

The Springfield Teacher

The UNITY newsletter of the Springfield Education Association 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109
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Volume XXV, No. 9

May 2004

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President's Message

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to fill out the Action Survey before vacation. The Crisis Committee spent several hours tallying the returns before vacation and will complete the task during their next meeting. The results will guide the committee in making recommendations to the membership for further actions.

The light at the end of the tunnel may not be the headlamp of an on-coming train! Superior Court Judge Margot Botsford's strongly worded, favorable report in the Hancock Case confirms our long-held position. The foundation budget is not adequate to provide all students with a comprehensive quality education. The State Supreme Judicial Court will now consider Judge Botsford's recommendations.

There is no immediate relief, but this keeps hope alive. The legislators will be looking over their shoulders. Now, more than ever, it is important to communicate with your state senators and representatives. If you have not already done so, please go to the SEA web site, at www.seateachers.com, for talking points and sample letters. Personalize them by referencing your school, your students, and your colleagues. Send your letters to your elected legislators. If you have sent a letter, send another one. It's important, in the light of Judge Botsford's report, that we push our elected officials to do the right thing now and not wait until the State Supreme Judicial Court forces them to act responsibly.



POP QU?Z

by
Peter Dupuis



1. **I don't understand how the city can raise our insurance payments when we haven't had a raise. How can they do that?**

When the former mayor made the change to the Canadian Drug Program, he projected big savings for the city's medical insurance. These projected savings were applied to our premiums, which reduced the premiums. Last month, the city realized there would not be the savings that were expected. This, coupled with a recent sharp increase in usage, has caused the overall premium to increase. Our contract requires us to pay a percentage of the premiums. So, when the overall premium amount increases, the amount that equals your percentage also increases. In short, you are still paying the same percentage, but it is that percent of a larger premium.

2. **If I teach summer school, will it be applied towards my retirement?**

No, retirement is calculated based on regular school years. However, those teachers who are part of the new extended ninth grade program will have the added income applied to their retirement.

3. **Can teachers and counselors be required to search students?**

No. Teachers cannot be required to conduct searches of individual students. Teachers can be required to use their preparation periods to assist in locker searches but, only in an emergency. They are paid for this similar to coverage.

4. **I heard the Superintendent just hired a new secretary at \$45,000 a year. How can he do this when there is no money for salaries?**

The actual job title is "Confidential Executive Assistant-Human Resources," which makes me think this job will entail more responsibility. I have been told that, when Antonette Pepe asked the School Committee how this person will be paid, she was given a vague response to the effect that, "we have the money." Tim Collins, SEA President, has put the question of funding this new position on the agenda for our next meeting with Dr. Burke.

GRIEVANCE UPDATE

On April 1, 2004, Charles Baldwin and I met with the Executive Director of Human Resources, Cornelia O'Hare, to attempt to resolve Grievance 2003-16 which deals with Department Chair appointments. The School Department contends that the Education Reform Act of 1994 contains language that supercedes our Agreement. The Association maintains that the language they cited contains stipulations that state just the opposite. We believe this opens the door for the Superintendent to unilaterally disregard sections of the Agreement. I have requested and received approval from the Grievance Committee and the SEA Executive Board to seek arbitration to resolve this grievance.

New Grievances

2003-18 When the School Department could not find an appropriate position for a teacher returning from sick leave, they put the teacher on unpaid leave. The Association considers this to be a de-facto layoff which violates the Reduction of Force section of the Agreement. *Article 28, Section F-2*

2003-19 Members of the S.C.D.M. team did not receive their stipend for the first half of the school year until well after the date specified in the Agreement. *Article 27, Section P*



WHAT'S OUR UNION DOING FOR US?

Mary Chamberlain

It's almost that time. If you have not renewed your teaching license yet, it's time to get on-line and do it. The following are some renewal tips that Ralph Devlin at the MTA organized for us.

