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Scheduling Spring Parent Conferences

Schools considering an alternative schedule for parent-teacher conferences (instead of **March 14**) should take the following steps:

Principals should meet with parent representatives and MTEA Building Representatives to develop options for each school. Then the BR should survey teachers on the options, and the principal should obtain input from parents. The BR and the principal should then meet to review the parent and the teacher responses.

By **February 8**, BRs should notify the MTEA in writing of the specific dates and times their faculty wants for spring conferences. Schools will be notified as soon as the MTEA and MPS reach agreement on each request.

Contract Enforcement - Key to Safe and Orderly Schools

Our union's teacher bargaining team made strengthening contractual provisions on security and discipline a priority in negotiating the 2007-09 teacher contract. Our team forged agreements with the School Board's team to add several new measures, which were outlined in the October 10 Negotiations News. **If enforced**, the provisions can help maintain safety in schools and improve discipline throughout MPS.

Some provisions were implemented at the start of the school year. For example, MPS directed all principals to require visitors to immediately report to the school office when they enter a school. And, **if authorized** to go to a classroom, visitors must be escorted by the school administrator or his/her designee.

Implementing New Provisions for Teacher Testimony

One of the new contract provision gives teachers who are physically assaulted by a student the option of testifying in person at the central office suspension and/or expulsion hearing. Prior to implementation, this measure required legal analysis and setting systemwide procedures.

On January 9, the central administration gave principals "Guidelines for Teachers Testifying at MPS Student Disciplinary Hearings" for immediate implementation. Principals were also directed to explain the new procedures to their staff.

On January 10, our union notified MTEA Building Representatives that a copy of the two-page document was available on our Web site and that BRs would receive detailed information at their January 16 meeting.

Education and Enforcement Campaign

The January BR meeting is the first of several steps planned to help you understand your discipline and security rights - both the new and longstanding contract provisions. Consistent enforcement is critical to maintaining schools where teachers can teach and students can learn.

School Interview Team Elections

Most MPS schools fill their teacher vacancies through the contractual interview process. Under this process, each school's interview team determines which applicants to interview and selects the candidates who best fit their school's needs. Interviews cannot take place unless a complete team is established.

This month, MTEA Building Representatives should conduct an election to determine the teachers who will serve on interview teams to fill teacher vacancies **for next school year**. Under the new contract, teams will start interviews on **March 31**, two months earlier than in the past.

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Join the MTEA Book Club

Join the MTEA SpeakOut! Committee for an engaging book club event! We are reading **The New Teacher Book**, a collection of essays by multiple authors, published by *Rethinking Schools*. The essays will resonate with new and veteran teachers alike, offering practical advice on how to:

- ◆ Effectively navigate the school system.
- ◆ Form rewarding, professional relationships with peers.
- ◆ Connect with students and families from all cultures and backgrounds.

Two discussions, facilitated by essay authors will take place at the MTEA Building. The first will be on **Monday, February 4**, and the second is on **Monday, March 3**. Both are from 4:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Books Available Here

Copies of the book (a limited supply) are available at the MTEA Building. Members planning to join the discussions will pay \$15 for the book up front and receive a partial rebate at each session.

For questions, contact Kris Collett of the MTEA staff at kcollett@mtea.weac.org or 259-1990.

Initial Educators Save the Date!

An after-school workshop on the Quality Educator Interactive (QEI) is planned for **February 11**. QEI is a Web site where you can create, edit, and share your online professional development plans. Details will be in [Sharpener](#) and at mtea.org later this month.

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Preparing for Interviews - Key Dates

◆ Principals must send the complete list of the school's interview team members - parent(s), administrator, and teachers - online to the MPS Office of Certificated of Staffing by Friday, **February 1**.

◆ MPS will conduct training for team members twice next month:

- **February 19** (Tuesday) - 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
- **February 27** (Wednesday) - 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Both sessions will be held in the auditorium of the MPS central office. Schools should send at least one representative to one of the sessions.

Interview Team Composition

◆ The minimum membership of a team is an on-site administrator, a parent, and three teachers.

◆ By contract, teachers must comprise the majority of each team. For example, if a school decides to have two parents on a team (along with the administrator), four teachers would need to serve on the team so that teachers would comprise the majority.

◆ Schools have the option of establishing more than one team based on the number and nature of the vacancies.

◆ Alternates should be elected when team members are elected. They will be needed if absences occur when interviews take place.

Electing Teachers to the Team

◆ Teacher team members do not automatically remain on their school's team year after year. A new election should be held in January, unless there is consensus among teachers to maintain the same team(s).

◆ By contract, only the BR conducts the election of teacher members.

◆ Suggestion: BRs may want to hold the election when teachers are available on the record/staff planning day or the banking day, which will be **January 25 & 28** in most schools.

◆ Teachers assigned to your school at least 50% of their time are eligible to vote for and serve on the interview team. (Interns are **not** eligible to vote or serve on a team - due to a potential conflict-of-interest.)

◆ Service on an interview team is voluntary and unpaid. Interviews must be conducted outside the school day.

Questions

You will find the answers to frequently-asked questions about interviews at mtea.org (Contract A to Z).

If you have additional questions, please call Don Ernest of the MTEA staff at 259-1990 or e-mail him at ernestd@mtea.weac.org.

Record/Staff Planning

The memorandum of understanding between MTEA and the school board on the use of record/staff planning day is reprinted below. For most schools, this day occurs on **January 25**. If you have any questions/problems related to the plans for the use of this day at your school, please talk to your BR. If assistance is needed, the BR should call an MTEA staff member at 259-1990.

