the federal mandates could not be satisfied unless the district reached agreement with the MTEA to modify the contract for certain schools receiving funds.

MOUs Bargained

Just prior to the June 30 deadline, negotiators for MPS and for our union agreed to five memorandums of understanding (MOUs) needed for the district's SIG application.

For Seven High Schools

Four of the MOUs are specifically for the following high schools: Bay View, Bradley Tech, Madison, Pulaski, South, Vincent, and Washington (formerly ELOP/LEAPS). These MOUs modify the contract for block scheduling, professional development/planning, and create a joint committee on recruiting and retaining teachers.

For All Schools

The fifth MOU establishes a joint committee to develop a new teacher evaluation system for the entire district. By law, it must incorporate student growth and adequate support for teachers. The new evaluation process will be developed next school year and piloted in 2011-12.

Preparing for the 2010-11 School Year: Positive Start With New Superintendent

On his first day as the district's superintendent, Dr. Gregory Thornton met with MTEA President Mike Langyel. The July 1 conversation was frank and productive. Several topics were discussed including layoffs, contract bargaining, and how our union and the new administration can work together.

Agreements on Calendar and Professional Development

During the following two weeks, representatives of our union and Dr. Thornton's administration reached agreement on modifying the 2010-11 calendar and on an initial day of professional development on the MPS Comprehensive Literacy Plan. (Details are in this [Sharpener](#).)

Key Bargaining Information Shared

At the same time, MPS finally provided health insurance claims data which our union's teacher bargaining team had requested months ago. The data is necessary for negotiating complex health care cost issues, and the district's refusal to provide it has been a major obstacle to progress in contract talks.

Progress on Layoff Issues

In addition, the new administration took steps to address concerns related to the number of teachers laid off. On July 12, the district recalled 89 teachers.

Spring Break Changed to Before Easter

Background Information

During the past few years, MPS has conducted the ACT testing districtwide on a school day – to facilitate the participation of all high school juniors. ACT sets the date for school day testing, and in the spring of 2011, the date is April 27, the Wednesday after Easter.

However, the district's negotiators were unaware of the ACT date when they reached a tentative agreement with MTEA negotiators on June 8. MPS agreed to the MTEA's proposal for the traditional spring break, which was based on our union's survey of the membership. (Member surveys are **not** binding votes, but do set the MTEA's position for bargaining the calendar.)

The ACT testing conflict was not raised until the tentative agreement on the calendar was brought to the School Board for final approval at its June 24 meeting. Instead, the Board directed the administration to ask the MTEA to change the calendar to avoid the ACT testing conflict.

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Reimbursement for Vacation/Travel Plans

With a decades-long pattern of spring break the week **after** Easter, you may have made financial commitments for travel/vacation based on the initial calendar agreement. The MOU changing spring break allows you to submit a reimbursement claim to the School Board for travel, hotel, and other expenses which are non-reimbursable, non-refundable, or generate other penalties.

The deadline for submitting your claim is no later than seven calendar days following the start of your 2010-11 work year. For year-round school staff, the claims deadline is **August 5**. For IB schools, **August 23** is the deadline. For teachers on the traditional calendar, the deadline is **September 6**.

Instead of reimbursing you, the School Board may opt to allow you to carry out your vacation plans. If so, the district will assign you work on April 18-21 or other mutually agreed upon dates.

New Posting for Key MTEA Position

In April, the MTEA Executive Board began a nationwide search to replace Tom Morgan, who had passed away unexpectedly in mid-March. The plan to fill the vacant MTEA Executive Director position by July 1 did not work out.

On July 16, the MTEA Executive Board decided to conduct a second nationwide search to fill this position.

Sam Carmen Serving on Interim Basis

Anticipating the second process may take a few months, our union's Board has appointed Sam Carmen as the Interim Executive Director. Sam was on the MTEA staff for 23 years. He served as Executive Director for 13 years, prior to retiring three years ago.

MOU Moves Spring Break to the Week Before Easter

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been bargained that keeps the spring break as close as possible to the traditional pattern and resolves the ACT conflict.

For schools on the traditional calendar and IB schools, the break will start on Monday, **April 18**, and classes will resume on Tuesday, **April 26**.

For year-round schools, the spring intersession will start a week earlier, on Tuesday, **April 5**, and classes will resume on Tuesday, **April 26** (instead of Monday, May 2).

Additional Calendar Information

Go to mtea.org to access the three 2010-11 calendars - traditional, year-round, and IB.

The MOU changing spring break provides a process for members to claim reimbursement for plans they made based on the initial agreement on the calendar. (See article on the left.) Specific district procedures for submitting a claim will be at mtea.org when they are available.

Professional Development Key to MPS Comprehensive Literacy Plan

MPS is launching a districtwide, all grades, all subjects approach to teaching literacy – reading/writing/language arts. Professional development is essential to successfully implementing the Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP). In fact, DPI approval was premised on the district requiring all teachers to participate in professional development on the new plan.

Foundations Course Voluntary This Summer

MPS is offering an all-day, two-part course for all PreK-8 teachers. The course, "A Journey Begins! Foundations for Effective Literacy Instruction," will help teachers get started implementing the district's comprehensive Literacy Plan using the new reading series. Classroom teachers will receive the teacher edition and other materials for the grade they teach.

The Foundations course will be available on a voluntary basis on ten dates: July 26-30 and August 23-27. Participants will be paid at their individual hourly rate for both three-hour sessions.

On July 16, MPS e-mailed enrollment information to teachers for the July sessions with a July 22 registration deadline. MPS will e-mail similar information for the August 23-27 sessions. Registration will be open the week of August 9.

Mandatory on Banking Day

If you cannot attend on a voluntary basis this summer, you will be required to participate in the Foundations course on the first banking day of your school year, as follows: year-round schools - **July 30**; IB schools (grade 6-8) - **August 17**; and traditional school year - **August 31**.

This is an exception to the banking day provision of teacher contract. An MOU was negotiated specifically as the first step in meeting the DPI requirement that MPS provide mandatory professional development for all staff involved in implementing the Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

The Foundations course is required for **all** PreK-8 teachers. The MOU provides this all-inclusive definition: "All PreK-8 classroom (regular education, special education, and bilingual/ESL) teachers of literacy (reading, language arts) and literacy leaders (i.e., mentor teachers, literacy coaches, implementors and learning coordinators)..."