- First, ask the question: Do I have to renew my license? If you have a Preliminary or Initial license, you do not need to renew your license. You need to keep working toward Professional licensure. However, it is important to be aware of the time period for moving from one stage of licensure to the next. You have five years of employment under that licensure to complete the requirements and move to the next stage. Also, when you receive Professional licensure, please note the expiration date!
- If you have a Professional licensure, you have five years to renew whether or not you are employed.
- Your Professional license can be renewed even if it is no longer issued. For example, I have a K-8 license: a license that has been eliminated. However, as long as I keep renewing it, I will continue to have a K-8 license.
- How can you tell the status of your Professional license? It is:
 - o Active: 5 years or less since DATE OF ISSUE or the most recent renewal;
 - o Inactive: 5 years or less since EXPIRATION DATE; you can be assigned to teach under an inactive license. However, you only have 2 years to reactivate.
 - o Invalid: Not renewed after 5 years from the expiration date; you cannot be hired to teach with an invalid license until you fulfill the PDP requirements.
- First licenses to become invalid will be on June 17, 2004.
- Remember that PROFESSIONAL license is the new name for STANDARD license.
- Keep all your PDP points in your file for the next five years because you can be audited any time within that 5-year period. If you are audited, the actual endorsement will have to be produced. On the back of the Individual Professional Development Plan, your principal/supervisor had to have signed it. That's the endorsement.
- How many PDPs do you need?
 - o 120 PDPs: date of issue or most recent renewal before December 1, 1999
 - o 150 PDPs: date of issue or most recent renewal December 1, 1999 or later
 - o 150 PDPs: necessary for any inactive/invalid license, even a license that is not your Primary license
 - o 30 PDPs: each additional license beyond the Primary license
- How long does it take to get your license if you renew on-line. If you had renewed a few months ago, it was a week or less turn-around time. At the present moment, it takes 4-6 weeks.
- How long does it take if you renew on a hard copy and send it snail mail? I don't know and would love to find out. Let me know if you have received your renewed license as a result of sending in a hard copy. I am guessing that it could take 3-6 months.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nancy S. Fitchin

Richard Lavoie, renowned speaker and consultant, will be instructing parents and professionals who have an interest in learning disabilities during a workshop at Cotting School in Lexington, MA on June 27 and 28, 2004. The conference is called "On The Waterbed: The Impact Of LD On The Family." Its aim is to help parents and educators understand and assist children who have trouble in school. Richard Lavoie is known for the empathy he shows toward children with learning disabilities and his understanding of the importance of teaching social skills. The cost is \$210. For further information call (781) 862-7323, ext. 145, fax (781) 402-0233, or email www.cotting.org.

Also on June 27 and 28, the MASCD will host "Understanding by Design: The Leadership Challenge" with John L. Brown, PhD., as the presenter. This workshop will be held at the Sea Crest Resort in Falmouth, MA. This framework can help promote change and result in enhanced teaching and learning. The framework is applicable to the areas of curriculum development, teaching and learning, assessment, supervision, etc. The cost is \$240 for members and \$275 for non-members. For further information, email mfhayes@mediaone.net.

On July 15-19 and October 5, 2004, Jerry Goldberg will teach a workshop on "Differentiated Instruction". The workshop seeks to define differentiated instruction, supply theories on how students learn best, show how to differentiate various aspects of the educational process, and explain the mechanics of a differentiated classroom. This workshop will be held at Olmsted School in North Easton, MA and is \$450 for members and \$485 for non-members. Four graduate credits are available through Simmons College. For further information, email mfhayes@mediaone.net.

PLEASE NOTE: We will no longer be accepting applications for Professional Development Funds for the 2003/2004 school year. The funds budgeted for the 2003/2004 school year have been depleted and the waiting list is full.

ARE YOU REQUIRED TO TAKE THE MASSACHUSETTS TESTS FOR EDUCATOR LICENSURE? HELP HAS ARRIVED!

What kind of help? Tutors will conduct help sessions to prepare you for the Communication and Literacy Skills portion of the test. The focus of the sessions will be on reading comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and dictation.

Where? All of the tutorial sessions will be held at the Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center.

When? See the schedule for 2003-2004 below.

