

The Springfield Teacher

The UNITY newsletter of the Springfield Education Association 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109
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President's Message

I want to thank those teachers who, on very short notice, attended the rally on February 22, 2011 in support of Wisconsin workers and all of our rights to collective bargain.

Unions are not the cause of this economic crisis. If it wasn't for union movement, this country would not have child labor laws, the forty-hour work week, health care, occupational health and safety laws, equal pay for equal work, minimum wage, and a middle class.

What is needed in this country today is living-wage jobs especially in communities like Springfield where unemployment and under-employment are the major causes of the struggles the city is facing.

As for unions being the problem in education, Massachusetts has the highest percentage of unionized education workers and our students are number one on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The students who perform worst on the NAEP are from "right to work states" where educators are prohibited to collective bargain.

There are several bills pending in the legislature that, if passed, will limit our collective bargaining over health insurance. Each and every one of these bills does nothing to reduce the cost of health insurance. They simply shift the cost of health insurance from cities and towns to the employees and retirees.

Health insurance in the commonwealth is a budget buster for everyone, both public and private employers and employees. Health insurance costs have been escalating three to four times that of inflation. What we need is a single payer health plan and get the money changers (for profit insurance companies) out of the business. The lack of such a program, a single payer health plan, has been a handicap for the manufacturing industry in the United States. These companies are competing with companies from Canada, Germany, South Korea, Japan, and many other countries where the cost of health insurance is not part of the cost of their finished products because they have some form of single payer health insurance plans.

We all need to be vigilant and not allow short-sighted politicians, pandering to the wealthy, to turn back the clock and eliminate the middle class in this country. We all need to speak up for what is right and just for all the people in our communities.

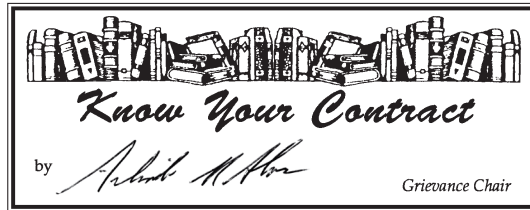


OVERPAYMENT

The District informed the SEA they mistakenly overpaid 1,451 teachers by moving them ahead on the salary schedule two steps instead of one.

The first action the SEA took was to check with MTA Legal to determine what the legal obligation of the overpaid teachers is. MTA Legal informed SEA that teachers who were overpaid have a legal obligation to repay the overpayment. The District has an obligation to negotiate with the SEA as to how the overpayment is to be accomplished.

The SEA will do everything in its power to give the affected teachers options that will minimize the impact of the repayment plan on teachers.



LEAVES OF ABSENCE

In the course of a typical day I receive e-mails and phone calls from teachers regarding various issues. I would like to share some of these issues and explain how the contract addresses the concerns.

Classroom Coverage

Article 5-F.3: “If a substitute is not available, K-12, the Administrator will first attempt to assign an available teacher during said teacher’s preparation period....”

In other words, when classes need coverage by teachers within a building because no substitute is available, that coverage will be provided by teachers assigned during their preparation time. Those teachers so assigned will be compensated for the time lost. As with other teachers, Title I and Special Education teachers can be assigned to cover classes, for compensation, during their preparation time when substitutes are unavailable. Similarly, teachers must be assigned to cover Title I and Special Education classes when those teachers are absent and no substitute is available. No teacher, including Title I and Special Education teachers, can be taken from his/her students (that is, the classroom is shut down for the day and students are sent to other classrooms) and reassigned to a class that does not have substitute coverage. Further, a teacher cannot be required to combine his/her class with another class to provide coverage for the day, nor can any teacher who is teamed with another teacher be required to cover the entire class alone during his/her teaching partner’s absence.

Meetings with Principals

Article 21-B: “A teacher will be notified in advance, in writing, of the purpose of meeting with an administrator in cases where disciplinary action is contemplated, and shall be entitled to have Association representation. The administrator shall exercise reasonable discretion in disciplining a teacher....When a principal or supervisor must talk with teachers in regard to events unacceptable to the principal or supervisor, those discussions shall not occur in the presence of parents, pupils, teachers, or non-professional employees.”

In the event that an administrator believes the actions of a teacher warrant an investigation, then, in accordance with *Article 21-B of the Agreement Between The Springfield School Committee And The Springfield Education Association*, the administrator should act in the following manner:

- A) The administrator will set up a meeting with the teacher by providing reasonable advance notice to the teacher in writing. The notice is to include the purpose of the meeting.
- B) The teacher is to be informed of his/her right to have Association representation present.
- C) The meeting is to be private and confidential between the administrator and the teacher, with the Association Representative present if so desired by the teacher.

If the administrator requests a meeting with you and does not give you the purpose for the meeting, then you need to ask the administrator the following questions:

1. Is the purpose of the meeting of a disciplinary nature? If the answer is **Yes**, you should have Association Representation. If the answer is **No**, you should ask the following question.
2. Can this meeting lead to disciplinary action? If the answer is **Yes**, you should have Association Representation at the meeting.

