

The Springfield Teacher

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

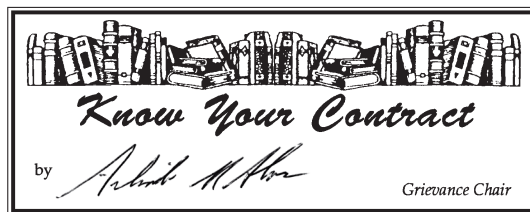
The SEA's newly elected Executive Board will be developing a report on the amount of additional time teachers are required to devote to the numerous policies and directives from the district over the past few years. I have been saying over and over again teachers have too much on their plate. When the district wants to add something to the plate, it should remove something from it. Over the years, the district has rarely, if ever, followed this advice.

Initially, the SEA Executive Board will work to identify these policies and directives and assess the amount of time the district has added to teachers' work day. The Executive Board will share their initial study with Association Representatives during a Legislative Board meeting and ask the Association Representatives to gather input from all members. The SEA will use the report in our collaborative work with the district during Interest Based Bargaining and other appropriate forums.

Kudos go out to Burt Freedman, Legislative Political Action Team (LPAT) Representative for Senator Welch's district, and David Bernstein, LPAT Representative for Senator Candaras' district, for organizing the first meeting with the senators and representatives who represent Springfield. It was a very good first meeting. Over forty-five members were in attendance many of whom are SEA members. Kudos also go out to all the MTA members and retired members who attended. We would like to double the number of attendees at the next meeting. Watch for an e-mail from the SEA for the date and time.

We all need to get politically active if we are to improve the learning conditions for the children in our charge. Their learning conditions are our working conditions.





Teacher Evaluations

As many of you all ready know, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has passed new regulations overhauling how teachers and administrators are evaluated. The regulations require the development and implementation of a new evaluation system in all Level 4 schools this school year and in all schools during the 2012-2013 school year. The SEA is in the process of negotiating a new evaluation system that aligns with the new state regulations. We have had several meetings, but have not been able to complete our work because of DESE's failure to provide us with the necessary materials.

Due to the short time frame we have to develop this new system, both parties have agreed the Evaluation System negotiated will expire at the end of this school year. We will be soliciting feedback from both teachers and administrators and make revisions before we implement it district-wide.

Reminder: The new Evaluation System is only to be used in Level 4 schools this year. All non Level 4 schools are still using our current Evaluation System (STEDS).

Extended Day

There is always some confusion regarding which day extended day should be held during the week of Thanksgiving. **Article 5, K**, states, "The School Centered Decision Making Team in each school shall determine 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." Since Tuesday, November 22nd is the day before a vacation, extended day can only be held on Monday, November 21st.

Know Your Weingarten Rights

Employees have the right under the law to have union representation present during an investigatory interview by the employer. If an employee has reasonable belief that the interview could in any way lead to the employee being disciplined or terminated, he or she should request to have a union representative present at the meeting. If representation is requested and denied, the employee may choose not to answer any questions. The law precludes the employer from taking action against the employee for exercising this right.

What Situations Are Covered?

- A meeting called by administration to find out facts about what has happened, or to have the teacher explain his/her side of the story, where discipline of any kind is possible.
- Where the purpose of the meeting is to discuss a teacher's allegedly inadequate work performance where it might lead to discipline.
- A meeting where the administration is investigating an incident either to determine whether or not discipline is warranted or support a disciplinary decision already made.

What is not covered?

- Where the administrator has decided to take an action and is informing the teacher of the decision and no information is sought from the teacher.
- Where the administrator is transmitting instructions, training or corrections.
- Where the administrator has explicitly stated in advance that there will be no adverse consequences or discipline resulting from the interview/meeting.
- Where the teacher initiates the discussion after the administrator has notified the teacher of the discipline being imposed. In this situation, the teacher, in effect, waives his/her rights under the law.

(Continued from page 2)

If an administrator wishes to meet with you and you think that it could lead to disciplinary action, ask the following questions:

- Is this meeting disciplinary in nature?
- Could this meeting lead to any disciplinary action against me?

If the answer is yes to either of these two questions, inform the administrator that you wish to have a union representative present at the meeting.

Reminder: The teacher must assert the right to have union representation. The administrator has no obligation to inform the teacher of this right.



CELEBRATE MASSACHUSETTS FAMILY LITERACY MONTH

The Event is Free!

Come for a family day of fun and learning!

Saturday, November 12, 2011

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

**Children's Museum at Holyoke
44 Dwight Street, Holyoke, MA**

FREE:

- Kids Books
- Children's Museum
- Merry-Go-Round Rides
- StoryWalk™

For more information, contact holyokefamilyliteracy@gmail.com or call (413)-552-2913.

