

What's the Point?

Before you react to the draft on the role of educators in education reform on the back of this Sharpener, you should ask **why**.

The primary reason is that we need a strong and clear statement of where we stand on education reform because the threats to our professionalism are increasing. We are being pressured to do more and more, with less and less. We need to spell out our beliefs and expectations - rather than letting those furthest from the classroom prescribe "reforms" that will not meet our students' needs.

Where's the Teeth?

Making a public statement is just the initial step.

The teeth of any position we adopt on our role in education reform is how well we enforce it. As members, leaders, and staff - it is up to us - a union of professional educators - to insist upon our rightful place in education reform decisions. We must demand the respect we deserve - individually, as a school faculty, and on a systemwide basis.

We cannot control what others may say and do.

We can determine what we do to improve teaching and learning in MPS.

Education Reform: Where We Stand - Your Feedback Is Needed!

Everyone - inside and outside of public education - seems to have their own definition of education reform. The dictionary provides various meanings, including "to induce or cause to abandon evil ways." For some critics, education reform is used as a code phrase to say **everything** public schools and educators are doing is bad - and must be radically changed.

Reform Should Start With State Funding

Most educators agree that the current state funding law fails to provide many districts, including MPS, with the financial resources needed to offer all students the educational opportunities they need and deserve. The School Board recognized this inequity when it unanimously adopted the "Working Together, Achieving More" strategic plan jointly developed by MTEA and MPS representatives.

But Politics, as Usual, Dominate

Unfortunately, educational opportunities in Wisconsin are determined by political power - not by the needs of students, families, and taxpayers. For example, Governor Doyle succumbed to political pressure when he cut a deal in 2006 to expand vouchers, without authentic accountability.

We, as a union, must continue to **collectively** work to change the impact of politics on education at all levels of government.

As that struggle continues, we, as educators within our professional union, can and must influence the improvement of teaching and learning in our classroom, school, and district.

BRs to Enact Our Union's Position

At their April meeting, MTEA Building Representatives discussed the first draft of **our union's position on the role of teachers in education reform**. Based on BR feedback, a second draft is printed on the back - for your review and feedback.

Please write your comments and return your sheets to your BR no later than the end of the day on Tuesday, May 13. BRs are scheduled to discuss and take action on a final draft at their May 14 meeting. Your feedback will enable your BR to represent your faculty's views.

Suggestion: One quick way to react is to write "Y" for **yes** in front of each point you support and "N" for **no** for those you don't support.



Our Union's Position on the Role of Teachers in Education Reform

Draft for Your Review and Feedback

As teachers, we have the primary responsibility and the right to:

- ◆ Serve as the instructional leader within our classrooms
- ◆ Make professional judgments about teaching and learning based on:
 - Our own background and formal education.
 - Our teaching experiences.
 - Continuing professional development.
 - Student data - qualitative and quantitative, relevant and unbiased.
- ◆ Discuss students, data, relevant research, and instructional practices with educators (including administrators) to improve instruction and learning within our classroom and school.
- ◆ Participate in schoolwide and districtwide research, development, design, decisions, and assessments impacting teaching and learning.

We **respect** the statutory and contractual authority of local and districtwide administrators, and the School Board, to make the final decisions on education policy issues.

We **expect** that decisions on instruction will reflect what research says: effective and lasting improvements in teaching and learning cannot be achieved without the meaningful involvement of teachers in education policy decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels.

To fulfill our responsibilities and rights as professionals, we need:

- ◆ Time to reflect, prepare, and plan - both individually and collaboratively.
- ◆ Professional development - based on our needs and those of our students.
- ◆ Recognition and respect for:
 - Our commitment to the demands of teaching in MPS.
 - What we are already doing to help our students and families.
 - Our individual and collective efforts to improve instruction.
- ◆ Constant communications which:
 - Celebrate the successes of students, parents, staff members, schools, and the entire system.
 - Highlight research and resources for improving teaching and learning, from within and outside of MPS.

We believe the best way for administrators and the School Board to demonstrate their respect for teachers is to bargain and follow a contract that helps attract and retain highly qualified educators, a contract that **jointly** addresses teaching and learning issues.

Please return to your BR by Thursday, May 13.