Similarly, if the administrator wishes to meet with the teacher in response to concerns expressed by parents, students or others, the above procedure should be followed. No meeting that could result in disciplinary action is to take place in the presence of parents, pupils, other teachers, or non-professional employees.

What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By 

It's heating up out there! Never mind the Middle East and northern Africa, how about Wisconsin? For all the complaining I've aimed at democrats, finally a group of Wisconsin democrat legislators left the state in support of working men and women. The people were in the street – not only in Wisconsin but in many other locales too. Our brothers and sisters came out across the country to show solidarity. The rumblings of change (real change) are slowly emanating from the epicenter of organized labor to the main streets of our cities. I hope the news from Egypt, Libya et al, that long suppressed groups of citizenry, are taking the tenets of democracy as true hope leads the workers of the U.S. to wake up and demand an end to the oppressive tactics of the ruling class. I hope too that the citizens of this country take to the polls at every opportunity and oust the politicians who kowtow to their campaign contributors. Those contributors who are driving a lethal wedge between the workers and the wealthy elite cannot be allowed to rule the legislative halls of our country any longer. Together we must work to save organized labor. Those who came before us to fight for decent living/working conditions, many of whom were slain in the streets where they protested for the dignity of humanity, mustn't be forgotten.

The harsh measures being sought by the Republican legislators and governor of Wisconsin are not isolated attacks. There are bills in many state capitol buildings that are aimed directly at union busting, benefit reduction, collective-bargaining restrictions, etc. Even in Massachusetts, there are attempts to roll back the clock of the workers' struggle. We must be diligent. We're being asked to pay for the downturn in the economy so the wealthiest of our country may continue to enjoy their lifestyle. We must defend every right we currently have to the nth degree – at the polls and in the workplace. We must also strike out on the offensive demanding a real seat at the table of democracy. Our power resides in our numbers and more importantly: in the fact that what we seek in working conditions is not to be realized by the few, but to become universals in all areas of labor; we do not wish to replace the elitists at the top of the food chain. We fight not only for the advancement of organized labor but for all labor.

As teachers, we've been taking it on the chin for quite some time now. The opposition's attack is under full steam. It was very encouraging to see so many concerned colleagues show up on short notice to Springfield's City Hall (during February vacation) in support of our fellow workers. A number of different unions were present which showed our enemies that we can be a cohesive force with which to do battle! I hope we will all continue to read, write, talk, march, demand, vote, educate, etc. until no one in power can even blow his/her nose without considering its effect on the workers of this land.

Keep Smiling

Peter J. Reese
Vice President

2011 School Committee Meetings

It is extremely important all SEA members attend the School Committee meetings in order to stay abreast of what is going on with your profession in the city and to gain an understanding of how the committee works in the event we need to lobby its members.

Thursday, March 17, 2011	Working Session	6:00 P.M. School Department
Thursday, April 7, 2011	Middle School Reps. Regular Session	6:00 P.M. 6:30 P.M. City Hall, Room 220
Thursday, May 5, 2011	High School Reps. Regular Session	6:00 P.M. 6:30 P.M. City Hall, Room 220
Thursday, May 19, 2011	Chapter 74 Vocational Com	6:00 P.M. Putnam, 1300 State St.
Thursday, June 2, 2011	Speak Out Regular Session	6:00 P.M. 6:30 P.M. City Hall, Room 220
Thursday, June 16, 2011	Retirees Recognition	7:00 P.M. Duggan Middle School 1015 Wilbraham Road

School Committee Meeting minutes and agendas are posted on the sps website. Go to, <http://sps.springfield.ma.us/schoolcommittee.asp> to view and/or download the documents.

KEYS UPDATE

It's been a year since the NEA KEYS survey was administered. After the results became available, the expectation was for each school to have a team analyze and interpret the data, present it to the staff and incorporate some part of it into the School Improvement Plan. If your school has not had the opportunity to do this because of other demands placed on your school by the district, testing, etc., it is now time to prepare for next year. Please talk to your administrator, the ILT, and SCDM Committee to ensure time is allotted for NEA KEYS in the schedule for the 2011-2012 school year.

This year the schools have looked at student data and OHI data as part of the Springfield Improvement Framework. Looking at the staff's school climate data from KEYS would provide the triangulation necessary when working with other data. SEA leadership will be talking at the district level to ensure that the district supports the allotment of time for this venture.

The NEA KEYS survey is a wonderful tool to practice and integrate collaboration into a school's culture. There are a few things that need to happen for the process to be truly collaborative. The collaborative process includes looking at data, coming to consensus, and narrowing the focus by a joint labor/management team. The KEYS team also needs to create and sustain a feedback loop back to the rest of the faculty for the purpose of asking the question, "Did we get it right?" The feedback loop ensures that all voices are heard in order to increase ownership and buy-in.

