
Recall Report

Prior to Congress enacting the \$10 billion Education Jobs Fund on August 10, your union worked out an agreement with the new MPS administration to recall all **568** substitute teachers laid off in June. And MPS was in the process of another wave of teacher recalls, to fill 100 elementary vacancies.

Your union continues to work toward the MTEA's goal of bringing all teachers and EAs back to work as soon as feasible.

Celebrate Solidarity!

It's not too late to sign up to join in the Labor Day parade plus fun and food at Laborfest. Go to mtea.org or call us at 259-1990. **We just learned that President Obama will be there.**

Open House Notice

By contract, one open house per semester is part of each teacher's assignment. Principals are required to inform the faculty of the date(s) by "the fifth workday of the school year." For most schools, the deadline is **September 3**.

Considering Retirement?

This fall, the MTEA workshop for teachers considering retirement within the next few years will again be offered twice.

Workshop Dates

If you plan to retire in June of 2011, we recommend that you and your spouse attend the workshop on Thursday, **September 23**, or Tuesday, **October 5**.

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Layoffs Used as Bargaining Ploy

The new MPS administration has reported restoring 240 teacher jobs - before the start of the school year. It's clear the prior administration needlessly laid off more than 200 teachers.

Why? For months prior to the layoff, the district carried out a campaign with the goal of pressuring the MTEA and other MPS unions to make extraordinary concessions in health care coverage. The prior top level administrators inflated the number of teachers laid off as part of its bargaining strategy.

482 - Never Explained, Never Justified

The former administration proposed a reduction of 260 teacher positions for the district's 2010-11 budget. Even if the administration had factored in attrition, this is **220 fewer** than MPS laid off in June.

The prior administration never provided a credible explanation of how and why it decided to lay off teachers for the first time since 1982 and justify the surprisingly high number.

From the start of the MPS budget process, the prior regime thwarted our union's attempts to sit down and gain a shared understanding of the district's financial situation.

Bargaining in the Media, Not at the Table

The prior administration not only failed to provide information, it never brought the Board's well-publicized proposal to place everyone in the HMO to the bargaining table.

In fact, in May of 2009 - a year prior to the layoffs, our teacher bargaining team proposed an employee premium contribution for health insurance, a cost saving change in the prescription drug plan, and other modifications. But MPS did not provide data needed to responsibly address health care and other cost issues in contract talks.

Moving Forward With Cautious Optimism

Laying off 482 teachers in June was just plain wrong. But MPS will face legitimate and substantial budget problems in its 2011-12 budget.

All of the negatives will persist next year. The recession will continue to decimate tax revenues. The broken state funding system will only make matters worse - unless the Legislature enacts an equitable method. Costs will rise. And it is extremely unlikely that Congress will enact another stimulus package for schools.

Contract Talks Pivotal

MPS faces significant problems that can be resolved **mutually**. The new administration, led by Superintendent Gregory Thornton, has indicated a willingness to work with the MTEA and the other MPS unions.

Contract negotiations this fall will be the litmus test of the new administration's commitment to partnering with employees.

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The workshop will be held from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. at the **Italian Conference Center, 321 East Chicago St.** Don Ernest of the MTEA staff will present the seminar and answer questions.

Details & Registration

Information will be presented on pension benefits under both the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) and the supplemental early retirement plan (SERP). Don will also explain the other negotiated retirement benefits - health insurance, life insurance, and severance pay.

To register go to mtea.org (Events) or call us at 259-1990. We need your name, the number attending, and when you'll attend.

Key Preparation Steps

The MTEA workshop provides a broad framework for you to start your specific retirement plans. We highly recommend you go to mtea.org for two more steps (noted below) 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.

The WRS form is also available at etf.wi.gov/publications/et7301.pdf.

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 your benefits under the negotiated supplemental pension plan. At the end of this session, your retirement paperwork will be ready to file.

September Checklist

Each fall, you receive lots of materials to review from your union and from MPS. The district recently completed its annual open enrollment mailing which include a booklet on health and dental insurances and another on flexible spending accounts.

This checklist can help you keep track of your options, starting with items that must be completed during September.

Insurance Coverage - September 30 Deadline

- Update your MPS health and dental insurance data - add dependents, note any other changes such as marital status.
- Re-enroll for health and dental insurance if returning from an unpaid leave. Coverage does **not** resume automatically.
- If you wish, switch to a different health or dental plan.
- Enroll for health and dental insurance if you haven't in the past.

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) - September 30 Deadline

Reduce your income tax deductions and have more money to spend in 2011 with either (or both) FSA programs:

- Enroll in the Health Care FSA
- Enroll in the Dental Care FSA

Complete the PHA - December 15 Deadline

Each calendar year, you and your spouse must take the Personal Health Assessment to receive an up-to-date report on your health/risks and to avoid the \$200 penalty. Go to mtea.org for easy access to the PHA.

- Complete the PHA - yourself.
- Complete the PHA - spouse.

MTEA Information and Involvement Opportunities

- Subscribe at mtea.org to receive the e-mail edition of Sharpener.
- Join the conversation with your union on Facebook; search **Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association**.
- Follow MTEA's public communication on Twitter **@mteaunion**.
- Join an MTEA committee that interests you at mtea.org.
- Sign up to participate in MTEA political activities at mtea.org.

Reminder: MTEA Leadership Vacancies

As reported in the August 19 Sharpener, there are three vacant representative positions on your union's Executive Board: one special education and two middle school. If you would like to be considered for appointment, your online application or letter must be received at the MTEA Building by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, **September 17**.

For eligibility details and online application, go to mtea.org.