
Support for Improving MPS Student Achievement

It seems that every time you pick up a certain daily newspaper somebody from outside of MPS is talking about how to “reform” us. Wouldn’t it be great if an outside organization offered to work with the educators of our district, supporting the positives and assisting in the hard work of change?

The Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC) is doing exactly that. The GMC is an organization comprised of business, labor, academic, philanthropic, non-profit, and civic leaders. Its mission is to “keep Southeastern Wisconsin the best community to live, learn, work, and play.”

For over two years, the GMC has invested time and money in MPS. It served as a catalyst in developing a five-year plan for MPS – and funded the process. The GMC continues to support the plan this school year – the second year of implementation.

Who's Your Evaluator?

By contract, you must receive written notice of the name of your administrative evaluator(s) within 30 workdays of the start of the school year.

This fall's deadline is Thursday, **October 9**.

If you transfer to another school, you should receive this notice within 30 workdays of your reassignment.

Opening Up Communication Within MPS

There’s a communications gap in our district. Whether it’s implementing the MPS Strategic Plan, the latest DIFI edict, or the newspaper series on the Neighborhood Schools Initiative – educators and other staff members are often isolated and uninformed.

An Online Town Hall for MPS

This fall, a Web site will be established as one step toward connecting the MPS community through a variety of communication formats. The new site, called “Project X” because it is now a big unknown, will include blogs, video, forums and audio. The purpose is to help improve student achievement in MPS through communication.

Not the “Party Line”

Project X will provide a way for educators to share their views, concerns, questions, and criticisms of what’s going on in MPS. Success stories within classrooms, schools, and the system may be shared. (We all need to hear some good news!) But the problems will be aired. Frank discussion of issues (**not** personalities) is fair game.

Collaborative Effort – Not Top Down

Project X is being developed by representatives of the MTEA; the Administrators and Supervisors Council (ASC - a.k.a. the principals’ union; MPS; and GMC (see article to the left). The goal is open and honest dialog among employees – not management platitudes.

Your Ideas Are Welcome

This new communications source is intended to connect you to the rest of the MPS community. You can help shape the content **before** the site is launched (and after).

Send your suggestions for what you’d like to see and hear on Project X to omaharp@mtea.weac.org.

Health Insurance Open Enrollment

During September, you have the opportunity to switch health care plans. In most situations, **our union recommends the Aetna plan**. Two points to keep in mind:

1. Aetna Is the Better Plan - The Aetna plan provides more comprehensive coverage for you and your family - with the doctors and hospitals you choose. Aetna also pays better benefits in many key areas of care. When you compare the costs of the Aetna plan and the UnitedHealthcare HMO, you need to consider the financial impact of all of your family's medical needs, currently and in the future.

2. No Premium Cost - Whichever plan you have for 2008-09, there will be no premium deductions from your paycheck. The School Board will continue to pay 100% of the premium cost.



Health Care Cost Tips

Most members realize that your union has negotiated excellent health insurance benefits: comprehensive coverage; Board-paid premium; minimal out-of-pocket costs. And there are ways to reduce your out-of-pocket costs!

Wait for a Bill

With both the Aetna PPO and UnitedHealthcare HMO plans, there is a \$10 "co-pay" for some doctor visits. But you should **not** pay the \$10 during the visit (unless the office staff insists).

The main reason not to pay right away is that some doctor visits will not require a \$10 co-pay. For some visits, there will be no charge to you at all. Others will require an out-of-pocket payment, but **not** the \$10 co-pay.

Ask your doctor to submit the claim to your health insurance plan, and let Aetna or UHC process it **first**. If and when you get a bill, you should review it and pay only if it's correct.

This is the same advice if you need emergency or urgent care. Unless the medical provider requires up-front payment at the time of service, you should **wait for a bill**.

Talk to Your Doctor

Aetna participants are responsible for paying a deductible of up to \$100 per person per year. (This is limited to a maximum of three family members each year.)

If the deductible is charged for a visit to a doctor, chiropractor, physical therapist, or other medical provider you see regularly, you should ask **not** to be billed for any deductible amount.

Many doctors understand the hardship a \$100 deductible may cause for your family. They also value you as a patient with excellent insurance - which pays them well. Your doctor may be willing to not bill you for the deductible amount to help you, and keep you as a patient.

Paychecks for 2008-09

MPS pays educational assistants on a two-week holdback basis and only for the days actually worked – no pay in advance. The holdback means that the days you work during a pay period are not paid until the end of the next pay period, a full two weeks **later**.

For paycheck purposes, there are two groups of educational assistants – those on the uniform, 9-day schedule and those who are not. The MPS holdback system for paychecks affects both groups, but in different ways, as explained below.

If You Are on the 9-Day Pay Schedule

If you work 30, 32.5, 35, or 40 hours per week, you are on the 9-day pay schedule. Your first 9-day check will be **September 19**.

You will receive a 9-day check throughout the school year – with one exception which is explained below.

The two-week holdback at the start of the school year provides a cushion of days actually worked, enabling MPS to uniformly issue 9-day paychecks from September through December. However, unpaid days during the fall and early winter – such as convention days and winter recess – use up the cushion.

It is necessary to have one smaller paycheck to keep the holdback cushion for the rest of the school year. This year, there will be a 7-day check on December 26, 2008.

If You Are Not on the 9-Day Pay Schedule

If you are not on the 9-day pay schedule, each biweekly paycheck you receive covers the days you work during the two-week period which ends a full two weeks prior to the payday.

For example, there are six days of work and the Labor Day holiday during this year's first pay period which ends on September 5. Your first paycheck two weeks later, on **September 19**, will cover seven days, including Labor Day.

However, most of your paychecks during the school year will be for ten days – whenever there are two full weeks of school during a two-week payroll period.

As in the past, some paychecks will be smaller because of unpaid days off. Due to the winter recess, you will receive only a five-day paycheck on January 9, 2009 and on January 23. The May 1, 2009 paycheck will cover only four days because of spring break.

If Your Car Is Vandalized...

The educational assistant contract provides school board coverage for malicious damage to employee cars parked at school during school hours or while on school business. Motorcycles are also covered.

If your car is maliciously damaged, you should file a "Report of Auto Vandalism to Employee Auto" form, available in each school.

Do not have the auto damage repaired until **after** Cambridge Integrated Services Group, Inc., the school board's auto claims administrator, inspects the damage and authorizes repairs. If your car cannot be driven, call Cambridge immediately at 1-262-785-4100 to expedite a resolution.

You should contact an MTEA staff member at 259-1990 if your claim is denied or for questions about auto vandalism reimbursement.