

# 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](mailto:contact@seateachers.com) Website: [www.seateachers.com](http://www.seateachers.com)

## President's Message

I hope everyone made it through this past storm with minimal property damage. I also hope you and your family are well, warm, and powered-up.

At the School Committee meeting that was held the week of the storm, the possibility of canceling February vacation was put on the agenda for the next meeting. The Committee members are concerned about the loss of teaching time before this year's MCAS season.

I have communicated with Governor Patrick, Secretary of Education Paul Reville, and Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester urging them to move the MCAS testing days back at least eleven to fifteen days to account for the seven days lost due to the hurricane in September and the snow storm in October as well as the four or five snow days we can reasonably expect in the winter. I urge all members to do the same. Also contact the Mayor, School Committee members, your state representative and state senator. Ask them to support this effort. I will also request that the Springfield Public Schools push the school calendar back for things such as report cards and warning notices.

MCAS has been a crooked yard stick for measuring the success of schools. It has never been a measure of the individual student's growth which is the true measure of how the commonwealth public schools are doing. As flawed as MCAS is, the reality for our schools and students is MCAS results can have a destructive impact. Our students and teachers deserve the optimum time to prepare for MCAS.

I ask all supporters of public schools and public school students to call, e-mail, or write to the governor, the commissioner of education, the secretary of education, the mayor, school committee members, and state senators and representatives telling them to move back MCAS testing dates equivalent to the number of days lost due to the weather.

SEA members who have made plans based on a School Committee approved calendar should not suffer a financial loss due to a mid-year change in the school calendar.

Our students, schools, and teachers deserve nothing less from the educational leaders of the commonwealth.

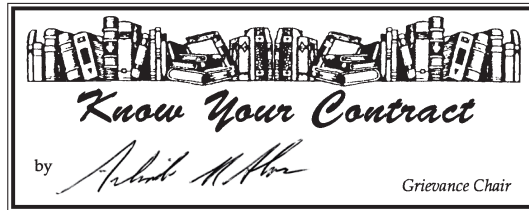


To contact state and local officials, go to the SEA website ([www.seateachers.com](http://www.seateachers.com)), scroll down, and click on "Contact Your Elected Officials."

Governor Patrick - <http://www.mass.gov/governor/utility/contact-us.html>

Commissioner Chester - [http://www.doe.mass.edu/contact/orgdetail.aspx?orgcode=COM\\_COM09](http://www.doe.mass.edu/contact/orgdetail.aspx?orgcode=COM_COM09)

Secretary Reville - [http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eduutilities&L=1&sid=Eoedu&U=Eeoe\\_contact\\_us](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eduutilities&L=1&sid=Eoedu&U=Eeoe_contact_us)



## ADOPTION LEAVE

### A. Your Rights

Amidst the excitement surrounding the impending adoption of a child comes the realization that provisions must be made to be out of work for a period of time. The amount of leave needed will depend upon many factors. Restrictions imposed by the adoption agency, health of the child, economic need and child-rearing concerns must be considered. Below, I explore several sections of *Articles 12 and 13* of the ***Agreement Between The Springfield School Committee And The Springfield Education Association*** to show how, and to what extent, issues related to adoption and child-rearing are addressed. Please note that the sections on adoption leave apply to teachers with and without professional status.

*Article 12-C* states, “If the adoption agency requires and certifies that an adopting parent must stay home with the child, then the teacher may be paid up to six weeks (30 school days) during that school year of Emergency Leave as per *Article 12, A3* (home exigencies) if the teacher has unused disability and emergency (sick leave) in her/his account.”

Typically, adoption agencies require an adoptive parent to remain home with the adopted child for a designated period of time. The contractual benefit of “adoption leave” allows the teacher who has become a newly adoptive parent to meet the requirements of the adoption agency and spend valuable time with his/her child without suffering an immediate financial burden. The calculation of “30 school days” of paid adoption leave will begin with the date upon which you officially receive the child. This is especially helpful to a parent who will not be adopting locally, as it will lessen the burden of loss of time from work due to travel. (The *two business days* allowed per year can be applied towards the travel time.) Note that in order for you to be “paid up to six weeks” you must have that amount of accrued sick leave. Otherwise, your time will revert to unpaid leave upon the depletion of your accrued disability days.

