

# 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 hope everyone has a joyous, restful and rejuvenating vacation!

In the meantime, we are asking all SEA members to participate in a few initiatives. First, the SEA Executive Board asked Association Representatives to reach out to members and get a handle on the vast number of district mandates that have been added to the workload of SEA members over the last three years. We are looking for data indicating what the mandates are, how much time on average the mandates add to the workday, and how effective the mandates are in helping to improve student performance. For example, the Springfield Public Schools has devoted serious resources to the Focus on Results initiative. The main thrust of this initiative is to narrow a school's focus and then concentrate on that area. Only when the district takes mandates off teachers' plates, instead of adding more mandates, will initiatives such as this be a sound idea. It is important the SEA hears from you to insure we have solid data to bring to the bargaining table as we negotiate a new Contract.

The second initiative the SEA is asking members to get involved in is communicating with the governor, commissioner of education, the secretary of education, the board members of DESE, the mayor, school committee members, senators, and representatives asking them to push back the dates of MCAS testing. If they push the dates back, then possibly the February vacation will be reinstated. It is our understanding, if MCAS testing dates are pushed back, the school committee is willing to reinstate the vacation.

The officials will not make changes based on a handful of calls. They need to feel the pressure. Numbers will count. Therefore, **everyone** - SEA members, family, and friends - who has an interest in quality education for the children in the Springfield Public Schools needs to ask the politicians and policy makers to do what is right and just for our students. They deserve the same amount of quality teaching and learning time as the students in districts who have not faced what our students have (tornado, hurricane, and October snowstorm). Going from January to April without a break, as other communities will have, will also create a negative impact on the quality of teaching time as well as students' concentration and retention. The only way to do what is right and just for our students is to move the MCAS testing schedule back (from March through April to April through May). The SEA asks **all of you** to get involved.

Once again, have a great holiday season and I extend all the best to you and yours.



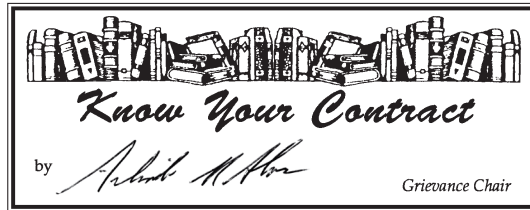
To contact state and local officials, go to the SEA website ([www.seateachers.com](http://www.seateachers.com)), scroll down, and click on "Contact Your Elected Officials."

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)

DESE - [boe@doe.mass.edu](mailto:boe@doe.mass.edu)



## WORKPLACE INJURIES

It's that time of year again - - very shortly there will be snow in the air and ice on the ground. If this year is anything like last year, it will be a very challenging winter. I'm concerned, despite the attempts to keep up with the ice, snow, and wet floors, some accidents may result from the slippery conditions generated by this weather. Slips and falls are the leading causes for teachers to be injured on the job. If you should have an accident or sustain an injury at work due to the inclement conditions or any other misfortune, I want you to be aware of your rights and responsibilities in such a situation.

### **If you are injured or have an accident while at work:**

- a) Fill out the *School Department Employee's Notice of a Work-related Injury and/or Occupational Disease* report (Accident Report) immediately, if possible. (Do not confuse this with an *Incident Report*.) Your principal will be able to provide you with the blank report to fill out. Give the completed report to your Principal. Your principal needs to send the completed report to Central Office within twenty-four hours.
- b) Keep a copy of the report.

### **If your injuries require medical treatment:**

- a. Call Concentra Medical Center (746-4006) and ask for the Patient Services Representative. You will be scheduled in the next appropriate and available time slot with an Occupational Medicine Clinician.
- b. If after the initial visit to Concentra you decide you would rather be treated by your own doctor, you may do so as long as s/he is willing to take payment from Workers' Compensation.
- c. Record the date and time of all medical visits.
- d. Explain that your injury was work related and will be covered under Workers' Compensation through the City of Springfield. Because this is a work-related injury, **do not** give the medical provider your health card.
- e. Make sure your doctor submits any procedures or treatments to a utilization review prior to beginning the treatment.

### **If you have any issues related to your claim,**

contact Carolyn Scyocurka, Claims Adjuster at FutureComp, 413-750-4254

### **If you must take a leave from work as a result of the injuries,**

under Article 15-D of the *Agreement Between The Springfield School Committee And The Springfield Education Association*, "All members of the bargaining unit are covered under the applicable provision of the Massachusetts Workers' Compensation Law, currently Chapter 152 of the Massachusetts General Laws." Under that law, workers who are incapacitated for five or fewer calendar days are not eligible for cash benefits. Therefore, those days out of work are covered by your sick leave. Beginning the sixth day, compensation is paid and you should not lose any more time from your sick leave while out due to the work-related injury (for up to one year). If, due to your injury, your absence from work lasts for twenty-one days or longer, those initial five days are to be restored to your sick leave, in accordance with the law.

