

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 Website: www.seateachers.com

President's Message

Happy New Year! As we move into the new year, the SEA is doing everything we can to mitigate the ramifications of the cancellation of February vacation. We are pursuing all legal and political avenues. We have filed a grievance and unfair labor charges at Labor Relations and we are bargaining the impact of the change in the school calendar.

The best possible outcome would be the Board of DESE moving the MCAS testing schedule from March through April to April through May.

Kudos to SEA members who went to the SEA website to contact the Governor and the members of the Board of DESE and other political leaders! Your efforts are gaining traction.

Senators Welch and Candaras, and Representatives Ashe, Coakley-Rivera, Curran, Finn, Puppolo, and Swan have all sent letters in support. The Springfield School Committee and the City Council also communicated with DESE. I have a meeting scheduled with the Governor where I will present our case on moving the MCAS calendar and ask for his help.

I thank all of you who sent e-mails and letters. I ask you to encourage your colleagues, family, and friends to do the same.

The SEA Executive Board is working on a project to do an assessment of the amount of time district mandates add to teachers' workday and what, if any, value the mandates have relative to improving student learning. The district needs to narrow its focus and stop laying mandate after mandate on teachers' plates. Peter Reese, SEA Vice President, has addressed this in previous articles in *The Springfield Teacher* and has addressed it again in this issue on page 3.

Once again, Happy New Year and thank you for all you do!



SEA Membership and Legislative Board Conference March 23 and 24, 2012

~A chance to learn about the SEA~
~An opportunity to tell union leadership what you think~

See article on page 5



I have received several e-mails and phone calls from teachers regarding issues related to the length of the school day. The main concern teachers have is when are teachers required to report to school and to what time are they required to stay. Below is language in the Contract that addresses this concern, followed by a brief explanation. *(This applies to all non-level 4 schools only. The length of the work day at Level 4 schools, except Commerce, is 7 hours and 45 minutes. This time is set in their approved DESE Turn Around Plan.)*

Article 5, Working Conditions, section J, School Hours and Teacher Work Day, reads as follows:

1. “The schedule of school hours is subject to change. Said starting and dismissal times are subject to modification (between the hours of 7:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. for all traditional schools and between 7:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. for alternative schools) by the Committee provided that no such modification will increase the length of the teacher’s workday.”
2. “The teacher workday will be seven (7) hours. The time required before and after school is included in the seven (7) hour day, except where otherwise specified in this agreement; e.g., extended day.”

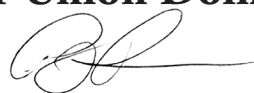
Section J-1 clearly states the range of time in which schools are allowed to operate. No traditional school can start prior to 7:30 A.M. and the school day must end no later than 3:30 P.M. Alternative schools have greater flexibility and are allowed a wider range.

Section J-2 states that teachers will work a seven (7) hour day, which includes any morning or afternoon duty that is assigned to the teacher. Below are examples of the length of a teacher’s work day by grade level. Please note that some schools in the district have slightly different start and end times, but the teachers are only required to be there for seven (7) hours.

1. At the high schools, the school day starts at 7:35 A.M. and ends at 2:20 P.M. Teachers are required to be on duty at 7:20 A.M. therefore at 2:20 P.M. the teachers have worked seven (7) hours and are free to leave for the day.
2. At the middle schools, the school day starts at 8:05 A.M. and ends at 2:50 P.M. Some teachers have morning duties and are required to be on duty at 7:50 A.M. therefore at 2:50 P.M. those teachers have worked seven (7) hours and are free to leave for the day. Other teachers are assigned afternoon duties and are not required to be in until 8:05 A.M. therefore at 3:15 P.M. those teachers have worked seven (7) hours and are free to leave for the day.
3. At the elementary schools, the school day starts at 8:50 A.M. and ends at 3:30 P.M. Some teachers have morning duties and are required to be on duty at 8:30 A.M. therefore at 3:30 P.M. those teachers have worked seven (7) hours and are free to leave for the day. Other teachers are assigned afternoon duties and are not required to be in until 8:45 A.M. therefore at 3:45 P.M. those teachers have worked seven (7) hours and are free to leave for the day.

What's Our Union Doing for Us?

By



Happy New Year to all – ever the optimist! We've got a long haul ahead of us especially with no winter vacation. The sad thing is: not all of us will make it to the end of the year; so many have resigned or retired early already.

