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## Retirement Planning Workshop for EAs

If you are considering retirement, you should attend the MTEA's retirement planning workshop after school on **Tuesday, January 18**. The workshop will be held at the MTEA Building, 5130 West Vliet Street.

Light refreshments will be served during registration, which starts at 4:00 p.m. The presentation starts at 4:30 p.m., followed by questions and answers and ends no later than 6:30 p.m.

### Details and Advice

The workshop will offer general information on how and when to retire from MPS. Mary Jane Stoeffel from the Milwaukee Employees' Retirement System will explain your city pension benefits.

Cheryl Barczak of the MTEA staff will review the contractual retirement benefits - health insurance, life insurance, and severance pay.

If you plan to retire at the end of this school year, you should submit your formal notice to MPS **prior to March 1**. This planning session will explain why.

### Pre-Registration

If you plan to attend, please pre-register at mtea.org (Events) or call us at 259-1990. *We encourage you to bring your spouse.*

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## Reminder on January Paychecks

If you are **not** on a 9-day pay schedule, your January paychecks will be smaller due to the days off for the winter recess. You will receive a **7-day** paycheck on **January 7** and a **5-day** check on **January 21**.

◆EAs on a 9-day pay schedule will receive 9-day checks as usual. The one 7-day check for 2010-11 was on December 23. (It's been the last paycheck in December for the past seven years.)

◆EAs at year-round schools will receive their usual 7-day paychecks.

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## Contract Talks to Resume

Our union's educational assistant bargaining team is scheduled to meet with the school board's team on January 25.

The teams have not sat down at the table for several months. The school board's team postponed the session scheduled to October. District negotiators said they wanted to make a new offer to the EA unit after the teacher contract was settled.

Historically, the teacher unit, which is by far the largest group of MPS employees, has set the pattern on health insurance changes for the other 12 MPS employee bargaining units, including the EA unit.

### MTEA Seeks "Me Too" Resolution for EAs

After the teacher contract was ratified by the school board in early December, our union offered to quickly resolve the contract for the EAs (and the two other MTEA units). Our offer to the district was a "me too" on the same health insurance changes and similar salary raises bargained for teachers.

### MPS Rejects EA Contract Offer

Discussions with key administrators prior to winter break did not resolve the EA contract. On the contrary, the district indicated that it has no intention of offering what was bargained in teacher talks to any other MPS unit.

### Key Issue: Employee Health Insurance Payments

Most private and public employees pay a "premium contribution" or "premium share" for their health insurance. Payments are often a percentage of the premium for the health insurance plan the employee selects.

In teacher contract talks, our union proposed and successfully bargained a unique approach to employee contributions for health insurance. Starting next school year, teachers will pay a share of the district's health insurance costs, based on their individual salaries - 1% for single coverage and 2% for family.

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### Expulsion Recommendation for Serious Safety Offenses

We sent two Sharpeners focused on discipline and safety to all MTEA members, including EAs, in December. Both issues included an explanation of the MPS policy and teacher contract provision which require an expulsion recommendation as the **minimum** disciplinary action for four, serious safety offenses: assault, battery, possessing a gun, and possessing a weapon (other than a gun).

This policy is in the MPS student rights and responsibilities handbook.

#### Clarification Needed

The December 3 Sharpener gave the correct information, but the December 14 issue contained a misleading explanation. The four serious offenses **always** require a recommendation for expulsion as the minimum action.

#### What Should Happen

When the school administration recommends expulsion, the student is placed on what's called a "CO" or "central office" suspension. The student remains out of school until a "CO" conference is held. As a result, the student could be reassigned to another school, instead of being expelled. Occasionally the hearing officer decides to limit the disciplinary action to a suspension.

#### EA Chairperson Can Help

Please ask your EA Chairperson for assistance immediately if there is a serious safety offense, but your school is not recommending expulsion.

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### Save Your MPS

#### Paycheck Statements

We recommend that you retain your biweekly MPS paycheck statements. Your records may be needed to correct an error in pay, sick leave accumulation, etc.

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Basing employee health insurance payments on salary is a progressive approach. Lower-paid employees pay less than higher-paid employees - similar to federal income taxes.

#### Salary-Based vs. Premium-Based

Whether based on salary or premium, employees pay a share of the district's health care costs out of their own paychecks.

However, when employees pay a percentage of their premium costs, many choose the lower cost health plan, as explained below.

#### Example Shows Difference

Here's an example of a paraprofessional who works 30 hours/week at the highest hourly rate, \$16.92, and needs family coverage. Suppose, for this example, employees have to pay 5% of the PPO premium for the PPO plan **or** 2.5% of the HMO premium for HMO coverage.

If this paraprofessional chooses the PPO plan, her biweekly deduction for health insurance would be \$67.12 a paycheck. If she chooses the HMO plan, her deduction would be \$22.07. With the difference of \$45 per paycheck, it's likely that she would choose the HMO plan.

On the other hand, if employee health insurance payments were based on the individual's earnings, her 9-day paycheck deduction would be \$20.30. She would have the same amount deducted whether she chooses the PPO or the HMO.

#### What's Next in EA Bargaining

At the January 25 bargaining session, the district's team is scheduled to present a comprehensive offer to our EA team. We anticipate the school board will propose that EAs pay a percentage of the premium for the health plan they choose. This would make paycheck deductions for health insurance more costly for EAs in the PPO plan.

Look for bargaining updates in Team-Mate and at [mtea.org](http://mtea.org).

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### If Your School Voted for Interviews

EAs at 129 MPS schools have voted to use the contractual interview process to fill vacancies at their school. We sent a list of 2010-11 interview schools to your EA Chairperson with this Team-Mate.

If your school is on the list, interviews will be used to fill EA vacancies. **No vote, no action is required!**

#### If Your School Did Not Vote for EA Interviews

If EAs at your school have not voted to use the contractual interview procedure, your school is **not** on the interview school list. To become an interview school, the contract requires four steps (see p. 18-19).

We sent EA Chairpersons an outline of the steps with this Team-Mate.

#### EA Interviews - Not the Same as Teachers

In the past, some schools confused the teacher vacancy interview process with the educational assistant interview process. The procedures are different and completely separate, under two different contracts.