Write a letter to the Human Resource Department and request the number of sick days you have available. After you return to work, follow up that request to ascertain your injury has been charged against the appropriate number of sick days. (If it appears that you have been charged with sick leave incorrectly, please contact me.)

Contact the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement Board as soon as possible to notify them of your injury. If your injury results in complications later on, such notification may mean the difference between an accident disability allowance and a smaller allowance of another type.

(Continued from page 2)

**Finally, if your injury is the result of an intentional assault, follow the above, plus:**

- a. Your principal must report the incident to the Superintendent in accordance with *Article 22 A.1*. You should fill out an *Incident Report* for your principal. Also, complete a report with the Quebec Team if possible. Keep a copy of all reports filed.
- b. Contact me at the SEA as soon as possible at 782-8300. If you wish to press charges for assault, we will be able to provide you with legal assistance through the MTA if **you are a member of the SEA**.
- c. Write a detailed account of the incident as soon as possible to supplement the *Incident Report*.
- d. If your personal property is damaged during the course of the assault, the School Committee is responsible for reimbursing you the cost of the damaged property (*Article 22-C.3.a*).

Have a happy holiday season!

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## Flu Shot Vaccination Coverage

All GIC health plan members have coverage for flu shot vaccinations included in their health plan benefits, and with recent federal health reform and Medicare changes, those vaccinations are covered as preventive care services with a zero-dollar copayment. While some of the particulars of coverage vary, the health plans, in general, only allow their participating medical providers, not pharmacies, to bill directly for the vaccinations. The reason for this is, although the health plans do contract with pharmacies, those contracts usually cover only the dispensing of medications, not the provision of a service such as administering a vaccination. Since covered health plan providers include physicians as well as limited service retail clinics (e.g., CVS Minute Clinics), our members have numerous choices about where to receive a vaccination other than at a pharmacy.

GIC members should contact their health plan with any questions they may have about flu shot benefits.

In general:

- The medical providers of all GIC Medicare and non-Medicare plan members can bill the health plan directly for the flu shot vaccine and its administration with no member copayment.
- If a GIC member receives a flu shot at a pharmacy, the pharmacy may directly bill the health plan only in the case of Neighborhood Health Plan.
- Pharmacies can bill Medicare Part B directly for Medicare members who show the pharmacy their Medicare card (not their health insurance card). This does not apply, however, to members of Fallon Senior Plan and Tufts Medicare Preferred.
- A GIC member who does happen to get the flu shot vaccination at a pharmacy and is charged in full or in part for the vaccination should contact their health plan to see if they can obtain reimbursement by submitting the receipt to the health plan.

GIC contracts with CVS Caremark to provide the pharmacy benefits for UniCare plan members. Flu vaccines, like other vaccines in the CVS Caremark plan, are covered as drugs are; a pharmacy in the CVS Caremark pharmacy network is paid to dispense them, not to administer them. Members receiving the flu shot at a pharmacy, therefore, may be charged by the pharmacy for a copayment (depending upon if they have Medicare or not), and/or an administration charge. CVS Caremark does offer its clients a supplemental program for the purchase of coverage of flu shots at pharmacies, with five different charges for five different types of flu vaccines. Considering GIC members can receive flu vaccines through their health plan's network of medical providers, GIC decided at this time not to purchase this additional product.

If you have any questions, contact your health plan provider.

# What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By 

For your reading pleasure this month, I've decided to include a letter sent to me concerning a past article in our newsletter along with my reply. It is always encouraging when I receive feedback (positive or negative), questions, concerns, suggestions, etc. in response to a piece of writing. This is how we do business – by communicating as openly and honestly as we are able. The more of this two-way communication we participate in, the more we can accomplish as an organization. We must stay connected!

Dear Peter,

I read with interest your comments about the “phony” office referral form. There was talk at our PBIS training at the end of last school year about a new form, and in fact, there was one at IOE in the fall. We were wondering if a new form had actually been approved. I saw the form in a pile of discipline forms, and mistakenly used it because I thought it was the new form. It looked good to me, especially considering it was a duplicate-formatted form.

In the past, at IOE we have asked for forms that are prepared in duplicate format, so that teachers can have a copy of what is sent to the office. Otherwise we have to make a xerox copy, which is not always possible - or write out a referral twice!! The issue has been that we do not always get info back from the office about what actions were taken, nor a record of our actions.

