

The Springfield Teacher

The UNITY newsletter of the Springfield Education Association 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109
TEL: 782-8300 FAX: 783-8812 E-mail: contact@seateachers.com Website: www.seateachers.com

President's Message

We can breathe a sigh of relief now that Governor Deval Patrick has announced the mid-term budget cuts will not affect this year's Chapter 70 money (education funding). However, this sigh will be short lived. The Governor also indicated he will recommend level funding for next year's budget. A level funded budget is tantamount to a cut. Even more worrisome is that he is considering giving cities and towns some flexibility in making their minimum legal required contribution to education.

We **ALL** need to call, write and/or e-mail Governor Patrick and our state representatives and senators (see last month's issue of *The Springfield Teacher* or go to our website at www.seateachers.com for contact information). We need to tell them that **not a single community who, in the past, failed to make its minimum legal required contributions to its schools should be given any flexibility** in making their minimum legal required contribution to education. Springfield did not meet its minimum requirement four out of the last six years as shown in the chart on page 4.

Our elected officials need to do everything in their power to recession-proof our children. For years, our elected officials have talked about how they support family values and educating our children is a priority. It's time to hold all the elected officials (federal, state, and local) accountable. It's time for them to put the money where their mouth is.



What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By: 

I've recently read (not studied) Dr. Ingram's "Entry Plan" and "Summary Report" for the Springfield Public Schools. Although there are some seeming discrepancies in reported data and some rather limited in number but nonetheless misleading outsourced reporting, it is an ambitious plan. This document outlines what Dr. Ingram refers to as the renaissance of the Springfield Public Schools. He rightly avers that a rebirth of the system is in order. There are many damaged pieces to the puzzle – hopefully none are lost. A call to all constituents to come to the aid of society's future is given throughout. Doctor Ingram, in his introduction to the executive summary, wishes for "...a new future in which every child has the same chance to achieve and succeed, in which there is a resurgence of parental involvement, a revitalization of effective teaching and a reawakening of broad, unshakable community support." This document outlines a hugely ambitious endeavor. The aforementioned three factors that if addressed properly will, according to plan, create a system that will improve academic proficiency, student attendance, high school graduation rate, and school safety. Let us analyze the three components of this renaissance: parental involvement; effective teaching; community support.

First, I'd like to state unequivocally that without the support systems delineated above, a highly functioning school system will not and cannot exist. Secondly, I agree wholeheartedly that microcosmically we as a district can positively affect the youth in Springfield – educationally, emotionally, and morally – but there are limits. My issue is primarily with the larger picture. This is not to discount the local misconceptions as to what should be done to right the ship of education.

Parental involvement: Have you checked the economic picture lately (like the past thirty or more years in Springfield)? Life is not easy. With a poverty level hovering near eighty percent in the city, parents have little time or means to get to the schools. To bring the schools to the parents will cost money the city will not have. There is also a relatively large pool of transient families attending school here. Some are internally transient (moving within the city and therefore from school to school) and some simply come and go from without. Single parent households abound. Data on dropout rates consider a youngster a dropout if he/she does not graduate from the high school they first attend four years later. (Begin at Commerce finish at Central and you my friend are a dropout!) Parental involvement is probably the key to student success and we must get extremely creative if we are to make strides here.

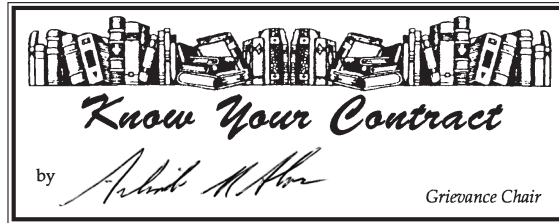
Effective teaching: Dr. Ingram calls for a "revitalization of effective teaching." This begs the questions: What or who killed effective teaching? Or, has effective teaching in fact died? Does putting everyone in a particular discipline and grade level on the same page at the same time adversely affect teaching/learning? Are lesson plan banks a failure proof means of ensuring effective teaching – we know that all kids can learn to make cookies as long as they are given a cookie cutter? Does having thirty or more students in a regular education classroom and having consistently understaffed Special Education classes allow teachers to more effectively teach? It's like playing the odds at a rifle range – the more targets, the better the chance of hitting something. Remember! A three percent referral rate is what we're aiming for – we must get closer to the State average. After all, the last I heard Longmeadow was penalized for not reaching the SPED referral rate average. The State average is 16.9%. Springfield Public Schools hover around twenty percent. Logic tells us that an urban school district with all the perils of toxic metals and inadequate safe housing should be on a par with more affluent cities. Solution: scrape lead paint from the tenements, shape the shavings to resemble potato chips and the spread them around the suburbs. Sooner or later the SPED referral rates may be more in line. DOES ANYONE UNDERSTAND WHAT AN AVERAGE MEANS? Let's appoint a control board to suppress wages to the point of creating a mass exodus not seen since the parting of the Red Sea. According to the report, I come up with approximately 350-400 non-certified teachers in the classroom today. Hopefully the revitalization of effective teaching will come to mean: retention of new, competent hires; competitive wages and benefits; a return to academic freedom, a move toward the number one positive factor for student success – lower class size; true student support; and true educator support.

