
Support for Improving MPS Student Achievement

It seems that every time you pick up a certain daily newspaper somebody from outside of MPS is talking about how to “reform” us. Wouldn’t it be great if an outside organization offered to work with the educators of our district, supporting the positives and assisting in the hard work of change?

The Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC) is doing exactly that. The GMC is an organization comprised of business, labor, academic, philanthropic, non-profit, and civic leaders. Its mission is to “keep Southeastern Wisconsin the best community to live, learn, work, and play.”

For over two years, the GMC has invested time and money in MPS. It served as a catalyst in developing a five-year plan for MPS – and funded the process. The GMC continues to support the plan this school year – the second year of implementation.

Calling for a Substitute

To arrange for a substitute teacher, call one of the four phone numbers below. (North Avenue is the dividing line.)

Elementary

Southside - 238-6225

Northside - 238-6223

Secondary

Southside - 238-6226

Northside - 238-6224

Opening Up Communication Within MPS

There’s a communications gap in our district. Whether it’s implementing the MPS Strategic Plan, the latest DIFI edict, or the newspaper series on the Neighborhood Schools Initiative – educators and other staff members are often isolated and uninformed.

An Online Town Hall for MPS

This fall, a Web site will be established as one step toward connecting the MPS community through a variety of communication formats. The new site, called “Project X” because it is now a big unknown, will include blogs, video, forums and audio. The purpose is to help improve student achievement in MPS through communication.

Not the “Party Line”

Project X will provide a way for educators to share their views, concerns, questions, and criticisms of what’s going on in MPS. Success stories within classrooms, schools, and the system may be shared. (We all need to hear some good news!) But the problems will be aired. Frank discussion of issues (**not** personalities) is fair game.

Collaborative Effort – Not Top Down

Project X is being developed by representatives of the MTEA; the Administrators and Supervisors Council (ASC - a.k.a. the principals’ union; MPS; and GMC (see article to the left). The goal is open and honest dialog among employees – not management platitudes.

Your Ideas Are Welcome

This new communications source is intended to connect you to the rest of the MPS community. You can help shape the content **before** the site is launched (and after).

Send your suggestions for what you’d like to see and hear on Project X to omaharp@mtea.weac.org.

Faculty Meetings and Inservices

By contract, teachers may be required to attend faculty meetings and inservice sessions at their work site not to exceed two hours per month. If an inservice or faculty meeting will last longer than one hour, their principal is required to notify teachers of the date and expected duration at least one calendar week in advance.

For this and many contract provisions affecting the entire faculty, we rely on the MTEA Building Representative in each school for enforcement. If you have a question or concern about faculty meetings at your school, please check with the BR.

If a problem persists or a contract interpretation question arises, please call an MTEA staff member at 259-1990.

For Initial Educators

The Quality Educator Interactive (QEI) is your online Professional Development Plan resource, free to you as an MTEA member. The QEI helps you create your PDP, assemble your review team, and complete the approval and verification processes, all online.

A QEI workshop, especially for initial educators, will take place on Thursday, **October 2**, at the MTEA Building. Please pre-register at mtea.org (Events) or call 259-1990.

The presentation by WEAC Teaching and Learning Consultant Ron Jetty will overview the site including: the PDP, a free self-reflection and journaling tool, a career portfolio, and the largest statewide database of professional development opportunities for our state's K-12 educators.

Registration and refreshments at 4:00 p.m. The workshop starts at 4:30 p.m. and will end no later than 6:30 p.m.

Political Action Rebate Reminder

During 2008-09, the combined MTEA/WEAC/NEA membership dues amount of \$48.71 will be deducted from 20 biweekly paychecks. This deduction includes a \$0.46 contribution to the MTEA's Political Action Fund. This amount is separated from your dues payment and used for local political action purposes - primarily to support candidates for the Milwaukee School Board.

Members may request a rebate if they do not wish to contribute to the MTEA's Political Action Fund. Based on the MTEA Constitution, to request an MTEA-PAC rebate of \$9.20 for 2008-09, you must send a written request to MTEA Executive Director Tom Morgan. Your request must be received at the MTEA Building by **October 1**.

MTEA Retirement Workshop

Each fall, the MTEA presents a comprehensive workshop for teachers who are considering retirement within the next few years. The workshop is especially valuable to those planning to retire at the end of the current school year.

Two Contractual Notes

◆The contractual deadline for submitting your retirement notice to MPS is **March 1**.

◆The current teacher contract will expire on June 30, 2009. The retirement benefits in the 2007-08 contract are guaranteed for teachers who retire by that date.

Workshop Dates and Details

If you are considering retiring in June of 2009, you and your spouse should attend on Thursday, **September 25**, or Tuesday, **October 7**. The workshop will be held from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at **Serb Hall, 5105 West Oklahoma Avenue**. Don Ernest of the MTEA staff will present the seminar, and there will be ample time for questions.

Information will be presented on several topics including: pension benefits under the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS); the negotiated supplemental retirement plan; and other contractual retirement benefits including health insurance, life insurance, and severance pay.

We urge you to bring your spouse. If you plan to attend, please call the MTEA at 259-1990 to register by giving your name, number attending, and your choice of workshop date. If you prefer, register online at mtea.org (Events).

Key Steps in Preparing for Retirement

The MTEA workshop provides a broad framework for you to start your specific retirement plans. We highly recommend two more steps to help you determine your choice of WRS annuity payments, the timing of your retirement, etc.

First, you need to submit a WRS "Benefit Information Request" form. Copies of this form will be distributed at the workshop, and instructions will be given to help participants complete it. After you send in your form, the WRS will provide you with specific dollar amount estimates of your state pension payment options. (It could take up to 12 weeks.)

Second, after you have received your payment estimates from WRS, you and your spouse should make an appointment to meet with Don Ernest. This in-depth counseling session will provide answers to your individual questions - including the amount of benefits you will receive under the negotiated supplemental pension plan. At the end of this session, all of your retirement paperwork will be ready to file.

Who's Your Evaluator?

By contract, you must receive written notice of the name of your administrative evaluator(s) within 30 days of the start of the school year. This administrator(s) is primarily responsible for your evaluation and will sign it. The MPS Human Resources Department has asked principals to access the appropriate form letter for this notice on the MPS portal and distribute the letter to each teacher by **Friday, September 26**.