I want to thank all of those who responded to our call for documentation on the ever growing demand for one's time. The workload, therefore the time commitment to your job, has become unmanageable. This evidence of additional responsibilities forced upon educators in Springfield is enlightening (not to mention provocative of rebellion) on a few levels. There seem to be some systemic demands and then there are the idiosyncratic – sometimes dictatorial/maniacal/sadistic/authoritarian/farcical/etc. – demands. We received, thus far, lists of programs, policies, directives, dicta, and a plethora of complaints in the “so much is demanded of us at the last minute” category. We are in the process of categorizing/analyzing the material. The task of presenting a fair and generalized “day in the life of a Springfield teacher” to the district is quickly becoming a huge (but most worthy) assignment. We are still seeking detailed accounts of what you all are being asked to do in your respective schools. How much time spent on each task is extremely helpful. Please, keep the information coming.

I will not list all the reported programs because we really need the full picture on each and we don't want a list to be checked off under the assumption our knowledge is complete. We can use a “for instance” such as ANET testing. Here is a situation whereby the district is paying a company to collect data on student performance. The company is being paid well for this. From what we've garnered thus far, teachers are being told to carry out certain duties connected to the ANET program. They are being asked to: (the following may not be a complete scenario) create with their students “student success plans” (a type of IEP for all), create re-teaching plans, collect data, make copies of all forms, align ANET test standards and objectives to district lessons, create and maintain ANET bulletin boards, fill out “Academic Address” forms which entail meeting with students individually, and answer surveys. This is only one item placed on teachers over and above the already demanding aspects of the job: lesson planning, assessments, delivery of lessons, correcting, managing, attending professional development offerings, home contact, disciplining, etc. How much time is in one day?

Then there are the inane managerial decisions. Suffice it to say that some decisions and the attendant outcomes would make great material for the sit-com writers of Hollywood. One such example is the new policy where office secretaries determine who responds to a teacher's call to the office for help. Check this scenario out: fight in class, teacher calls office and explains what's happening (with enough detail for the “911” staff), secretary dispatches the nurse to the room where the fight is taking place. I guess the nurse was called to patch up the students before the fight ended!

Sadly, these decisions affect our lives as well as the children we attempt to educate here in Springfield. In our efforts to nail down the time it takes a teacher to perform her/his responsibilities (known as “The Workload” or “A Day in the Life of a Springfield Teacher”) we invite all to help us. Please include the time of day you usually arrive/depart your building.

You may contact the SEA at contact@seateachers.com (please type “Workload Documentation” in the subject line of the email) or me (petereese@yahoo.com) with your evidence.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Below is a request from me for individuals to sit on the SEA Scholarship Committee. Please check it out and think about it.

As always: Keep Smiling

Peter J. Reese
Vice President

WANTED

**Teachers to Serve
on One of the Most Rewarding
SEA Committees
The Meline Kasparian/Peter Dupuis
Scholarship Committee**

Serving on the SEA Meline Kasparian/Peter Dupuis Scholarship Committee is one of the most rewarding endeavors one may participate in, as far as union work goes. This year, a streamlined process will be in place to make it easier. The time commitment is not huge. The responsibilities of committee members include: attending an initial procedural meeting, reading applicants' packages, scoring applicants in five categories, attending a final meeting to determine the year's recipients, and attending the Legislative Board/Awards dinner in June (optional).

If you are interested in being a committee member for the 2012 scholarship recipient selection, please send an email to contact@seateachers.com (type "Scholarship Committee Member" in the subject line of the email).

Thank you,

Peter J. Reese
SEA Vice President and Scholarship Committee Chairperson

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

Proposed amendments to the bylaws shall be submitted in writing prior to 5:00 P.M. on March 15, 2012 to the Committee on Bylaws, SEA Office.

Proposed amendments to the bylaws, submitted by individual members, shall be reviewed, and, if necessary, combined and/or edited without substantive change by the Bylaws Committee and then submitted to the membership at the Annual Meeting.

The Bylaws Committee shall, within 30 days of taking action on a proposed amendment, issue a report of its action to the submitter of the amendment.

Prior to the March deadline, the committee will make reasonable effort to assist interested members in achieving their intent so that proposals are legally worded and are consistent with other sections of the bylaws.

The Bylaws Committee shall recommend to the Annual Meeting procedures for consideration of amendments to the bylaws.

All bylaws must be in accordance with MTA-NEA bylaws.

Save the Date

SEA Membership & L Board 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 a brief overview of collective bargaining history and a panel that will address *Teachers and Unions Under Attack – Wisconsin! Ohio! Springfield? Are we next?*

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 rep topics include how to communicate with your staff through intentional conversations, mobilizing your members and 10-minute meetings, accessing your power and defining leadership characteristics, and a session on getting to know the Contract.

Experienced rep 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.