The sessions will run from 3:30-5:00. You may come in at any time during those hours.

What is the cost? FREE!

SCHEDULE OF TUTORIAL SESSIONS 2003-2004

TEST: May 15 (Register by April 2 to avoid late fee.)

Tutorial Sessions: May 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

TEST: July 24 (Register by June 11 to avoid fee.)

Tutorial Sessions: June 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Test Registration Bulletins are available at the Office of the Licensure Mentors located at the PD Center, area colleges, or can be sent to your home if you call (413) 256-2892. If you have any questions, please contact Mary Chamberlain or Linda Christofori (750-2148).

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

The following tips for the month are taken from the MTA's published Teachers' Calendar/Planner.

The conclusion of another school year is almost here. Wrap the year up on a positive note:

- Be sure all paperwork is done and submitted on time.
- Thank students, parents, and colleagues for a good year.
- Sort and file materials for use next year.
- Devise a system of noting strengths and weaknesses on materials and lessons as you file them.
- Reflect on what went well or not so well.
- Resolve to address identified needs during the summer.

SIGN UP TO ATTEND

The PIONEER VALLEY
PROJECT RALLY for
Education, Housing and
Increased State Funding
Thursday, June 3 at 6:30-8:00 at
Holy Family Church
235 Eastern Avenue, Springfield

Restoring state funding and increasing parent and community involvement in education are two of the critical issues facing the Springfield Public Schools. Teachers need community support to achieve these goals. Teachers are joining together with other unions and religious congregations through the Pioneer Valley Project to improve schools and the quality of life in the region.

The SEA will rally with hundreds of people from all walks of life in an action to "Build a Community of Fairness and Hope." The rally will begin at **6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 3 at Holy Family Church**, 235 Eastern Avenue in Springfield. City and state officials are being invited to hear our priorities and to make commitments to work to achieve specific goals. PVP will be asking the city to support a program to increase parent involvement in education and schools as a way to improve the quality of education. City and state officials will be asked to support increased state funding for Springfield services and schools. And the city, area banks and development agencies will announce commitments to work together to rebuild inner city neighborhoods.

The SEA has set a goal of bringing 65 of its members to demonstrate support for these issues. **A strong turn out is needed to get the attention of political and economic leaders.** If you plan to attend the rally, e-mail the SEA Office at contact@seateachers.com or call the office at 782-8300.

**TOGETHER WE CAN
MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

ACT NOW!

Protect Retiree Health Ruling

On Thursday, April 22, 2004, the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) approved an **NEA-supported** retiree health benefits rule. The rule clarifies that offering early retirees health insurance coordinated with Medicare does not violate the Aged Discrimination in Employment Act.

The rule is subject to comment by other federal agencies and must be reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget and published in the Federal Register before it becomes final.

Five - Minute Activist!

Protect the EEOC rule - an important victory for members. Send your message of support to the Commission at www.capwiz.com/nea/utr/1/AJLDDHNRCN/JDWODHNROO/ AND to your Members of Congress at www.capwiz.com/nea/utr/1/AJLDDHNRCN/LHHZDHNROP/.

What's the issue:

Early retirement plans that provide health benefits until the retiree is eligible for Medicare are legally at risk without this rule. School districts would face the following options:

- Leave current early retirement plans in place and accept the legal risk.
- Provide benefits in addition to Medicare to Medicare-eligible retirees.
- Reduce the benefits provided to pre-Medicare eligible retirees so that they are no better than Medicare, or eliminate such benefits altogether.

Most school districts - facing stressed budgets and rising health care costs - would likely choose the last option.

Many NEA affiliates have bargained health benefits for pre-Medicare eligible retirees into their contracts. Without this benefit, Medicare-eligibility would likely determine most employees' retirement decisions, because members and their families could not afford to be without health insurance.

The Attack on the Rule

The AARP has launched a grassroots effort opposing the rule. AARP alleges that the rule jeopardizes the health benefits of Medicare-eligible retirees.