Hosted by: Children's Museum at Holyoke in partnership with the Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium.

Partners: HeadStart, Holyoke, Chicopee and Springfield; Holyoke Public Schools; Greater Holyoke Coordinated Family and Community Engagement; Holyoke Community College; Northampton Public Schools, Pathways to Family Success; Children's Museum at Holyoke.

SEA Association Representative Election REMINDER!!

If you haven't held your SEA Association Representative election as yet, please do so as soon as possible. There is one representative for every fifteen members, e.g. 28 members – 2 representatives.

Association Representatives, please complete and submit the election result form that was provided at the September 15, 2011 Legislative Board meeting. If you did not receive one, go to www.seateachers.com, click on "Legislative Board" to download the form, or call the SEA office at 413-782-8300.

School Centered Decision Making Election Guidelines Election of Teacher Representatives

- **A secret ballot election is to be held during the Faculty meeting in October.**
- **Only members of the bargaining unit are eligible to vote.**
- **Teachers can self nominate.**
- **Candidates must address the faculty orally or in writing as to why they wish to be elected.**
- **A candidate is elected when s/he has received a majority of the votes cast plus 1 (50% plus 1 vote) by teachers present and voting by secret ballot. For example, if 75 teachers cast ballots, a candidate must receive at least 38 votes to be elected.**
- **Teachers are members of the Team immediately upon being elected.**

What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By 

I would like to begin this month's article by thanking all those who attended our recent social event at the Elks Lodge on September 16th. I am one of the avid proponents of this type of event. I hope all who attended had a wonderful (although somewhat chilly) experience. I believe we should continue to get together to eat, talk, relax and listen to music with family as well as colleagues. There is also a need to take advantage of that time and express concerns, observations, serious issues and insights to your representative leadership while at the function. These socials should remain entertaining, but must also be used as one more avenue of effective communication for all members – rank and file as well as leaders. Let's keep coming together, but let's realize some concrete steps forward as well. Again, thanks for supporting your union.

Primarily, I seem to address issues facing us on the state and federal levels. I think for this article I need to bring it on home. And, in bringing it back home, I will attempt to convey the absolute necessity for all of us (leadership and individual members alike) to pay attention to what is happening out there and then communicate your concerns, issues, solutions, grievances, etc.

Let's start with a simple issue: office referral forms. There exists one and only one referral form. Period! No grey area! No room for interpretation! It can be found in the Contract as Appendix D on page 108 of the "Agreement." Other counterfeit forms have surfaced. One of the most insidious of these has come from a recent consultancy – PBIS. I pointed out that this form was in violation of the Contract and we then entered negotiations to ascertain if a new form could be crafted to accommodate yet another insurgency. Talks adjourned with no agreement. Guess what? The PBIS form (along with other phony forms) is still being used. As far as I know, memos went out directing the "official" form be used. Principals are still demanding staff to be insubordinate to the contract and use the phony forms. Yikes! Is anyone in control of even a simple procedure such as this?

How about "drive-bys?" How about someone walks into your room, surveys the environment to make sure you hung up all the highly flammable posters, agenda, word walls, standards, assignments, student work, rubrics, etc. then reports out that items were missing that were actually in the room and readily in sight (yes, even among so much of the visual pollution)? If our fearless leaders don't know what they see in front of them then we are in bigger trouble than I thought. My goodness they even carry checklists! I guarantee the perpetrator couldn't recall the lesson observed because checking off all the items teachers are supposed to hang up is such a daunting task.

How about lesson plans? Anyone out there been asked to follow certain templates on which to write all their lesson plans? Guess what the Contract says about this. Article 5. E.1 states, the lesson plan bank will be a "repository of outstanding lesson plans..." Furthermore, these "...plans will be standards based, include modifications/adaptations, and appropriate assessments to benchmark learning and inform instruction...." The Contract also states, "All teachers will use lesson plans from the Center...."

How about another consultant group that brings testing to town not aligned to our curriculum and scope and sequence? Teachers are being asked to rewrite aspects of both the curriculum and the scope and sequence to align with the testing company! Isn't our curriculum already aligned to state standards? Once again, Yikes!

The power mongers are so concerned with what a room looks like, if everyone teaches in the same manner, if everyone is on the same page, if everyone clicks their heels and gosesteps behind the commandant, the focus – the children – is lost. The children are lost for all the reasons I usually rant and rave about. Even with all the external directives and pressure on the district we could stand a chance if the middlemen of madness truly cooperated with those in the trenches and not suck up to the politicians of paranoia (paranoid for their jobs if they dare oppose the masters).

