
More Recalls?

With Congress enacting the \$10 billion Education Jobs Fund on August 10, your union continues to work toward the goal of bringing all EAs and teachers 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.**

Your Mailbox Rights

The contract provides that a mailbox be designated for each EA in every building for the distribution of MTEA materials.

The purpose of this provision is to give you a set place to receive Team-Mate and other items. A mailbox may range from an independent structure to file folders.

If your school does not already provide mailboxes to assistants, your MEAA Educational Assistant Chairperson should bring this contract provision to the principal's attention.

First Paycheck - September 17

EAs on the nine-day uniform pay schedule will receive their first check September 17.

If you are **not** on the nine-day schedule, the first paycheck will cover five days.

Majority of Laidoff EAs Recalled

Last May, MPS sent layoff notices to **233** EAs - 139 generals and 95 paraprofessionals. Following last week's reassignment assembly, MPS reports that there are now **90** EAs on layoff - 71 general EAs (one voluntarily) and 19 paraprofessionals (including nine volunteers.)

Layoffs Used as Bargaining Ploy

The new MPS administration, led by Superintendent Gregory Thornton, has reported restoring 240 teacher jobs. This is half of the 482 teachers the prior administration laid off in June. The recalls were made before the school year started - in addition to EAs (and substitute teachers).

It's clear now that the prior administration *needlessly* laid off hundreds of employees.

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

Layoffs - Never Explained, Never Justified

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. Nor did it explain laying off over 500 substitutes.

The prior regime 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, your union's 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

MPS will face legitimate and substantial budget problems in 2011-12. 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

On the plus side, the new administration 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.



Your Negotiated Paid Personal Days Off

The MBSD/MTEA Educational Assistant Contract provides for a paid personal day off for eligible assistants each school year. The provision is summarized below:

- ◆ If you have 10 to 19 school years of service within the educational assistant unit and satisfactory attendance, you are entitled to one personal day off with pay each school year.
- ◆ With 20 or more years of service and satisfactory attendance, you receive two paid personal days each school year.
- ◆ For the purpose of eligibility, satisfactory attendance means that you are not required to provide a doctor's excuse for every day you are absent.
- ◆ Personal days off can be taken for any reason, but the scheduling must be approved by your immediate supervisor in advance - unless an unexpected emergency arises. In such cases, you should notify your supervisor promptly.
- ◆ If you do not take your personal day or days off, you may choose to be paid for the day(s) at your normal daily rate on the last paycheck of the school year or have the day(s) added to your sick leave accumulation.

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 Team-Mate.
- ___ 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.

Transport Students in Your Car? Just Say No!

You should not transport students in your car because of the risks. If an accident occurs, the primary coverage will be the responsibility of your personal auto insurance carrier. The School Board's liability insurance provides strictly "excess" coverage. As such, the Board will **not** pay for any claims unless your auto insurance coverage limits are exhausted. The fact that you are on authorized school business - such as taking home students who

missed their bus - does **not** relieve you of any responsibility if an accident occurs.

As MPS/school budgets get tougher each year, administrators look for ways to save money. But teachers transporting students is always ill-advised, and we strongly warn against it. **An emergency? Call 911. Missed bus?** Have the administrator call the parent and then, perhaps, a cab.