Guidelines for Record/ Staff Planning Day

1. Record/staff planning day as it occurs between Semester I and Semester II should be structured so that the majority of the day is available to teachers for the completion of records which are due at the end of the day.
2. Staff planning activities held during the staff planning portion of the day should relate to unique problems at the school. In structuring staff planning activities, the principals should involve the MTEA Building Committee in the decision as to the items to be included in the staff planning portion of the day.
3. Staff planning activities shall be limited to matters of local concern that would normally be a topic of faculty meetings. If a faculty requested a central office staff person to come in to answer questions of a local concern it would be considered part of the staff planning activities.

Early Childhood Save the Date!

Our annual make-it, take-it workshop for early childhood educators will take place on Wednesday, **February 20**. Details will be in Sharpener and at mtea.org later this month.

WAA Testing - Significantly Changed

The Wisconsin Alternative Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA) has been substantially changed this school year:

- ◆ For this school year only, the WAA testing must be completed during January, instead of the usual fall WKCE period.
- ◆ Special education teachers are required to **individually** administer three areas of the WAA - reading, math, and science - to each student, in an appropriate testing environment.
- ◆ It is expected that each area of one-on-one testing will require an hour - an estimated total of three hours per student.
- ◆ For language arts and social studies, teachers are required to complete a rating scale checklist. The time needed to complete both checklists is estimated to be a total of 30 minutes. Teachers are no longer required to attach evidence to these checklists.

3.5 Hours of Class Coverage for Each Student

Representatives of our union and the MPS administration have agreed to the following guidelines for administering the new WAA during January of 2008:

- ◆ Principals should arrange for 3.5 hours of class coverage per student for teachers who must complete WAA testing.
- ◆ The amount of time to complete the checklists and one-on-one testing is an estimate. If there are unusual circumstances requiring more time, the teacher should inform the principal so that the additional coverage time is arranged.
- ◆ The longstanding memorandum of understanding (MOU) which MTEA negotiated with MPS to give teachers released time and pay for WAA "second-raters" does **not** apply to the new WAA process. (For example, there is no second rating for the new WAA.)
- ◆ MTEA and MPS representatives will meet after this year's WAA testing round is completed to review how the new procedures were implemented in the schools and make plans to address any problems.

Act Now to Meet the January 31 Deadline

If you have students who need to be tested with the new WAA, you should let your principal know the total amount of time you estimate is needed - using 3.5 hours per student as a guideline.

Your class coverage time should be arranged to fit your plans for administering the tests to each student. For example, most students who need WAA testing will not be able to handle three continuous hours. You'll need to schedule the times based on each student's ability to complete each test.

Class Coverage Concerns

If you encounter problems working out the class coverage you need with your principal, please contact Nancy Costello of the MTEA staff at costellon@mtea.weac.org or 259-1990.

Workshops Planned for Art Educators

The MTEA Art Educators Committee is sponsoring a series of monthly, after-school workshops during the second semester. For information on all five sessions, go to mtea.org.

Papermaking

The first workshop will be held on Wednesday, **January 30**, at Roosevelt Middle School. The two-hour session will start at 4:30 p.m.

Sally Duback, a local artist who specializes in papermaking, will conduct a workshop to teach MPS art teachers her craft. All participants will have an opportunity to create an individual piece of handcrafted paper and leave with ideas about how to make paper with students.

No Fee, But Pre-Register

There is no fee for this workshop. However, you should bring a sponge and an item or items you would like to incorporate into a paper piece (old photos, bits of paper, glitter, sequins or fabric).

Please pre-register at mtea.org (Events) or call 259-1990.

Listening to Your Faculty's Concerns

MTEA President Dennis Oulahan and Executive Director Tom Morgan would like to meet with members to discuss what is needed to support your professional work. Dennis and Tom are eager to visit your school for an informal conversation - before or after school, during lunch, whatever works for your staff.

To arrange a visit to your school, please ask your BR to call Tom or Dennis at 259-1990 or e-mail them at oulahand@mtea.weac.org or morgant@mtea.weac.org.

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 2007 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.

A Few 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. In fact, the IRS requires unions to notify members of the portion of union dues which are deductible.

To comply with the IRS notice requirement, our attorney has calculated the lobbying expenses of the MTEA, WEAC, and NEA for 2007, as well as the MTEA and WEAC political action contributions. After deducting all lobbying and political expenses, our attorney has determined that 72% of the MTEA/WEAC/NEA dues teachers paid during 2007 qualified as miscellaneous deduction expenses.

Typical Allowable Dues Amount - \$668.76

For most teacher members, the total amount of union dues deducted during 2007 was \$928.84. If you paid this amount, IRS allows you to claim only **\$668.76** in union dues as a miscellaneous deduction expense ($\$928.84 \times 72\% = \668.76).

Determining Your Amount for 2007

To claim the allowable portion of the union dues you paid during 2007, you should take two steps:

1. Check your December 28, 2007 paycheck to find the total amount deducted for union dues during 2007. It will be in the "After-Tax Deduction Box," noted "YTD" (Year-to-Date).
2. Multiply your amount by 72%.

Extra Step Required If You Requested a Rebate

If you requested a rebate for your 2007-08 MTEA PAC contribution (\$8.80), 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 2007 **before** you multiply your 2007 dues deduction total by 72%.

"Our Lights Are On" Reminder

If you worked at your school for the district's annual recruitment night on January 9, you should be paid for your time.

As a result of an MTEA group grievance filed when MPS failed to negotiate teacher compensation and other issues, an arbitrator ruled that participation is strictly voluntary and teachers who staff this event are paid at the part-time certificated rate (\$24.33 per hour).