Community support: The community is really all of us. The subgroups I will address are the politicians and industry leaders. These subgroups comprise the macro piece of the puzzle and the most difficult to fight. Things like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) come from these groups. An economy that rewards a very few for mostly speculative "work" and allows so many to struggle to make ends meet (not always succeeding) creates an environment difficult to change. The "haves" have stolen the democratic process through media intervention and high stakes elections. I have to stop here before I get really wound up. If we are to truly have a renaissance, reality must change nationally. This is the hard fight. We must be organized and willing to put in the time. We can accomplish much in-house, but will never attain real success until some very entrenched practices/institutions are dealt with. Well, let's just deploy the troops to keep our customers happy.

Speaking of time to accomplish our tasks and willingness to organize around issues, I have a question. How did you all enjoy the last SEA social? I'm talking to the forty or so who attended! Remember, we will begin negotiating a new Contract before you know it. We need to show the strength and resolve to see it through.

Keep Smiling,

Peter J. Reese



School Department E-mail System

Over the past few months, the number of teachers e-mailing the SEA office from their SPS accounts has increased. The SEA encourages teachers who wish to contact our office via e-mail to use their personnel e-mail account rather than their SPS account.

The Springfield School Department provides its employees with an SPS e-mail address and access to the network which utilizes those addresses. The intention of this system is to support education and facilitate communications relevant to the effective education of the students in the district.

The Springfield Public Schools website, in the sub category District Plans and Policies: Acceptable Policy, clearly states, "Users should not have an expectation of privacy or confidentiality." The School Department considers e-communications and files in the same category as lockers and therefore subject to being open and searched by administration. This policy further states, "Electronic messages...may be inspected by appropriate school administrators."

To insure the confidentiality of your correspondence with our office we strongly urge our members not to use their SPS accounts when e-mailing the SEA. We also recommend that teachers not use their SPS accounts for personnel business.

If You Suspect Abuse: Dealing With Department of Children & Families

Massachusetts State Law designates all teachers to be mandated reporters of evidence of abuse and neglect. If you suspect a child is the victim of abuse or neglect, you **must** report it to the proper authorities.

According to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, Section 51A, "Any...public or private school teacher, educational administrator, guidance or family counselor, ...or any person paid to care for or work with a child in any public or private facility...who, in his professional capacity shall have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of eighteen years is suffering serious physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon him...or from neglect, shall immediately report such condition to the department by oral communication and by making a written report within forty-eight hours after such oral communication."

The law continues, "whenever such a person so required to report is a member of the staff of a ...school...he shall immediately either notify the department or notify the person in charge of such...school, whereupon such person in charge or his said agent shall then become responsible to make the report in the manner required by this section."

In other words, a **teacher's** legal responsibility is to report the suspected neglect or abuse to the principal. It is the **principal's** responsibility, according the law, to file the report with the DCF. Any oral and written communication with DFC should be initiated by the principal, not the teacher(s) who reported the suspicions of abuse.

If you report to your principal you suspect a student is suffering from abuse or neglect, your principal may request that you fill out the report because you are most familiar with the circumstances, but the report should be signed by the principal, not you or any other teacher. That way, the principal will be designated as the contact person for DCF. Also, that helps you maintain your anonymity. If your principal insists that you sign the report, call me at the SEA office (782-8300).