What is the problem with the so-called “phony” referral? You mentioned that SEA negotiated with someone - was it PBIS? What were the sticking points?

I think there are probably many teachers who would like to see an updated form that is quicker and easier to use, and includes a duplicate copy.

You are welcome to print this in the next newsletter with your response.

Thanks

Susan Triolo  
ESL teacher, Indian Orchard Elementary

Dear Susan,

I thank you for your correspondence; it is so nice to hear from teachers in response to articles in our monthly newsletter. I encourage all to email their concerns, questions, comments, etc. to me, but please use my personal email (petereese@yahoo.com). I cannot access my SEA account from home.

Susan, I understand your wish to have a more user friendly referral form and that is exactly why the union agreed to negotiate this issue. Let me give you a quick run through of what has transpired. Hopefully, I will address the concerns your letter conveys.

First and foremost, the SEA does not bargain contractual changes with any private consultant group. We bargain with the Springfield Public Schools (SPS). SPS approached the SEA last year in hopes we would take a look at a proposed new referral form; we agreed to study the issue. This was not priority one given the reality we face with collaboration schools, Level IV schools, IBB (bargaining a new Agreement), and the day to day work that is done by the union staff to meet the needs of well over 2600 teachers. During the summer, while PBIS training was occurring in some schools, rumors of a new referral form reached the SEA. We communicated with SPS that we would need to bargain any change; we submitted our changes in the form and received a response that we would need to sit down and negotiate. We had a session in September with representatives from PBIS present. The district heard our concerns, read the slight changes (we actually added a few

*(Continued from page 4)*

check-off boxes for infractions they missed on the original), and it was agreed that the PBIS representatives would tweak their proposed form, based on our proposed changes and get back to us. We have recently heard from them (11/15/11) with no discernable accommodations to our concerns/suggestions.

It is very interesting that IOE had office referrals printed in a duplicate-formatted form as I have been asking for this since Dr. Burke was at the helm. We had these forms formatted for ease of use up until the Finance Control Board hit town and haven't seen them since. I fully appreciate a teacher's need to have the paper work reduced and or streamlined (the very reason we agreed to open talks about the referral form), but in any case, if you are not receiving a written response to your referrals from the office this could constitute a violation of Article VII of our Agreement.

The real issue here is not that the union is adamant about keeping the contractually agreed upon form, but the usurpation of our collective right to bargain over changes in working conditions. An entire colonial reality was overthrown not because the people hated taxes so much, but because there was no voice in the decisions to tax. Taxed tea didn't start a revolution, but the utter disregard for people's rights to have a voice in the creation of policies that carried the weight of law (for both sides) did! SPS should have communicated to all principals that the only acceptable referral form is the contractually agreed upon form. This is not a trivial matter. It is a matter of good-faith bargaining. We are currently negotiating a new Agreement; we must be confident that the future Contract is respected by both parties. If arbitrary changes can be made to your working conditions (as trivial as the change may seem), we then lose the little reassurance that the system we still have can work. Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) is predicated on mutual trust and respect for all agreements reached. It will be very difficult to continue IBB when such an easily resolved matter (referral form) cannot be settled properly.

Basically what I'm saying to you, Susan, is that our union supports the idea of a more easily used form. The form itself is not a huge issue to resolve; it's the idea that changes in the Contract can be instituted at will (quite possibly without the knowledge of the district). Hopefully this will be taken care of soon.

Again, thank you for writing. It is only with open lines of communication that the SEA (that's all of us) can operate in the best interests of the members.

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May all have a safe, happy, restful holiday season. See you next year!

Peter J. Reese  
Vice President



### **What does one snowflake weigh? \***

Submitted by: Debra Askwith, Brunton

The first snowfall of the season always amazes me. The storm of October 29<sup>th</sup> was no exception. I couldn't resist the urge to stick out my tongue to capture these creations of nature. The wetness, and not the weight of the snowflake, was all that my tongue could perceive. Yet, that evening a coalition of these crystals felled mighty oaks, bent birches, and mangled maples. Never underestimate the power of a group in fulfilling its destiny; especially when they come gently in the quiet of the night.

We, as a community of educators, have the power to make a positive difference when we all come together. Ask your Building Representative how you can contribute to building better schools through your involvement in a fully engaged Union.

\* Estimated weight of a single snowflake is between 0.001 to 0.02 grams. A single Hershey kiss weighs 4.7 grams. (Source: Archimedes Notebook [www.archimedesnotebook.blogspot.com](http://www.archimedesnotebook.blogspot.com))

# **P**ROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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*Patricia Sullivan*

On November 9, 2011, Tim Collins, Mary Chamberlain and I met with Mary Kate Fenton, Chief Schools Redesign Officer and Gladys Franco, SPS Professional Development Department Chair to start planning Professional Development for the 2012-2013 school year. We discussed many topics including the New Teacher Orientation, August Professional Development, and the after school Professional Development that teachers do during the school year.

