

Back-to-School

The new school year is almost here. Year-round schools are now in session. For most educators:

- ◆ The first workday, organization day, is Thursday, August 30.
- ◆ Friday, August 31, is the first banking day for most schools.
- ◆ Students start on the Tuesday after Labor Day, September 2.

For the complete calendar for 2008-09, go to mtea.org.

What's Enclosed

Our union's strength is informed and involved members. The three sign-up items enclosed are for your participation in:

- ◆ Political Action
- ◆ MTEA Committees
- ◆ Labor Day Parade

A "Teacher Data" form is also included to bring us up-to-date on your home e-mail address and other contact information.

New Teachers Need Our Help

While the start of the school year is demanding for all of us, colleagues who are new to the profession face a challenge that seems overwhelming at times. We ask experienced teachers to reach out to the new teachers at your school - offering support and encouragement.

Banking Days, Make-Up Days: Agreement Reached for 2008-09

On July 25, negotiators for our union and the MPS administration agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on how banking days will be used if DPI requires MPS to make up snow days during 2008-09.

Make-Up Day Sequence

If schools are required to make up one, two, three or four snow days, the sequence for the make-up days is outlined below. The sequence assumes at least one snow day prior to January 26, 2009. If the first snow day were to occur after that date, the sequence would start with May 8 becoming a student attendance day.

of Snow Days - Traditional School Calendar Modifications

- One** - January 26 banking day becomes a student attendance day.
- Two** - May 8 banking day becomes a student attendance day.
- Three** - June 16 record day becomes a student attendance day/and June 17 (the emergency make-up day) becomes record day.
- Four** - March 16 banking day becomes a student attendance day.

Schools on the year-round calendar and International Baccalaureate (IB) high schools have a similar sequence, adjusted for their calendars. Both sequences are at mtea.org.

Joint Waiver Request

The MOU also provides that MPS and MTEA will jointly request a DPI waiver if weather-related school closings occur next school year. Last spring, the superintendent decided to use the emergency make-up day and asked DPI for a waiver for the other snow day. He told the MTEA after the fact.

Improving Labor Management Relations

In addition, our union proposed a labor-management committee to cooperatively address systemwide issues such as banking time and collaborative planning. The district agreed to form a joint MTEA/MPS committee that will meet monthly and take a positive, problem-solving approach to issues of mutual concern. Its purpose is to resolve issues through open and respectful discussion.

Mutually Beneficial Resolution

Our teacher bargaining team considers the MOU on banking days/ make-up days and the MOU establishing the joint, problem-solving committee to be a good compromise that benefits educators, parents, schools, and the district. Both MOUs are at mtea.org.

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First Paycheck

Teachers on the traditional school calendar will receive a **four-day** paycheck September 5, not the usual six days.

For school social workers and other teacher unit members who work 200 days, this first paycheck will be for nine days (not the usual 11 days).

Deduction Notes

◆ If you have a loan, savings club, or other deposits to an Educators Credit Union account, a deduction will be made on the September 5 paycheck (unless your net pay does not cover the amount).

◆ MTEA dues will **not** be taken on the first paycheck. Dues deductions will start on September 19, the first 9-day paycheck.

◆ TDA deductions will also start on September 19.

Action Research Fellows Openings

Ten Action Research Fellows are funded by an NEA Foundation grant to help close the achievement gaps in MPS. Teachers selected as fellows use their classroom experiences to systematically reflect on their practice and grow professionally. They receive academic support for their research, network with peers locally and nationally, and are awarded a \$1,000 stipend.

Four teachers have been selected for the 2008-09 cohort: **Ronald Fintak, Jr.**, Browning; **Jeff Johnson**, South Division; **Elnore McKinley-Seward**, Emerson; and **Sheri Turnacliff**, Vincent.

There are five more openings.

Apply Now!

The application deadline is Friday, **September 5**. A downloadable application form is at mtea.org.

For more information, please call Dr. Christine Anderson, the principal investigator for the NEAF grant, at 270-1701.

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No one can foresee if there will be even one snow day next school year. But everyone will know well in advance when days will be made up if DPI doesn't grant a waiver. A defined sequence will be followed, allowing educators and parents to plan ahead.

A reasonable middle ground was found on the difficult issue of when the emergency make-up day would be used. MPS proposed to use it first – if there is just one snow day. Our union proposed to use it only as a last resort. This was a key issue to our negotiators because, without the MOU, the emergency make-up day would be the first day used under the language in the contract.

The labor-management committee has the potential for collaboratively addressing some of the complex problems teachers face – and avoiding contentious disputes.

However, as explained below, a positive resolution seemed very unlikely at the end of last school year.

Moving From Chaos to Cooperation

The MPS administration took several steps in dealing with the make-up days last spring that frustrated and angered our members. Unfortunately, our teacher bargaining team did not have the leverage to negotiate a better resolution for the 2007-08 snow days.

To make matters worse, the 2008-09 calendar (with five banking days) had been negotiated. There was no pressure on the school district to even discuss modifications for make-up days. Our union again had virtually no leverage to engage MPS in meaningful talks.

How the Agreement Was Achieved

A balanced, win/win resolution for 2008-09 was bargained because of two extraordinary steps.

First, the May 23 Sharpener presented a highly unorthodox strategy to gain leverage for our bargaining team. We asked members to vote against banking time for 2008-09.

Our union initiated banking time in the mid-90's. Since then, members have voted for it year after year - 100% of the schools in recent years. Many teachers have always worked on a banking time schedule since starting in MPS.

But Sharpener explained to put pressure on the administration: "A substantial number of schools must vote to **not** bank time in 2008-09."

Second, in response to the May 23 Sharpener, 68 schools voted against banking time. Their votes provided our teacher bargaining team with the leverage needed to reach the agreements described above.

Thanks to the BRs and the members in these schools, two MOUs were bargained that will benefit all members.

All Schools on Banking Time for 2008-09

The school district faced deadlines this summer planning transportation schedules and other preparations for the start of school. Relieving this pressure was a key issue to MPS negotiators. A resolution would not have been achieved without an agreement that all schools, including those that voted no in June, will do banking time again in 2008-09.