Also, upon completion of the six-week/thirty day adoption leave benefit, you may request child-rearing leave of up to two-and-a-half years if you are a teacher with professional status. If you do not have professional status, you can receive an unpaid leave for an additional period of time not to exceed a total of twelve weeks, following your child’s adoption, when combined with the adoption leave (*Article 13-E.2*). Inform the Chief of Human Resources, in writing, of your intentions.

### B. Your Responsibilities

During the adoption process, you must keep the Superintendent, through the Chief of Human Resources, informed of your plans. When you know the date you will be leaving work due to the upcoming adoption, send written notification to the Chief of Human Resources, and provide a copy to your principal. Provide appropriate notice from the adoption agency. If the notification is not available at that time, indicate when the Chief of Human Resources and your principal can expect to receive the notice from the adoption agency.

After you have completed the adoption process, inform the Chief of Human Resources, in writing, of the date upon which you received your child, the agency’s confirmation, and any documentation indicating the length of time the agency is requiring you to remain home with your child. This note is separate from the one you sent prior to the adoption. Keep your principal informed as well.

If you will be taking child-rearing leave, you must notify the Superintendent, via the Chief of Human Resources, of your plans as soon as possible after the adoption. As I indicated above, if you have professional status, the unpaid leave will be granted for up to two-and-one-half years following your child’s adoption. If you do not have professional status, you can receive an unpaid leave for an additional period of time not to exceed a total of twelve weeks following your child’s adoption date when combined with the adoption leave.

(Continued from page 2)

**Please note: When you are working or on paid leave, the City of Springfield pays a portion of your health insurance premium. While you are on Adoption Leave, the School Department will continue to make that payment for the time allotted contractually for Adoption Leave. After that point, if you remain out of work on an unpaid leave, you may continue to be part of the group insurance plan, but must assume payment for the full amount of the cost of your health insurance.**

Questions? Please give me a call at 782-8300 or e-mail me at aalves@seateachers.com

### Association Representative Election Results Form

Kudos to the following schools that have held their Association Representative Elections AND have returned the election results form to the SEA! (As of 11/8/11.)

Balliet	Sumner
Brightwood	Warner
Brunton	White
Dorman	Zanetti
Dryden	Chestnut
Ells	Forest Park (all locations)
Freedman	Van Sickle
Gerena	Central
Glenwood	Commerce
Harris	Sci Tech
Indian Orchard	Balliet Middle
Kensington	Liberty Prep
Liberty	New Leadership
Lincoln	Renaissance
Lynch	Spfld Public Day High
Pottenger	

### Updated Building Lists

Kudos To the following schools that have updated and returned their school's building list to the SEA! (As of 11/8/11.)

Balliet	Sumner
Beal	Warner
Bowles	Washington
Dryden	White
Ells	Forest Park (All Locations)
Freedman	Van Sickle
Harris	Balliet Middle
Kensington	Early Childhood Screening
Liberty	Liberty Prep
Lincoln	Renaissance
Lynch	Springfield High

If you have not held your school's 2011 – 2012 Association Representative Election and/or returned the election results form to the SEA, please do so as soon as possible. Each school may have one representative for every fifteen members, e.g. 28 members = 2 representatives. Returning the election results form is very important. It is the only means by which the SEA is able to update each school's Association Representative/Legislative Board data. You may send the results by email to [contact@seateachers.com](mailto:contact@seateachers.com) (type "Association Representative Election" in the subject line of the email), postal mail to the SEA, Attention Charlene, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109, or by fax to 413-783-8812. The results form may also be downloaded by going to the SEA website, [www.seateachers.com](http://www.seateachers.com) and clicking on "Legislative Board." The form must be submitted even if no election needed to be held in your school. It also needs to be submitted, even if you phoned the results information into the SEA office.