This collaborative process takes time as it is not a quick fix to challenges in the school environment. It proves the old adage that it is necessary to go slow in order to go fast. The team needs 10-12 hours to analyze and interpret the data and plan the roll-out to staff. The roll-out to staff for feedback takes 2-3 hours. At this point in the process, the team needs to create an action plan that will end up in the school improvement plan, again with input and feedback from the rest of the staff.

If you have any questions about KEYS, e-mail the SEA at contact@seateachers.com. Please type "KEYS" in the subject line of the email.

REMINDER!
MTA Licensure Workshops

Appropriate for all educators who hold Temporary, Preliminary, or Initial stage licenses or who are working under waivers.

Join us and learn about:

- Regulatory requirements covering licensure and the ‘highly qualified’ requirement of federal ESEA/NCLB
- How a teacher moves through the stages of licensure from Preliminary to Initial to Professional license

When: Thursday, March 31, 2011
4:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

Where: SEA Office
1000 Wilbraham Road

How: The workshop is limited to 50 educators.
Therefore, you must register!

Register by e-mailing Mary Chamberlain at Mchamberlain@massteacher.org. Type “Licensure Workshop” in subject line. Include your name and school in the e-mail.

Additional workshops will be offered in March and May and will be announced on the sea website, www.seateachers.com, and in *The Springfield Teacher*.

New Teacher Webinars

MTA’s Center for Education Policy and Practice has posted their New Teacher webinar offerings. The webinars are open to MTA members. The sessions are designed to address new teacher concerns at appropriate times throughout the first year of practice. The offerings for the spring 2011 are:

- Establishing Classroom Routines
March 22, 24
- Managing Student Behavior
March 29, 31
- Grading Student Work
April 5, 7
- Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences
April 12, 14
- Dealing with Difficult Parents
April 26, 28
- Working with Instructional Aids
May 3, 5
- Transitions and Sponge Activities
May 10, 12
- Rules, Consequences, and Positive Recognition
May 17, 19
- Reading and Implementing IEPs
May 24, 26
- Behavior and Performance Conferencing & Contracts
May 31, June 2
- Preparing for the End of the School Year!
June 7, 9

For a complete description of each webinar, go to <http://guest.cvent.com/d/wdqb8k>. The sessions run from 5:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

All registration is completed online. The webinar fee is \$30. Registration for each session is limited to 25 participants. Go to www.massteacher.org/cepp and follow the registration link. For specific questions, contact Beverly Eisenman at beisenman@massteacher.org or 1-800-392-6175 extension 8362.

Note: At the October 2010 SEA New Teacher Dinner held at Lido Restaurant, ten new teachers won a raffle for reimbursement of the registration fee for MTA’s *Just for New Teachers Conference* or two of the MTA’s New Teacher Webinars. One winner attended the conference. If you are one of the other nine winners who has not used this opportunity yet, feel free to register for one or two of the webinars this spring.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

**John Boyle O'Reilly Club
33 Progress Avenue, Springfield
April 5, 2011 at 4:00 p.m.**

New Business will include:

- Election of 6 Directors
- Approval of Directors' expenses for the prior year
- Approval of the Officers' Reports

Proof of Identification required. Credit Union Members must be in good standing to participate.

Refreshments will be served.

RSVP by March 31, 2011
413-205-2040 or jbeylard@stcu.com



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www.stcu.com



Kenneth Shea - Bankruptcy Law

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Have you received a summons from collection agency?

Have you exhausted your options?

Are you looking for honest legal advice?

I understand.

Call for a free consultation or

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NEW ENGLAND CONSULTING SERVICE

GRADUATE COURSES FOR EDUCATORS

3 Graduate Credits

67.5 PDP's

4.5 CEU's in 5 classes

Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement

Course # PRDV 78816

Instructor: Christina Francoeur

This course is appropriate for all K - 12 educators

FIVE Days

April 30, 2011

May 7, 14, 21, 2011

June 4, 2011

For information and registration call:

(239) 287-6635 or (413) 596-3309


Health Insurance Open Enrollment Schedule 2011

Open Enrollment is April 8, 2011 – May 9, 2011

You may enroll in and make changes to your health insurance, FSA, deferred compensation, dental & vision, savings bonds, disability, and life insurance during the time period listed above. At this time, GIC Insurance has not notified the City Insurance Department of any dates, times, and locations representatives will be available for health insurance questions, enrollment, or changes. As always, throughout the open enrollment period you may visit the City Personnel Department in Room 18 at City Hall during the following hours:

April 8 – May 9	Monday thru Wednesday	8:15 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.
April 21, 28 & May 5	Thursday	8:15 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.
April 8 – May 9	Friday	9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

You may also contact the City Insurance Department by email at benefits@springfieldcityhall.com or by calling their customer service line at 413-787-6055. Information packages will be delivered to schools one week prior to open enrollment.



**MTA Short and Long Term Disability Programs
Open Enrollment**

March 7 – May 13, 2011

The MTA Disability Program's Open Enrollment for policy year July 1, 2011 is here once again. For further information contact Tom Colbert at 1-888-646-1972, ext. 3020. Online information is available on the MTA benefits website, www.mtabenefits.com.

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