



**Mail Your Ballot
by March 20, Please**
Ballots for electing WEAC (state-funded) delegates to the NEA RA were delivered to the schools last week with the March 6 Sharpener.

Especially with our long, cold, snowy winter, you probably think only of spring break whenever Thursday, March 20, is mentioned.

But it's also the deadline for mailing in the WEAC ballot. Please take a minute to fill in the Scantron sheet. And return it in the special MTEA postage-paid envelope by March 20. **Thanks!**

Looking Ahead

Here are a few events coming after spring break:

March 31

- Cycle I interviews start

April 1

- Election Day

April 3

- MMABSE Summit Conference

April 17

- Share professional concerns about mandatory, top-down "reforms"

Details

For more information, go to mtea.org (Events).

Summer School Hiring Dispute

Two teachers at an elementary school recently called our union's staff with concerns about the hiring for the extended school year (ESY) program at their school this summer. The most senior kindergarten teacher had been told she was not being employed because she had taught a K4 class and the summer school position is K5. The most senior primary teacher was told she would not be hired because she's taught second grade and the summer school position is third grade.

For decades, the MPS summer school application specified that "You must have taught in that subject area within the past three years." The term "subject area" has always meant to teach kindergarten (K3, K4, or K5), you must have taught kindergarten at any of the three levels during the past three years. To teach a primary summer school class, you must have taught in grades 1, 2, or 3. To teach an intermediate class, you must have taught in grades 4, 5, or 6.

Questions Initially Resolved, But...

The MTEA staff discussed this matter with an administrator at the school and the MPS Director of Summer School. The matter appeared to be resolved - with systemwide seniority being followed for hiring within each subject area, not by the grade taught.

Then we learned that the MPS Director of Labor Relations disagreed. We also found something interesting in the materials MPS had sent to schools in February for local school hiring for extended school year programs. The MPS language on qualifications specified "subject area/**grade level**." (Emphasis added.)

Schools were to submit their ESY hiring reports by March 3. Schools were also instructed to inform the staff that all hiring is "tentative subject to the approval of the MOU." When Sharpener went to press, MPS still had not sent the summer school hiring MOUs to the MTEA.

Grievance May Become Necessary

We will insist that the systemwide seniority and the longstanding definition of "subject area taught in past three years" are followed in this summer's hiring. We don't know if a group grievance will be necessary, but we will keep you posted.

MPS Spring Online Courses

Registration is now open for 13 courses being offered after spring break. Week 1 begins April 28. Graduate credit is available through Cardinal Stritch University. The registration deadline is April 4.

For more information on the courses and to register online with a major credit card, go to <http://enroll.milwaukee.k12.wi.us>. For additional assistance, contact Karen Halliburton, MPS Learning Technologies, at 438-3648 or opd@milwaukee.k12.wi.us.



Security Breach Letter Clarified

The January 29 Sharpener reported the security breach that affected members enrolled in the MTEA's group disability insurance plan. A computer containing the Social Security numbers of MTEA members in the plan was stolen.

The February 18 Sharpener reported that a year of free credit monitoring would be offered to affected members. In late February, a letter explaining the offer was mailed to their homes. The letter included a credit monitoring enrollment form, requiring the member's Social Security number.

We have received calls questioning the authenticity of this letter. The main reason for the calls: For decades, our group disability plan was underwritten by the Washington National Insurance Company. With recent changes (corporate mergers, etc.), the company that now underwrites the MTEA plan is the Union Security Insurance Company.

We want to assure you that the February 25 letter (signed by John Roberts) is authentic. We urge you to take advantage of the free credit monitoring offer. And yes, you must list your Social Security number to enroll.

Social Events - Save the Dates

May 9
10th Annual MTEA
Brewers Tailgate

May 17
MPS Golf Outing

Details/registration,
in Sharpener,
after spring break.

Interview Rights Violated at Engleburg

In January, the teachers at Engleburg elected three teachers to serve on a primary grade interview team, three for their school's intermediate team, and three others to serve as alternates for either team.

Subsequently, the principal unilaterally decided to have just one interview team and picked three teachers to serve on it.

The contract clearly allows the teachers at each school to decide to have multiple interview teams. A member of the MTEA staff attempted to resolve this matter informally, but the MPS Human Resources Department supported the principal's unilateral decision.

Grievance Has Been Initiated - Don't Apply at Engleburg

On February 25, our union filed a group grievance to stop this contract violation prior to the interview process. If MPS persists, the grievance seeks the remedy that: "Any teacher(s) assigned to the school during the interview process that was conducted by the team established wrongly by the principal, shall be removed from the school and the position(s) declared a vacancy."

Our advice: Don't apply at Engleburg until the principal agrees to honor the contractual rights of the teachers who work there!

MTEA Grievance Wins Teachers \$20,000 in Tuition Reimbursement

By contract, tuition reimbursement is available to teachers for courses required to obtain special education certification.

In violation of the contract, MPS unilaterally limited reimbursement to permit teachers only. In fact, MPS improperly refused to give tuition reimbursement application forms for special education courses to teachers licensed in regular education.

Our union filed a group grievance in 2003. As a result, a number of teachers were reimbursed, and MPS agreed to follow the contract. However, in May of 2007, we learned that MPS was again refusing to let teachers with a regular license apply for special education tuition reimbursement.

Second Group Grievance Filed and Resolved

As reported in the August 13 Sharpener, we filed another group grievance and needed to identify the affected teachers by September 30, 2008. (MPS had no record of who was denied an application.)

As a result, five teachers were identified as qualifying for the tuition reimbursement they had been improperly denied. The amounts varied. One teacher received \$744 for a three-credit course. Another is receiving \$7,790.10 for the 18 credits she had earned.