In particular, we discussed how important it is to provide **all teachers** with Professional Development. Are small departments like art, music, physical education and counseling receiving the appropriate Professional Development? Do the ETLs receive the up to date training necessary to do their jobs well?

How many days of Professional Development should there be? Do we continue with four days in August and the after school Professional Development during the school year? Should we bring back the three days during the school year instead of the after school days? Obviously, some of these changes would involve bargaining.

Further discussion centered on content specific Professional Development. In August, should we go back to offering two content days outside of the buildings as we have done in the past? Content Professional Development certainly would have to be in the area of a teacher's licensure or a subject area that the teacher has been assigned to teach. In addition, Professional Development needs to align with the new evaluation tool for teachers.

Finally, we reviewed survey results from the New Teacher Orientation. How can the district attract more new teachers to attend? How many days of orientation should be offered? Should the sessions be half day rather than full day? Can we do a better job of showing new teachers how the district policies, Unit A Contract, and evaluation can work together to help teachers achieve their own personal goals as well as the district goals?

As you can see, the discussion was wide ranging. All parties at the meeting showed an openness to new ideas and doing what is necessary to provide the best Professional Development that the district can offer.

I will keep you informed of our progress during the year.

# Save the Date

## SEA Spring Conference – March 23-24, 2012

UMass Conference Center & UMass Hotel at the Campus Center, Amherst

### **Participants wanted:**

**SEA Association Reps, SEA Executive Board Members and anyone who wants to learn what the union has to offer you and what you have to offer to the union!**

For the past several years, the Springfield Education Association has held an annual training for all Association Reps and Executive Board members to train them in the skills that would make them effective building reps and leaders. This year, the SEA is sponsoring a Spring Conference that would target the same members as before, **plus** members who simply want to learn more about the union, members who might want to become future leaders, or members who are former reps who want to help out in other ways.

Friday night's program will include an SEA overview of union history and a panel that will address *Unionism Under Attack*.

On Saturday, there will be concurrent sessions designed to address the needs of new or fairly new reps, the needs of experienced reps, and workshops for members with limited involvement who want to know more about the union. New or fairly new reps' topics include how to communicate with your staff through intentional conversations, communication organizational charts and 10-minute meetings, how to ensure there is an effective feedback loop in your building, and a session on getting to know the Contract.

Experienced reps' topics will also be about communication, yet on a deeper level, with a facilitated discussion on how to organize your building and sharing of strategies to create a feedback loop and a safe environment to get honest conversation going. There will also be a session on mediation training: using assertive language to problem solve.

For members who simply want to learn more about the union, members who might want to become future leaders, or members who are former reps who want to help out in other ways, the topics will include union tools and resources in and out of district, avenues of communication to help create a feedback loop, and paths of participation through school-base activities/teams. There will also be a session on accessing your power and defining and identifying leadership characteristics and skills.

Look for a registration form at the January SEA Legislative Board meeting. Overnight accommodations will be limited. Therefore, the sooner you register the better chance you have of obtaining a room. All rooms, Friday night dinner, and Saturday breakfast and lunch, will be funded by SEA for SEA members only. Attending the Saturday sessions only is also an option.

**It's That  
Time  
of Year  
Again!**



**Get Extra**

# *Holiday Cash*

**By Skipping Your Next Loan Payment\***

Members of STCU Credit Union can participate in our Holiday-Skip-A-Payment program. This means that you may skip your December or January payment on your Credit Union loan and if you have more than one loan, you can skip a payment on each.



145 Industry Ave., Springfield  
413-732-9812

453 East Main Street, Westfield  
413-562-4092



\*For consumer loans only. Interest will continue to accrue on the loan.  
A \$25 processing fee will be deducted from your account. See your branch for details.

## ***Kenneth Shea - Bankruptcy Law***

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*Are you being harassed by creditors?*

*Have you received a summons from collection agency?*

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*Are you looking for honest legal advice?*

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*[www.attorneykenshea.com](http://www.attorneykenshea.com)*

**200 North Main Street**

**East Longmeadow, Ma 01028**

**413-525-1313**



## Fall Contract Courses

Springfield Public Schools Professional Development has not confirmed the Spring Contract Courses that the Unit A Contract calls for them to offer. SPS Professional Development has committed to sending an electronic flyer containing course outlines, times, and dates to each Unit A member before the holiday break. This information will also be posted on the SPS website.