Registration forms can be found in this issue of *The Springfield Teacher*, in your school mailbox (distributed by an Association Representative), and on our website, www.seateachers.com. 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.

SEA Membership & Legislative Board Conference Registration Form

The SEA Membership and L Board Conference is scheduled for **Friday, March 23**, and **Saturday, March 24**, 2012 and will be held at UMass Conference Center & Hotel at the Campus Center, Amherst. The training will begin Friday evening and end at approximately 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. **Rooms are reserved** and on a **first come, first served basis**. In order to plan accommodations, please complete the registration form below. **SEA pays for accommodations (based on double occupancy) and meals.** Other details will be sent to you as soon as arrangements have been finalized. If space is available and you wish to bring a **guest, payment of one half of the room (\$65) must be received with your reservation.**



I will attend and stay at the hotel:

Name _____ Personal email _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____ School Name _____

Select One: My roommate is (Name) _____ Please assign roommate _____

Please circle one: Dinner choice Friday evening: **New York Strip Loin, Stuffed Grilled Vegetable Ravioli or Boston Baked Scrod**



I will attend and stay at the hotel:

Name _____ Personal email _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____ School Name _____

Please circle one: Dinner choice Friday evening: **New York Strip Loin, Stuffed Grilled Vegetable Ravioli or Boston Baked Scrod**

Please Note: **EACH PERSON** ATTENDING THE TRAINING **MUST FILL OUT THIS FORM.** PLEASE CHECK TO **MAKE SURE** THE **PERSON YOU CHOOSE** FOR A ROOMMATE **IS ATTENDING** THE TRAINING.

Please Return to SEA Office no later than February 17, 2012.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Patricia Sullivan

Happy New Year to everyone! Professional Development funds are still available. If you go to the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, you can find the forms and directions to apply for the funds.

I would like to say a few words about the upcoming SEA Membership and L Board Conference on March 23 - 24, 2012. One of the panelists on *Teachers and Unions Under Attack* will be Robert Farrant, PhD: Professor of History, University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Professor Farrant is the author of a book titled "Metal Fatigue" which describes the closing of the American Bosch in 1986. As a former Bosch worker and business agent for the union representing Bosch employees, Professor Farrant had a front row seat as this longtime Springfield company closed its doors and moved industrial jobs overseas. The loss of industrial jobs in Springfield has clearly had a negative impact on the economic and social health of the city.

Professor Farrant is presently Chair of the *Bread & Roses Centennial Committee*. In 1912, textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, many of them women, went on strike over wages and working conditions. There are many events planned for this year to celebrate the anniversary of this strike. If you go to www.breadandrosescentennial.org you can find more information.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Bob Farrant and reading his book through the Teaching American History Grant administered by Rosemary Kalloch, Director of Social Studies, for the Springfield Public Schools. I've also participated in a summer workshop with him that included the study of the Bread & Roses Strike of 1912. I encourage you to attend the SEA Spring Conference to learn more about the union or to become more active in the union. We've certainly seen and felt the backlash against unionism in recent years and we all need to actively protect the rights that we presently have as working people.

One strike banner during the Bread & Roses Strike said, "in struggle, you gain your rights." Today, we could probably say, "in struggle, we will work to keep our rights."

Look for the conference registration form on the SEA Website, www.seateachers.com and in this newsletter.



Dollars & Sense

SEA/MTA/NEA

Dues for Year 2011

January – June

13 Pay Periods @ \$36.55 = \$475.15

August – December

9 Pay Periods @ \$37.91 = \$341.19

\$816.34

Prior year's dues can also be found on the SEA website, www.seateachers.com.

Taking the NEA KEYS Survey

Everyone: Mark the following dates on your school calendar:

- The survey opens district-wide on January 30, 2012
- The survey closes district-wide on February 26, 2012

Before the survey: What schools need to do to prepare to take the survey

- A respected Unit A educator coordinator should be chosen at each school to work with the administration in:
 - o Handling the logistics of registering the school
 - o Opening and closing the school survey
 - o Monitoring the survey process

The Unit A educator coordinator and administration will work collaboratively on the following:

- Look for two forms that will be sent to each school electronically:
 - o School Registration Form
 - o Demographic information
- Work with the SCDM team to determine extended day dates of the survey within the 1/30 -2/26 time frame or other ways to help staff access computers during this time period (the survey can also be completed from any location)
- Inform staff of survey dates
- Send the school registration form to beisenman@massteacher.org
- After registering, prepare the demographics and then go to www.keysonline.org to enter the demographic information for the school.

