

Tom Morgan - A Leader of Educators, A Man of Extraordinary Compassion



Thomas E. Morgan
(July 15, 1947 - March 21, 2010)

In Memoriam

An observance, recognizing Tom Morgan's many contributions to the membership of our union, will take place at the monthly meeting of the MTEA Representative Assembly on Wednesday, April 21.

Personal Expressions

To send a personal message of sympathy to Tom's widow, please address your card to:

Mrs. Jacki Morgan
c/o MTEA
5130 West Vliet Street
Milwaukee WI 53208

Tom Morgan started his service as MTEA Executive Director in July of 2007. He immediately immersed himself in a non-stop whirlwind of activity that only intensified during his tenure.

Tom brought a wealth of experience to our union, and his consummate skills as a negotiator were called upon early and often. With his level-headed guidance, a settlement of the teacher contract was reached within a few weeks after the stalled talks resumed in the fall of 2007.

Tom's duties were multifaceted and complex, but his preference was personally advocating for members. He loved to visit schools and directly address faculty concerns.

Tom was very proud of the educators of MPS. He often spoke of his deep admiration for the members he served, their hard work and exceptional dedication to children.

Tom's leadership went far beyond the traditional role of advocating for members at the bargaining table and the never-ending enforcement of contract rights. Tom cared deeply about the Milwaukee community and the future of public education in the city.

In his tireless efforts to improve educational opportunities for children, he reached out and engaged a wide spectrum of community leaders, from the Milwaukee County Labor Council to the NAACP, from Citizen Action of Wisconsin to the Greater Milwaukee Committee. Tom was open and forthright in working with key leaders for a better MPS.

Opposing the threat of mayoral takeover was the biggest challenge of Tom's tenure. From mid-August through January of this school year, Tom spent countless hours, in tandem with MTEA President Mike Langyel, working to preserve the right of Milwaukee citizens to elect their school board. Through private meetings and public events, in discussions with legislators and other elected officials, weekdays and weekends, Tom left no stone unturned. He knew what was in the best interest of city educators, students, and parents – and he gave his all to the cause.

For those who worked with Tom, his compassion and concern for others stood out as his defining character trait. Tough bargainer, yes. Strong advocate, no doubt. Skilled politician, absolutely. But the way Tom personally cared for others was simply remarkable.

Tom Morgan thoroughly enjoyed working for and with people. From the always well-stocked candy jar in his office to his warm-hearted demeanor, Tom's service to educators and public education in Milwaukee was distinguished by extraordinary compassion.

Grievance Initiation Deadline Reminder

Whenever you feel you're being treated unfairly, you should first check with your Building Representative and then, if needed, call an MTEA staff member. The contract requires you to initiate a grievance "promptly but in no case longer than 30 workdays" after you "knew or should have known about the incident." The burden is on the employee to find out if the contract has been violated and file a grievance in a timely manner.

Note on Past Summer

School Hiring Violations

The March 22 Sharpener reported that three grievances the MTEA filed on behalf of teachers who were not hired for local school summer programs awarding them over \$11,000 in back pay.

Based on the number of calls to our office, other teachers were in similar situations last year (and in prior years).

If your contract rights were violated, it is too late to file a grievance because the 30 workday deadline has passed.

Upcoming Conferences

◆ The Wisconsin Labor History Society is holding its annual all-day conference on Saturday, **April 17**, at the IBEW Training Center at 11001 W. Plant Ct. in Wauwatosa. It will focus on helping teachers implement the new state law requiring that labor history be taught in public schools.

For details and registration, go to mtea.org (Events).

◆ The March 22 Sharpener had an incorrect e-mail address for the **April 27** MMABSE conference. The correct e-mail is: paellis@stritch.edu. You may also access details and registration at mtea.org (Events).

Next Steps for Our Union

The unexpected passing of Tom Morgan necessitated a special meeting of the MTEA Executive Board on March 24. Tom had worked extensively with the Board members - as a group and individually - for the past three years. The atmosphere was somber, and time was taken for reflection and planning for the visitation and funeral service.

Our union's elected leaders then took two actions:

1. Appointed Pat O'Mahar, the senior member of the MTEA staff, as Interim Executive Director. (Pat has been on our union's staff since 1971 and previously served as interim director in 1994.)
2. Set the timeline for posting the vacancy, initiating a nationwide search for Tom's successor.

The detailed posting will be at mtea.org and on the sites of the NEA and other national union employment organizations as soon as March 29. The deadline for applications is April 30.

Survey Changes Prompt Questions

In 2005, MPS conducted its first annual Instructional Practices Survey and Sharpener provided the following explanation:

"The survey is designed to give a better understanding of successful instructional practices within high performing classrooms and to help define professional development needs. School summary results - **not** individual - will be provided for each school to study and use in its planning. Individual results will be kept confidential."

Some Changes This Spring

◆ The survey was e-mailed directly to teachers, not handled through principals.

◆ In error, the survey was e-mailed to non-classroom professionals such as speech pathologists and DTs, who should **not** take the survey.

◆ In addition to past questions about your own instructional practices, MPS added questions from a separate survey on the performance of the school's principal and other teachers.

◆ The combination survey requires more time to complete.

Voluntary Participation Encouraged, But...

Since the first Instructional Practices Survey, our union's advice, reprinted below, has been:

"The overall goal of the survey is to improve teaching and learning - and to help reduce the achievement gaps. **We urge you to participate!**"

However, because a second survey has been added to the Instructional Practices Survey this March:

You should skip any questions you are not comfortable answering!

Moreover, as in the case of all MPS surveys, your participation is **strictly voluntary**. Even though MPS is offering schools a \$200 incentive for 70% participation, you are **not** obligated to take the survey.