## 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:

Monday, **January 2, 2012** – Extended Day **MUST** be held on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday of that week as predetermined and communicated by your school's S.C.D.M. Team.

Make Note In Your Calendar Now!

## Creditable Service Surveys for MTA Members

Among the many bills currently being analyzed by the legislature's Joint Committee on Public Service is a creditable service bill which impacts educators. **House 2932** would allow qualified school teachers, higher education faculty and certain professional employees, who rendered service in non-public schools after January 1, 1973, up to four years of creditable service towards retirement. Eligible members would be required to pay an amount equal to 10 percent of regular annual compensation as of their most recent date of entry into the system plus buyback interest on that amount.

In order to better gauge the impact of this bill, MTA is conducting a survey of members who would be eligible to buyback time if this bill is signed into law. The data collected will assist MTA in their lobbying efforts. Go to <http://massteacher.org/advocating/surveys.aspx> and click on "Non-public creditable service survey" to participate in the survey. It will take less than five minutes to complete.

## 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.

## I'm Your Handyman!

Plumbing, electrical, carpentry

Large or small, I do it all

Bud Wagner

(former Putnam Vocational Teacher)

**860-657-5709**

## KEYS INITIATIVE

KEYS is an acronym for **Keys to Excellence for Your Schools**. As a result of years of research, NEA, with the help of thousands of teachers and education support professionals, has identified conditions essential to the development and maintenance of a quality education program in a school. From this research sprung a tool and process for NEA members involved in school reform - the KEYS Initiative. The KEYS Initiative includes the use of an extensive web-based survey and support completed by school staff for school improvement.

### It is time to take the KEYS survey again!

The State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recognizes that school climate impacts teaching and learning and therefore is requiring all districts that received Race to the Top monies to do a climate survey in each of their schools. SPS and the SEA, recognizing this impact, implemented a climate survey (the National Education Association's KEYS) in 2007.

SPS has received permission from DESE to use the NEA KEYS survey in lieu of the state's requirement to use the TELLS survey since most schools in the district have completed the KEYS survey twice (2006-2007 and 2009-2010). The schools in our district have baseline data from those years, and some schools have analyzed that data and based school improvement work on the results.

This year, all teachers and school based administrators will be participating in the web based KEYS survey. Results of the survey are available as soon as the survey is closed giving schools immediate access to their data. Because over 90% of teachers in the buildings have completed the survey in the past, the results are valuable to access each school's climate.

If there is the same level of participation as the last time, the resulting data will be an accurate assessment of what was accomplished at each school and at the district level. Schools and the district will then be able to build on the successes, and focus on the challenges.

Once all the schools' surveys are completed, the district-wide data (a compilation of all of the schools' data) will also be available. At the district level, we will be convening a team to analyze the data. Fifteen teachers will be chosen for the district KEYS team, and will be part of a labor/management team that will include SEA leadership as well as district-level and school-based administrators. This labor/management team will be provided with KEYS data analysis and facilitation training as part of the expansion of SEA/SPS district-wide labor/management collaboration work.

It is our hope that, at the school level, principals and a KEYS data team will review the data to be presented to their staff.

It is our hope that **ALL** schools participate and take the opportunity to make teachers' voices heard concerning the school's progress toward improvement. For more information, go to [www.keysonline.org](http://www.keysonline.org).

<p><b>EXECUTIVE BOARD</b></p> <p><b>PRESIDENT</b> Timothy Collins</p> <p><b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> Peter Reese</p> <p><b>TREASURER</b> Susan Fielding</p> <p><b>RECORDING SECRETARY</b> Catherine Maccini</p>	<p><b>AT-LARGE MEMBERS</b> Arlindo Alves Denise Cote Barbara Dismuke Margaret Fitzpatrick Marianne Gleason Dawna Jenne Donna Kells Wagner Yvette Ramos-Bishop Susan Schack Charlesetta Smith Patricia Sullivan</p> <p><b>RETIRED AT-LARGE MEMBER</b> Lynn Hollowell</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SEA E-MAIL ADDRESSES</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Timothy Collins contact@seateachers.com</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Arlindo Alves aalves@seateachers.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Charlene Lonczak clonczak@seateachers.com</td> <td>Sandra Forni-Torres sfornitorres@seateachers.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">E-mail General Information or Questions to: contact@seateachers.com</td> </tr> </table>	Timothy Collins contact@seateachers.com	Arlindo Alves aalves@seateachers.com	Charlene Lonczak clonczak@seateachers.com	Sandra Forni-Torres sfornitorres@seateachers.com	E-mail General Information or Questions to: contact@seateachers.com	
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