Actual vs. Minimum Required Local Contribution, Hampden County Districts, FY2003 - FY2008

Lea District	FY2003			FY2004			FY2005		
	Minimum Required Local Contribution	Actual Local Contribution	Actual/Minimum Required	Minimum Required Local Contribution	Actual Local Contribution	Actual/Minimum Required	Minimum Required Local Contribution	Actual Local Contribution	Actual/Minimum Required
281 Springfield	27,804,658	28,513,019	103%	26,150,281	24,328,991	93%	28,075,949	28,760,504	102%
5 Agawam	18,630,116	20,503,779	110%	19,493,735	25,603,874	131%	20,437,232	24,287,890	119%
43 Brimfield	1,183,307	1,737,069	147%	1,245,362	1,979,487	159%	1,266,540	2,071,655	164%
61 Chicopee	23,168,041	23,227,834	100%	23,330,217	24,180,330	104%	24,202,767	24,766,775	102%
87 East Longmeadow	13,258,630	16,750,701	126%	14,419,630	16,837,354	117%	15,426,120	18,449,016	120%
112 Granville	1,055,256	1,443,163	137%	1,084,381	1,302,527	120%	1,115,936	1,375,758	123%
135 Holland	964,040	1,145,613	119%	955,162	1,388,531	145%	945,947	1,414,344	150%
137 Holyoke	6,582,891	12,907,871	196%	6,433,459	16,850,607	262%	6,445,683	13,985,793	217%
159 Longmeadow	19,203,423	21,440,149	112%	19,390,604	21,732,774	112%	20,153,680	22,775,976	113%
161 Ludlow	11,365,067	13,014,542	115%	11,721,697	13,949,315	119%	12,259,723	14,200,227	116%
191 Monson	4,012,663	4,265,761	106%	4,072,152	4,250,714	104%	4,252,521	4,516,194	106%
227 Palmer	4,509,630	5,980,037	133%	4,649,468	5,976,102	129%	4,848,619	5,926,649	122%
306 Wales	536,314	649,144	121%	540,841	705,734	130%	554,024	741,438	134%
325 Westfield	18,365,237	22,873,221	125%	18,681,119	22,410,991	120%	19,402,210	22,788,066	117%
332 West Springfield	16,221,326	18,912,708	117%	16,776,774	20,402,899	122%	16,936,153	20,404,254	120%
680 Hampden Wilbraham	15,585,853	17,457,818	112%	16,102,911	18,427,399	114%	16,937,309	19,571,072	116%
766 Southwick Tolland	4,695,093	4,903,653	104%	4,988,161	5,533,402	111%	5,251,378	5,670,993	108%
860 Pathfinder	3,011,256	3,713,050	123%	2,937,331	4,445,605	151%	2,961,582	4,458,785	151%
Hamden County district (excluding Springfield)			118%			123%			120%

Minimum required local contribution includes any required carryover of required net school spending from previous year
 Actual/budgeted local contribution = actual/budgeted net school spending minus Chapter 70 aid

Note: Several Hampden County municipalities are members of Gateway and Tantasqua. Gateway is located in Hampshire County, while Tantasqua is located in Worcester County. Therefore, these two districts are excluded from the list of Hampden County districts.

Source: Computed from Department of Education data
<http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/schfin/Chapter70/profile.xls>

Online Professional Learning Courses

MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice is offering the following online courses:

- "Better Beginnings for New Teachers"
- "Differentiating Instructional Practices"
- "Developing a Standards-based Unit of Instruction"
- "Creating Performance Assessment Tasks"

For more information and to register, contact Beverly Eisenman at 1-800-392-6175 ext. 8362 or by e-mail at beisenman@massteacher.org.

Spring is Coming!

It is time for Home Improvements!

Contact me for free estimates for all Home Improvement projects. I have successfully provided a full range of projects, i.e., complete household renovations, kitchen and bath, replacement windows, flooring - ceramic tile and wood, expert finish carpentry, crown moldings, painting, decks, and much more! Think you cannot afford it?

Think again!

I give Teacher Discounts. I have references from your peers and they are available upon request.