In the previous paragraphs, I attempted to highlight four areas of concern; disregard for the Contract, disregard for common sense, incompetent leaders or at least misplaced in their current role, and the refusal of management to tap the vast talent of the practitioners by directing their every move in the classroom. We, as a professional body, must record, communicate and strategize around these basic issues. We must hold those accountable, as teachers are being held accountable, to the strictures of a modern day inquisition. We must also continue to pound on the doors of our elected officials. There are union movements out there gathering momentum, organizing around the tactic of absolute zero tolerance for any elected official voting to limit/eliminate our already feeble bargaining rights and benefits. We should not be endorsing nor supporting monetarily anyone who votes against our basic human rights as workers.

And remember: Keep Smiling

Peter J Reese
Vice President

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by: *Patricia Sullivan*

The MTA Tenth Annual Conference **Just for New Teachers** will be held on Friday, December 2, 2011 at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and Trade Center in Marlborough, Massachusetts. If you are in the first four years of teaching, this conference is designed for you. If you missed the district's new teacher orientation in August, this conference can answer some of your questions. Go to the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, and click on "New Teacher" to view the different sessions which range from classroom management to working with parents. The registration fee is \$60.

The National Council of Teachers of English is celebrating its Centennial this year. Their Annual Convention will be held in Chicago, Illinois November 17 - 22, 2011. With the theme of "Reading the Past, Writing the Future," the conference will feature such writers as Natasha Trethewey, Ned Vizzini and poet Billy Collins. For more information, go to www.ncte.org/annual.

Finally, the National Association for Bilingual Education will hold its 41st Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas from February 15 - 17, 2012. The conference theme is "Celebrating Our Multicultural Nation Through Bilingual Education." Logon to www.nabe.org for more information.

Don't forget, you can apply for SEA Professional Development funds every other year. If you are taking courses or attending conferences and workshops you should apply for funds. Logon to the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, and click on "Professional Development Funds."

REMINDER

EXTENDED DAY

There is an extended day every week, even on weeks during which we work fewer than five days. Article 5, Section K.1 of the *AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE AND THE SPRINGFIELD EDUCATION ASSOCIATION* states, "The School Centered Decision Making Team in each school shall determine 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. (School Centered Decision Making) 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.

In particular this year, schools that normally schedule their extended day on the following date must adjust accordingly:

Tuesday, **November 22**, 2011 – Extended Day **MUST** be held on Monday, November 21st.

Make Note In Your Calendar Now!



October 22, Make A Difference Day, the largest national day of helping others, is sponsored annually by USA Weekend Magazine and its 700 carrier newspapers. Make A Difference Day takes place on the 4th Saturday in October each year. Go to, www.usaweekend.com/section/mdday.

October 24, United Nations Day - In the spring of 1945, representatives of fifty nations gathered in San Francisco to put the final touches to a document of far-reaching consequences - the Charter of the United Nations. The UN Charter went into effect on October 24, 1945. Two years later the UN General Assembly adopted a U.S.- sponsored resolution declaring October 24th United Nations Day. See the United Nations Resources for Educators website, www.unausa.org/resourcesforeducators, for more information.

October 28, Statue of Liberty Dedication - On this day in 1886, President Grover Cleveland dedicated the Statue of Liberty, officially titled "Liberty Enlightening the World." This universal symbol of freedom and democracy was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States.

NOVEMBER is American Indian Heritage Month

November was officially recognized as National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month in 1990 when President George H.W. Bush signed it into Public Law. See these sites for more information:

- Native American Heritage Month website, www.nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov
- American Indians/Alaska Natives: Education Issues, www.nea.org/home/15596
- National American Book List, www.nea.org/grants/29498.htm

November 6, Ending of Daylight Savings Time - On Sunday, November 6, 2011 at 2 A.M., daylight saving time ends in the United States.

November 8, Election Day - Election Day in the United States is the day set by law for the election of public officials. It is held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November.

November 9, Mix It Up at Lunch Day is a national campaign that helps K-12 teachers develop inclusive school communities. See the resources at the Teaching Tolerance website, www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up/map.

November 9, Fall of the Berlin Wall - On November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall - the 28-mile barrier dividing Germany's capital - came down. It had been built in 1961 to prevent East Berliners from fleeing to the West. As Communism in the Soviet Republic and Eastern Europe began to crumble, pressure mounted to open the Berlin border. In October 1990, West Germany and East Germany were united, and East Berlin ceased to exist.