During the survey:

All Unit A full and part time staff represented by the SEA, itinerants who start their week at the school and all Unit B building-based administrators, and principals

- **Should take the survey and encourage their colleagues to do the same!**

The Unit A educator coordinator and administration will work collaboratively on the following:

- Encourage staff to take the survey; remind them of the confidential nature of the survey
- Calculate the number of people eligible to participate in the survey before the survey is taken: all Unit A full and part time staff represented by the SEA, itinerants who start their week at the school and all Unit B building-based administrators, and principals
- Check participation rate after extended days dedicated to KEYS and encourage all who have not taken the survey to do so. The goal is to reach 90-100%.

After the survey:

The Unit A educator coordinator and administration will work collaboratively on the following:

- E-mail beisenman@massteacher.org to close the survey for the school
- An SEA team of teachers and an SPS team of administrators will be looking at district-wide data
- For schools who wish to analyze and interpret their school's data, further information will follow.

The Importance of Protecting Yourself and Having Disability Insurance

By: Susan Barry

This past summer I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. Two of my sisters and I were all diagnosed due to routine mammograms. **Do not skip your yearly mammogram!** I almost did and if I had waited a year, the outcome could have been very different. Instead, about two weeks later, the tumor was removed and I awaited the news for what treatment plan would follow. The first treatment the doctor advised me of was 24 weeks of chemotherapy. I was devastated. The doctor thought I would be out of school for the entire treatment.

I am writing this article because the thought of 24 weeks of chemo was incredible. Did I have enough sick days? What would happen to my students? Could I pay my mortgage? I even wondered what would happen to my dogs without their daily walk. Could I hire someone to do it for me? Could I afford it?

Luckily for me I had more than enough sick days to cover me if I had to do chemo (**please save your sick days – you will be happy you did**). I tried hard not worry too much about school; I had to wrap my brain around my situation and concentrate on my health and finances. Then, I realized I had a critical illness clause in my disability insurance. I called Trustmark; once they verified my diagnosis, they sent me a very large check that would help pay co-payments and other costs not covered by insurance. (I also bought myself a ticket to the Galapagos, but I digress.) For the record, this is a one-time payout.

Well, I was very lucky. We went from considering 24 weeks to 12 weeks to finally no chemo and just six relatively easy weeks of radiation. We all know people who have gone through a lot worse. Like all situations in life, this was a learning experience for me and those around me. I do not wish to become a poster child for cancer, but I will be a spokesperson for mammograms and early detection! My real goal in writing this article is to advise everyone that can, and it may be a challenge but it is a necessary evil, to get disability insurance or some other protection. I have a girlfriend who was in a major car accident and has since lost her teaching job (in another state). No job, no income. She has two daughters and a husband that works freelance. We know that means he has a busy season and a not so busy season. She is okay for now, but her luck will not hold out forever. Most of us are living paycheck to paycheck and we have seen our families and our neighbors lose their homes due to illness or accidents. The sick bank can help but it is not a long term solution. Insurance can be an extra expense, but is it worse than losing your job or your home? What about your family? Can they survive without you working or without you at all?

I hate paying for this insurance and hope I never have to use it, but as a single person who does not have a second income to count on or a large inheritance coming down the pike, I need to make sure my financial future is not jeopardized by a simple twist of fate. This was not going to happen to me – this only happens to other people, right? Well, it happened to me at the ripe old age of 47. It turned out okay, but it could have gone the other way. I know I have protection (and a fantastic team of radiologists, oncologists, and surgeons). Please everyone, protect yourself and your family. **Save your sick days and get some type of insurance** – it is worth the cost and cheaper at a younger age. I went with Trustmark, but there are many other companies that visit our faculty room every year. Talk to them, ask them questions. Take care of yourselves and those you love. I hope this is a very healthy new year for all of us.

**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

*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**



Thank You!

You may remember that over the summer teachers were asked to donate books to benefit Brookings and Dryden schools.

In the aftermath of the tornado, while assistance for large items was readily in place, replenishing a teacher's classroom library was still a needed area. So many of you pushed, pulled, and towed boxes to the SEA office in an effort to help another teacher. Thank you and kudos to all of you!

Brookings received their books first and it's fitting that, just two weeks before Christmas, Dryden received their books as well. Not only were books donated, but ancillary supplies were amongst the bags and boxes of books.

Constance Ryder
Balliet

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SEA E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Timothy Collins

contact@seateachers.com

Charlene Lonczak

clonczak@seateachers.com

Arlindo Alves

aalves@seateachers.com

Sandra Forni-Torres

sfornitorres@seateachers.com

E-mail General Information

or Questions to:

contact@seateachers.com