Please call Ron at: 508-577-2838

FY2006			FY2007			FY2008		
Minimum Required Local Contribution	Actual Local Contribution	Actual/Minimum Required	Minimum Required Local Contribution	Actual Local Contribution	Actual/Minimum Required	Minimum Required Local Contribution	Budgeted Local Contribution	Budgeted/Minimum Required
28,100,362	17,640,804	63%	40,743,318	40,384,755	99%	32,029,320	31,345,103	98%
21,493,837	27,080,188	126%	22,041,666	27,996,223	127%	21,602,566	28,344,961	131%
1,222,310	2,275,992	186%	1,181,088	2,066,335	175%	1,254,545	2,274,771	181%
25,483,093	25,639,338	101%	26,441,283	27,626,186	104%	26,325,951	26,511,216	101%
16,081,730	19,095,253	119%	16,113,527	18,822,543	117%	15,537,297	18,630,301	120%
1,168,273	1,562,971	134%	1,185,776	1,701,418	143%	1,206,660	1,807,417	150%
887,960	1,530,324	172%	867,451	1,427,067	165%	838,841	1,593,391	190%
6,811,798	13,172,316	193%	7,289,305	11,322,955	155%	7,637,734	8,824,371	116%
20,812,705	24,657,815	118%	21,048,279	24,392,618	116%	21,094,587	25,476,241	121%
13,063,961	15,037,739	115%	13,513,577	15,575,401	115%	13,594,068	16,347,236	120%
4,551,198	4,757,222	105%	4,838,959	4,888,187	101%	4,984,969	5,308,293	106%
5,150,016	7,197,238	140%	5,491,599	7,265,799	132%	5,686,758	7,003,336	123%
551,254	886,588	161%	542,623	979,200	180%	568,369	1,031,122	181%
20,368,440	25,375,135	125%	21,748,478	25,589,561	118%	22,572,618	25,938,186	115%
18,106,441	21,810,659	120%	18,598,514	20,519,330	110%	18,707,901	21,873,120	117%
17,817,946	20,971,319	118%	18,371,310	21,502,754	117%	18,507,813	21,931,303	118%
5,574,268	6,050,035	109%	5,990,969	6,629,220	111%	6,442,013	8,045,244	125%
2,786,084	4,308,492	155%	2,722,408	4,294,325	158%	2,973,205	4,618,763	155%
		122%			118%			119%

Poisoned Profits - The Toxic Assault on Our Children

The MTA Environmental Health & Safety Committee invites you to meet Philip and Alice Shabecoff, the authors of this powerful and insightful book.

Poisoned Profits is about the mounting evidence of birth defects, cancer, autism, and other serious illnesses in baby boomers and their children related to environmental toxins. Cases such as the school in Port Neches, Texas, dubbed “Leukemia High,” is examined in their book. Alice and Philip Shabecoff will discuss ways that you can organize and fight back as well as tips on reducing the risks in your own family.

The meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 18, 2009 from 3:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. at the MTA Office, 55 Bobala Road, Holyoke, MA. Space is limited. RSVP no later than February 10, 2009 by e-mailing Anne Marie Kelly at akelley@massteacher.org. A light dinner will be served.

Thank you,
Debra Askwith

NEW ENGLAND CONSULTING SERVICE

GRADUATE COURSES FOR EDUCATORS

3 Graduate Credits

67.5 PDP's

4.5 CEU's in 5 classes

Teaching the Struggling Reader — Part I

Course number — PRDV 77219

Instructor: **Michael Smist**

This course is appropriate for all K —12 educators

FIVE SATURDAYS

March 1, 8, 15, 29

April 6, 2009

For information and registration call:
(239) 498-9451 or (413) 596-3309

Attention: Educators on Waivers

Circle **March 13, 2009** on your calendar. If Springfield Public Schools' Human Resource Department (HR) personnel have applied to the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) for a waiver on your behalf, it is critical that you send three pieces of evidence of continuous progress to Bonnie Roy at the HR Department - Central Office by this date – March 13, 2009.

Evidence consists of proof of MTEL tests taken or documentation of appropriate college courses. If you have not completed the course or have registered for a summer course, documentation of either or both of these situations is considered proof of continuous progress.

However, please don't wait until this date to send the three pieces of evidence to HR. **START THE PROCESS IMMEDIATELY.** You are your best advocate!