NEA and a broad coalition of labor groups strongly oppose the AARP position. This rule does not jeopardize the health benefits of retirees 65 or older. The rule will NOT increase an employer's current control over retiree health benefits — including retiree health benefits provided by state retirement systems. Rather, this policy ensures that educators across the country are allowed to retire knowing that their health care coverage is protected until they are eligible for Medicare.

Act now to protect these benefits!

HEALTH & LIFE INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Open Enrollment for the City's Health/Life Insurance will be **May 1, through May 21, 2004**. For any member who is not enrolled in any health plan or wishes to switch plans, this is the time to do so.

Enrollment is also open to eligible employees who wish to register their domestic partner/household member. Domestic partners and household members **must** have shared their principal domicile with the city employee for the past twelve months. Benefits are available in accordance with city policy, city ordinance, and/or the respective collective bargaining contract.

The Personnel Office at City Hall is open from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Additional sign-ups may be done at the Meline Kasparian Professional Development Center May 4, May 12, and May 18, 2004 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. You may also go to the Tapley Annex, 70 Tapley Street, Room 7, Tuesday & Thursday 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Wednesday 7:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

**YOU ONLY NEED TO
COME TO THE OPEN
ENROLLMENT IF YOU
WANT TO ENROLL
OR MAKE CHANGES
TO YOUR PLAN**

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Gloria at 787-6028,
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10:00 A.M. - NOON

For information, call 739-9397
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and Receive Discount

HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?

If your address, telephone number, or e-mail address has changed, please e-mail the SEA office at contact@seateachers.com or call us at 782-8300. We will also inform the MTA and the NEA of the address change so you can receive the mailings from our affiliated associations (and your union card, which you should have received by now).



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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Kudos to **MaryAnn Dion**, Warner; **Sally Suomala**, Lynch; and **Ronnie Tillman**, Indian Orchard for their letters to the editor in support of Springfield Public Schools.
- Kudos to all SEA members who have written letters to their state senators and representatives. Let us **ALL** do our part and keep the postcards, letters, and e-mails going out.
- Let's have a big turnout again this year at the Pioneer Valley Project's **Rally for Education, Housing, and Increased State Funding** being held on Thursday, June 3, 2004 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Holy Family Church, 235 Eastern Avenue in Springfield.
- **STOP THE CUTS!**
Close Corporate Tax Loopholes!
EVERY program has been and continues to be on the chopping block and we cannot expand, let alone protect the programs we care about, without addressing this deficit. Everyone of our members has and will continue to experience cuts to programs they need – school closings, layoffs of teachers and firefighters, cuts to Mass Health and subsidized child care – everything is at risk! **So, WHY do we have such a big deficit? Because of over-spending in the 1990's, as the Governor claims? Not really!**
The Governor and Legislature passed 42 tax cuts – most to our state's wealthiest corporations and individuals – this cost the Commonwealth \$3.7 billion a year in lost revenue. The biggest tax cut was in the tax rollback in 2000 which mainly benefits the wealthy. Families making \$25,000 per year save only \$38, while a person making \$1 million receives \$7,000 a year from this tax cut. The most unfair losses in revenue come from Corporate Tax Loopholes. In 1968, corporate taxes made up 16% of the state's revenue. Today their share is only 4%. One third of the 50 largest employers in Massachusetts only pay the minimum corporate tax of \$456 a year. **They are definitely not paying their fair share!**
Corporate tax loopholes and avoidance cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars a year!

Over the past five years, we lost at least as much revenue as the size of the current deficit!

So what can we do about it?

- Close the biggest loopholes! The legislature should ensure that corporations making money in Massachusetts are paying their fair share of taxes on all their profits. We already won a ban on Passive Investment Corporations this year – now we need to require “combined reporting.” Sixteen states, including Maine, New Hampshire, and California, already do.
- Roll back special-interest tax breaks! We need to institute job requirements for “single sales factor” for companies like Raytheon and Fidelity.

Can we win?

With your help we can. **JOIN THE STOP THE CUTS CAMPAIGN!** For more information call Neighbor to Neighbor at 413-493-6666.

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