Updating and submitting your school's building list, which was distributed in September, is also very important. This is the information the SEA uses to insure our data accurately reflects the members who are in your school. Please update and return your building list as soon as possible. Send it to: SEA, Attention Charlene, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109 or fax it to 413-783-8812.

**DO NOT SEND THROUGH INTEROFFICE MAIL!**

# What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By 

For Thanksgiving, I'll keep this month's article short and sweet. I am going to further explain the campaign your union has agreed to wage against the pressures and complexities facing today's classroom teachers. Everyday as I count the students in front of me with every seat occupied, I know there are so many more children who need to be in front of me. The limited space in the in-house program precludes relieving every teacher of the misbehaving youth in his/her classroom. It saddens me. Couple misbehavior with the onslaught of so many more "things" to do and we find frustrated, exhausted, disempowered teachers struggling to do their job.

Here's what teachers need to do - collect data. Teachers are being held accountable for so many more responsibilities in executing their professional duties. We are constantly told that the "data" supports all of this. So let's begin. The SEA needs to know, systemically, all that is being asked of teachers. From the lists of directives the SEA receives, the data will be analyzed to determine the average amount of time a teacher must spend to fulfill the tasks. Having concrete data on time spent by our members each day will give us grounds to argue for more agreeable working conditions. Please, **we need everyone from all schools to furnish lists, examples, written directives, et cetera linked to any added workload placed on teachers. It is important to include the average time it takes to complete the additional task(s).**

Secondly, we must hold accountable those who are trampling our rights under the Contract as well as our basic rights as human beings. Teachers are being held responsible for completing so many extra tasks that have effectively changed working conditions, but who is holding management responsible for their actions? Again, we need to collect data. We need to systematically categorize data around contract violations and/or legal transgressions. I believe, if we start with such issues as: input from all schools on Special Education violations (e.g. paras, ratios, etc.), responses to office referrals, forced extra time on the job site, equitable classroom coverage, and harassment over emergency sick leave, this will give the SEA the ability to identify and grieve systemic issues as opposed to putting out localized fires.

We really need to address time on job and contractual issues as they affect the whole, not just individuals. So please, get any information you may have to the SEA office (use the Association Representatives in your building as conduits or deliver it personally by sending an email to, [contact@seateachers.com](mailto:contact@seateachers.com) - type teacher data collection in the subject line of the email).

Let us help!

Keep Smiling  
Peter J. Reese  
Vice President

## Third Annual United in Hope Spotlight on Peace

Sunday, November 20, 2011  
2:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

The High School of Commerce  
415 State Street  
Springfield

Celebrate and connect with local community members and academic and enrichment programs that promote peace and create hope.

- Guest speakers
- Youth speakers and performances
- Breaking Bread in Peace Ceremony
- Community Resource Table

Free! No reservations required. For more information, contact Gianna Allentuck at 703-930-0243.

## NEW ENGLAND CONSULTING SERVICE

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*Strategies for Effective Teaching*  
Course # - PRDV 76914

Instructor: Susan Gilbert

This course is appropriate for all K - 12 educators

**FIVE Days**  
December 3, 10, 2011  
January 7, 21, 28, 2012

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

## Kenneth Shea - Bankruptcy Law

*Are you overwhelmed by debt?*

*Are you being harassed by creditors?*

*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*

*Visit my website at:*

*www.attorneykenshea.com*

**200 North Main Street  
East Longmeadow, Ma 01028  
413-525-1313**



# Pay Day comes early for Teachers

**When you use Direct Deposit  
with STCU Credit Union**

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\*Assumes STCU receives ACH payroll in time for early posting

## 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 21<sup>st</sup>.

Make Note In Your Calendar Now!

## 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](http://www.seateachers.com), and click on the "New Teacher" link. The registration fee is \$60.

## DELAYED OPENINGS

The "Policies and Procedures" Reference Manual states: "The Springfield Public Schools expects you to use reasonable judgment and caution, but to understand your employment responsibility in this matter." In other words, you are expected to be in your building as soon as it is reasonably safe. If you know you are going to be late, you are expected to call and let your principal know. You are not expected to endanger yourself.

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