November 11, Veterans Day is an annual American holiday honoring military veterans. It is both a federal holiday and a state holiday in all states. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson first proclaimed an Armistice Day for November 11, 1919. In 1938, the United States Congress made the 11th of November in each year a legal holiday - to be celebrated and known as "Armistice Day." Congress amended this act in 1954, replacing "Armistice" with "Veterans," and it has been known as Veterans Day since then. See more at www.military.com/veterans-day.

November 13 – 19, NEA's American Education Week (AEW) spotlights the importance of providing every child in America with a quality public education from kindergarten through college, and the need for everyone to do his or her part in making public schools great. See the American Education Week website at, www.nea.org/grants/19823.

November 14 – 20, Bullying Awareness Week - Some groups observe the middle week of November as Bullying Awareness Week. Get ready with ideas from NEA's Campaign Against Bullying, www.nea.org/home/NEABullyFreeSchools, and International Reading Association's ReadWriteThink resources at www.readwritethink.org.

November 14 – 20, National Geography Awareness Week is an annual celebration hosted by National Geographic Education to promote geographic literacy. Here are some ideas for celebrating the week: NEA's selection of Geography Awareness Week lessons and activities, www.nea.org/tools/lessons/geography-awareness-week; Geography Awareness Week web site, www.education.nationalgeographic.com/education/collections/geographyawarenessweek for a free magazine, discounts, activities, games, maps, tools, and other great ways to celebrate; and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum web site, www.nasm.si.edu/geographyfromspace/gaweek.cfm, for quizzes and other resources.

November 19, Gettysburg Address Anniversary - Abraham Lincoln was the second speaker on November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg. Lincoln was preceded on the podium by the famed orator Edward Everett, who spoke to the crowd for two hours. Lincoln followed with his now immortal Gettysburg Address. See the Library of Congress website, www.myloc.gov/exhibitions/gettysburgaddress/pages/default.aspx.

Election Results

The Springfield Education Association Election Committee congratulates the following members on their successful bid for SEA office! An election was not needed because there was only one candidate for each office.

Recording Secretary

Catherine Maccini, Kiley

At-Large Member

Susan Schack, Science & Technology

Fellowships to be Awarded

The General Federation of Women's Club of Massachusetts will be awarding fellowships of up to \$3,000 for graduate study in education. For further information and to download an application, go to www.gfwcma.org; click on the "Member Center" tab then "Scholarships" from the dropdown menu. Then click on "Memorial Education Fund Scholarships" or contact Jane Howard at jhoward@mountida.edu.

Kenneth Shea - Bankruptcy Law

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*Assumes STCU receives ACH payroll in time for early posting

JUST FOR NEW TEACHERS

Tenth Annual Conference

Friday, December 2, 2011

8:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

**Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel and
Trade Center
Marlborough, MA**

If you're an educator in your first four years of teaching, the Just for New Teachers Conference is designed especially for you. While all teachers, novices and veterans alike, face many of the same daily challenges, the novice has fewer strategies to call upon. Whether it's handling classroom management, or addressing the wide range of individual student needs in your classroom, or simply finding what to do next about your educator license, this conference has something for you.

There are many workshops to choose from. For more information and to register, go to the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, and click on the "New Teacher" link. The registration fee is \$60.

Communicating To Our Members

Keeping our members informed about issues affecting public education, your profession, and the children of Springfield is vital. The SEA offers three vehicles to accomplish this – the SEA website (www.seateachers.com), this monthly newsletter (*The Springfield Teacher*), and blast emails sent to your personal email address.

Remember to:

- ⇒ **Check Out** your website at www.seateachers.com
- ⇒ **Look for** *The Springfield Teacher* distributed to your school every month
- ⇒ **Submit** your personal email address (SPS CANNOT be used) by sending an email to mailing@seateachers.com* indicating your full name and school (please type “email address” in the subject line of the email)
- ⇒ **Add** the Springfield Education Association email address (contact@seateachers.com) to your personal email contacts so that it does not go into your junk mailbox

AND

- ⇒ Of course, **OPEN** the emails sent by the SEA -- YOUR union!

By utilizing these three vehicles of communication, you will stay informed and on top of important information affecting you and the children in your charge.

* This email address is being used for the sole purpose of gathering information and should not be used for regular correspondence with the SEA office.

EXECUTIVE BOARD	AT-LARGE MEMBERS	SEA E-MAIL ADDRESSES	
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RECORDING SECRETARY	Donna Kells Wagner		
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	Susan Schack		
	Charlesetta Smith		E-mail General Information
	Patricia Sullivan		or Questions to:
	RETIRED AT-LARGE MEMBER		contact@seateachers.com
	Lynn Hallowell		