Other licensure tips:

- Whenever you send documentation anywhere, always make a copy of it.
- Store all your licensure information and documentation in one place: in a file cabinet, an accordion file holder, or a 3-ring binder.
- When you call the DOE or HR for advice and licensure counseling, document the date and the name of the person to whom you spoke and all the information you have been given. If you don't understand the information, keep asking questions until you do understand it. Always file this newly acquired information with your other licensure documentation.
- Always get an advisor at the college you attend for coursework. **ALWAYS** ask this: Will this college program, get me to the next level of licensure?
- Need help with the MTEL? Go to amazon.com and look for **The Best Teachers' Test Prep for MTEL (REA)**. This prep book is sold by Borders teamed with Amazon.com. Teachers in the district have given the prep books good reviews.

If you have any questions, please contact Mary Chamberlain at mchamberlain@massteacher.com. Please put licensure in the subject line.

A Special Kudos

A special kudos to the following schools that were represented at the SEA Social held on January 21, 2009 at the John Boyle O'Reilly Club: Balliet, Bowles, Chestnut, ECOS, Ells, Forest Park, Harris, Indian Orchard, Johnson, Kennedy, Kiley, Liberty, Milton Bradley, New Leadership, Putnam, SAFE, Sci Tech, Sumner, Talmadge, Van Sickle, and Walsh! **Congratulations to Ells! They had the highest percentage of teachers in attendance at the Social and won \$100 for their school!** It was an evening of fun, laughter, and camaraderie.



Read Across America

In May 1997, a small reading task force at NEA came up with a big idea. "Let's create a day to celebrate reading," the group decided. "We hold pep rallies to get kids excited about football. We assemble to remember that Character Counts. Why don't we do something to get kids excited about reading? We'll call it 'NEA's Read Across America' and we'll celebrate it on Dr. Seuss' birthday." And so was born on March 2, 1998, the largest celebration of reading this country has ever seen.

NEA's Read Across America is a motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2. NEA's Read Across America also provides NEA members, parents, caregivers, and children the resources and activities they need to help to keep reading on the calendar 365 days a year. Go to www.nea.org/readacross for resources and activities.

On March 2, 2009, the National Education Association is calling for every child to be reading in the company of a caring adult.

REMINDER EXTENDED DAY

There is an extended day every week, even on weeks during which we work fewer than five days. The School Centered Decision Making (S.C.D.M.) Team in each school determines the day of the week on which the extended day will occur, but not on Friday or the day before a holiday or school vacation. The S.C.D.M. team also determines an alternate day in the event the extended day falls on (or the day before) a holiday, vacation and/or snow day.

There may be occasions where a double extended day is being contemplated. Double extended days can be set only by the S.C.D.M. team and then **only after approval is received from BOTH the Superintendent of Schools AND the President of the SEA.** **The request for approval must come from the S.C. D.M. Team.**

Any request for a double extended day program must be made, in writing, by the S.C.D.M. Team to both the Superintendent and the President of the SEA. The written request should detail the nature of the program to be conducted and an explanation as to why the double extended day is necessary for the successful implementation of the program.

The double extended day policy is written in the Springfield Public School's *Policies and Procedures Reference Manual*, page 23.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

Proposed amendments to the bylaws shall be submitted in writing prior to 5:00 P.M. on March 16, 2009 to the Committee on Bylaws, SEA Office.

Proposed amendments to the bylaws, submitted by individual members, shall be reviewed, and, if necessary, combined and/or edited without substantive change by the Bylaws Committee and then submitted to the membership at the Annual Meeting.

The Bylaws Committee shall, within 30 days of taking action on a proposed amendment, issue a report of its action to the submitter of the amendment.

Prior to the March deadline, the committee will make reasonable effort to assist interested members in achieving their intent so that proposals are legally worded and are consistent with other sections of the bylaws.

The Bylaws Committee shall recommend to the Annual Meeting procedures for consideration of amendments to the bylaws.

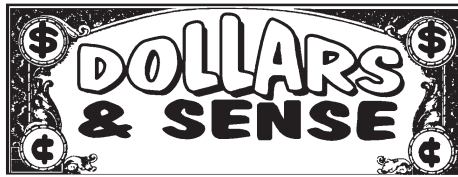
All bylaws must be in accordance with MTA-NEA bylaws.



Meline Kasparian Scholarship

The SEA Scholarship Committee wishes to announce the availability of applications for the Meline Kasparian Scholarship Fund. **To be eligible for this scholarship one must be related to an SEA member.** Up to five \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded. **The deadline for completed applications is May 1, 2009.**

If you would like an application, one can be downloaded from the SEA web site at www.seateachers.com or please send a self-addressed envelope, along with your request to: Springfield Education Association, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109, or stop by the office.



