

First Paycheck - September 18

EAs on the nine-day uniform pay schedule will receive their first check September 18. If you are not on the nine-day schedule, the first paycheck will cover five days.

Team-Mate Via E-Mail?

Did you know that you can receive a Team-Mate e-mail? In addition to rapid delivery, every issue will give you immediate access to timely, related information through links to the MTEA's and other Web sites.

You have two options to sign up: Go to mtea.org (Newsletters) or send us your home e-mail address on the enclosed "MTEA Member Data" sheet.

Try It - in Addition to the Paper Version

As we take steps to strengthen membership communication, you can determine what information is sent to you electronically. If you subscribe to receive Team-Mate via e-mail, you will continue to receive the paper version. You'll be able to compare the editions and see which works better for you.

Home E-Mail Please

Your home e-mail is our strong preference. It is not advisable for any union to rely on the employer's e-mail system to communicate with its members. Moreover, e-mails on the MPS system are public records.

However, it is legal for a member to receive Team-Mate via MPS e-mail. We know some members don't have access to home e-mail, and we'll use whatever e-mail address you provide.

Informed and Involved in 2009-10

Your union's collective strength starts with the commitment of each member. The enclosures provide ways for you to be better informed and more engaged in your union this school year.

Update on General EA Layoff

In June, when the school board adopted the 2009-10 MPS budget, the MPS administration failed to explain that its recommended cuts would result in yet another EA layoff. Without informing the board, MPS sent layoff notices (effective August 31, 2009) to 149 general EAs.

MTEA leaders sent letters to the nine school board members and talked with Board President Michael Bonds. Shortly after that, MPS informed your union that an error had been made and only 89 EAs should have been sent layoff notices. The district then notified 60 EAs they would **not** be laid off.

Value of EAs Voiced to School Board

Over the summer, union leaders and members have sent a key message to the school board: General educational assistants are highly qualified, experienced, and of great value to students and schools. At meetings and in personal contacts with board members, EAs have explained the important work they do each day and the positive influence they have on children.

No General EA Layoff Recommended

After hearing the moving testimony of MTEA leaders and members at its August 18 meeting, the school board's budget committee recommended two steps that would prevent the layoff of 89 general educational assistants this school year:

- ◆ Underfilling 33 paraprofessional vacancies.
- ◆ Restoring 56 general EA positions with \$1.5 million of the district's surplus funds.

Developing a Plan for Future Years

The committee also recommended that the MPS administration develop a training plan to address the long-range stability of EA positions in the future. The plan would be brought to the board in November.

In addition, when the committee learned that MPS has \$80,000 for handicapped children's assistant (HCA) position training, it recommended that interested EAs be allowed to receive the training.

Recommendations Approved by 5-2 Vote

Five board members voted to prevent laying off any general EAs: Peter Blewett, Michael Bonds, Terry Falk, Jeff Spence, and Annie Woodward.

Please continue on back...



Retirement Investment Options Vastly Improved

Seven years ago, your union investigated the tax-sheltered retirement investment products of the WEA Trust. We found the Trust offered high performing investment options, and as a non-profit vendor, its fees were extremely low, especially compared with for-profit companies. It was clear members could earn significantly more money for their retirement with Trust investments.

Long Time Coming

For years, MPS rejected MTEA proposals to add the WEA Trust as an authorized vendor. Finally, the district conducted a vendor RFP process last school year. The MTEA and other MPS unions participated in the process, which confirmed our previous findings.

On May 20, an agreement was reached to include the WEA Trust (and TIAA-CREF) as authorized vendors - in addition to ING and MetLife.

Information Flood

You will receive information galore this fall. MPS is mailing a 32-page booklet to all eligible employees and will hold a vendor fair. The four competing vendors will also take their own promotion steps - school visits, mailings, and more!

TDA = TSA = 403(b)

When you receive your 2009-10 MTEA DateBook, you'll find the four vendors listed as tax deferred annuities, TDAs. The district now uses the term, **MPS 403(b) Plan**, which is more appropriate, but both terms (and tax sheltered annuities, TSAs) are commonly used.

Correction in DateBook

Our DateBook lists Web sites for the four vendors, but the WEA Trust site has been changed to www.weabenefits.com.

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 (Events Calendar) or call us at 259-1990.

Continued from front...

Two members voted no: Tim Petersons and Bruce Thompson. The other two board members, Larry Miller and David Voeltner, did not attend.

Final Decision at August 27 Meeting

The committee's recommendations will be considered at the board's monthly meeting on Thursday, August 27. The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. in the MPS central office auditorium at 5225 West Vliet Street. It is a public meeting, but the public is not usually allowed to speak at the regular board meetings of the full nine-member board.

We believe a majority of school board members understand the value of their experienced and highly qualified employees - and will vote to avoid another layoff. **But, stay tuned, it's not over yet!**

Perspective on Mayoral Takeover

In 1998, Governor Tommy Thompson called a special session of the Legislature to enact a bill that would have replaced the Milwaukee School Board with an appointed three-member commission. The proposed legislation was defeated.

The May 22, 1998 Team-Mate presented "A Few Observations to Keep in Mind for the Future." Excerpts are reprinted below:

- ◆ MTEA and WEAC - staff lobbyists, elected leaders, and members - spent countless hours to defeat the takeover bills. These efforts were well-coordinated and absolutely essential. Those who question what they get from WEAC dues would be totally satisfied if they could have observed the MTEA/WEAC lobbying efforts during the past few weeks.
- ◆ Milwaukee legislators were outstanding in their defense of city educators. In response to relentless attacks on MPS, the Milwaukee delegation was articulate and impassioned in its support for the dedicated employees of MPS.
- ◆ While several negative measures were defeated, the Legislature did nothing to provide additional resources for MPS students. An effort was made to increase funding for summer school and after-school programs, but the focus of the debate was on blaming the school board, the system, the educators, etc. Underlying problems - such as poverty and inequity in funding - were not addressed.

MTEA Opposition to the 2009 Takeover Concept

Your union issued a press release when the news broke that the Mayor, the Governor, and the State Superintendent publicly endorsed mayoral control of MPS. The release outlined several reasons why the MTEA has consistently opposed any legislation that would eliminate the right of Milwaukeans to elect their school board representatives.

A copy of the release is at mtea.org. We also e-mailed it to over 2,000 MTEA members and leaders on August 14.

How Would Mayoral Control Impact You?

There are no answers to how a mayoral takeover might impact you, your working conditions, your contract, etc. Our attorneys have reviewed prior bills to change the state law, but cannot do a legal analysis until specific legislation is drafted.

This is a very serious matter, and we will keep you up-to-date.

