

Longer Day: No Details at the Table

Your teacher bargaining team received few specifics when the School Board's team introduced its longer day goal on February. The only point the Board's negotiators made perfectly clear was the extra time was **NOT** intended for individual preparation and planning.

The Board's team was scheduled to present its longer day proposal at the March 19 bargaining session, but subsequently indicated it would not be prepared by then. (April 2 is still a possibility.)

Talk Not at the Table

However, the next information your team received was in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on March 16. The article reported that the MPS administration is holding three public hearings on its plans to use federal stimulus funds - including details on a longer school day.

The following are excerpts quoted from the article:

Superintendent William Andrekopoulos on Sunday called for using tens of millions of dollars in federal economic stimulus money "to disrupt the status quo" in Milwaukee Public Schools in a bid to increase student achievement.

Making school days for kindergarten through eighth grade longer by something less than an hour a day and pushing the entire MPS system to switch to a "year-round" schedule, in which summer vacation is shortened, were two of the ideas suggested by Andrekopoulos.

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Supporting Your Team

There are three steps you can take now to support your MTEA teacher bargaining team:

1. **Sign up at mtea.org for e-mail updates on contract talks**, if you have not done so already. We prefer your home e-mail.
2. **Sign up for e-mail communications from your school's MTEA Building Representative.**
3. **Attend the MPS session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 23** at the MPS Central Office, 5225 W. Vliet St. - to publicly voice what you know is needed to improve student achievement.

Why Sign Up for E-Mail Updates

Your team wants to keep you up-to-date; e-mail is the fastest, most convenient, and cost-effective means. Over 1,000 members have signed up for MTEA e-mail updates and have already received:

- ◆ The MTEA and School Board's proposals within four hours of the exchange on February 17.
- ◆ A brief four-question survey to rate how key MTEA and School Board proposals would impact student achievement. (Over 450 members have responded.)
- ◆ The dates and topics for the next four days of bargaining - along with an action alert (reprinted below).

Superintendent Bargains With Public Instead of Your MTEA Team

Superintendent Bill Andrekopoulos, instead of bargaining with your MTEA teacher bargaining team, has decided to take the discussions to the media and the public.

In today's (March 16) - see excerpts to the left) edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the superintendent discusses using federal stimulus money to **switch K-8 schools to a longer day**, and the **entire district to a year-round schedule**. (Excerpts from the article are reprinted in this newsletter.)

Both items are mandatory subjects of bargaining. The superintendent should have discussed these matters with your negotiations team first.

Instead, he scheduled public meetings to "provide information and get opinions" about these and other options MPS is considering for using federal stimulus money.

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Newspaper Article

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He also called for improving teaching quality by giving staff members more time to prepare for class and collaborate with other teachers and by providing teachers more training.

Andreopoulos said MPS elementary schools have changed their schedules to allow 90 minutes a day for reading and literacy instruction. But, he said, additional time is needed for math instruction.

The school day in MPS grade schools is six hours and 40 minutes, with teachers required to be on duty six hours and 50 minutes.

"We have a very short elementary day compared to our surrounding suburban districts," Andreopoulos said.

Bargaining Noted

The article did explain that such changes would require bargaining - in the following excerpt:

One major consideration will be the position of the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association, since almost all the changes are subject to the labor contract, and negotiations have just started on a new contract.

Tom Morgan, executive director of the union, expressed doubts Sunday about Andreopoulos' ideas.

As for lengthening the school day, "doing the same thing we're doing now, just doing it longer, isn't going to produce results."

Morgan said the union is seeking class size reductions and stronger policies on placing disruptive students into programs away from more serious students. He said if teachers didn't have to spend so much time on small numbers of kids "just going to school to disrupt things," they would get a lot more done in class.

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Wednesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m. at Marshall High School, 4141 N. 64th St.

Thursday, March 19, 6:30 p.m. at South Division High School, 1515 W. Lapham Blvd.

Monday, March 23, 6:30 p.m. at the MPS Central Office, 5225 W. Vliet St.

Action Needed!

Attend 1 or more of these public meetings to explain why your team's proposals are a better solution for helping students in MPS.

◆ **Small class sizes** will allow you to teach more effectively and reach students who need individual attention.

◆ **Reasonable student ratios** (caseloads) will allow guidance counselors, social workers, speech pathologists, nurses and librarians and other non-classroom professionals to serve students more effectively.

◆ **Administrative support with discipline** will support students who need extra help and attention, as well as benefit students who are ready to learn.

◆ **Individual planning and preparation time** will allow you to reflect on your teaching and develop rigorous and engaging lessons for your students.

◆ **Eliminating the residency requirement** will reduce teacher turnover and expand the pool of qualified applicants for teaching positions in MPS.

Why Sign Up for BR E-Mails

Your Building Representative's leadership is critical to involving the membership in negotiations support actions.

In the weeks ahead, your team may need swift action to support its efforts at the table. Your BR will be the key to mobilizing your faculty - and e-mail can be an invaluable tool.

Again, we prefer your home e-mail for BR contract communications.

Updates on EA Contract Talks

When Negotiations News went to press, your union's educational assistant bargaining team was meeting with the School Board's team. A quick reminder of a few facts.

◆ The contract between the School Board and the MTEA covering educational assistants expired on December 31, **2006**.

◆ EAs, some of the lowest paid employees in the district, have not received a raise for two years and three months.

◆ The last time the School Board's team met with the EA bargaining team was in mid-November, 15 weeks ago.

◆ Prior to the March 17 session, the Board's team had not yet made an initial salary offer.