SEA/MTA/NEA
Dues for Year 2008

January – June	13 Pay Periods @ \$32.69 = \$424.97
August – December	9 Pay Periods @ \$34.00 = <u>\$306.00</u>
	\$730.97

2008 – 2009 MTEL Tutorial Schedule

*Open to SPS Teachers, Long-Term Subs
and Paraprofessionals*

No Registration Required

**Locations Will Be Announced
60 Alton Street, Springfield, MA
From 4:00 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.**

Each session will cover Communication & Literacy, English Language Learners, General Curriculum, and Foundations of Reading. Currently, Math tutorial sessions have only been scheduled for the November dates posted below. Additional dates for Math tutorial sessions are contingent upon funding. Test dates are in all five areas. For updates and to obtain additional information, go to <http://sps.springfield.ma.us/>. If you have any further questions, call Mariola Niedzwiadek at 413-787-6575.

SCHEDULE OF TUTORIAL SESSIONS 2009

TEST: **March 7**

Tutorial: February 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
March 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

TEST: **May 9**

Tutorial: April 27, 28, 29, 30
May 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

TEST: **July 11**

Tutorial June 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

MTA/NEA Conventions 2009

The MTA Convention will be held May 1 and 2, 2009, in Boston and the NEA Convention will be held in San Diego, CA from July 1 – July 6, 2009. Self-nomination forms may be downloaded from our web site at www.seateachers.com or please see an Association Representative in your building for the forms. These forms are **due at the SEA office before 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, February 25, 2009**. A sample ballot listing all candidates will be posted in each building from March 2 to March 9. Elections will be held in all buildings on March 9 and 10, 2009 during extended day.

ATTENTION ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

The Special Meeting for Elementary Association Representatives and SEA members that was cancelled due to inclement weather has been rescheduled for Wednesday, March 4, 2009 at 4:15 P.M. in the SEA office meeting room.

A blast e-mail announcing the new date was sent on February 3 to all members in elementary schools who have provided the SEA with their personal e-mail address. In the event you did not receive the e-mail, please visit the SEA website at www.seateachers.com and click on events for more information.

Mark Your Calendar With This New Date!

Attention New Teachers!

There are approximately twenty-three teachers hired in the 2008 – 2009 school year who have not completed the paperwork necessary to join the SEA. It is condition of employment in Springfield that Unit A employees join the SEA, pay the Agency Service Fee or be suspended for five consecutive school days without pay – see Article 24 Section A of the *Agreement Between The Springfield School Committee And The Springfield Education Association*.

There are many services and benefits available only to SEA/MTA/NEA members (www.mtabenefits.com). One of the most valuable, and unfortunately often needed when a member least expects it, is the free legal services for advice and/or legal representation in instances of: dismissal or suspension under the Education Reform Act of 1993, child abuse charges filed with the Department of Children & Families, being assaulted at work, employment discrimination, violation of your civil rights as an employee, and other legal issues you may encounter with unemployment benefits, retirement benefits and workers' compensation, etc.

SEA/MTA/NEA members are covered by an insurance policy in the event you are sued in connection with your employment under terms specified in the Educators Employment Liability Policy. SEA/MTA also provides its members access to reduced-fee legal services for non-employment legal issues as well as discounts on auto and homeowners insurance.

These are only a few, but probably the most important benefits, you are entitled to as an SEA member.

See an Association Representative in your building or stop by the SEA TODAY for a membership application.



MTA Short and Long Term Disability Program Open Enrollment

Begins February 2009

The annual MTA Disability Program's Open Enrollment is here once again. Open enrollment allows members to sign up for valuable income protection with no medical questions. All coverage is Guarantee Issue during open enrollment for MTA members. For further information go to www.mtabenefits.com or call 1-888-636-0112, ext. 200.

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SEA E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Timothy Collins

contact@seateachers.com

Charlene Lonczak

clonczak@seateachers.com

Success Press

successpress@seateachers.com

Arlindo Alves

aalves@seateachers.com

Sandra Forni-Torres

sfornitorres@seateachers.com

E-mail General Information

or Questions to:

contact@seateachers.com