

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

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President's Message

Five of the seven current School Committee members are on the November 8th ballot. Two are running for mayor and three are running for re-election. Over the last few years, these members have repeatedly failed to vote for an extension of our Contract. They continue to require additional assessments that take time away from teaching and learning. When I spoke at the September 8, 2005 School Committee meeting speak-out, I asked the members to pay teachers as the law requires according to the terms of our expired Contract by placing all teachers at their appropriate step and column. Not one of them spoke out against the Superintendent's implementation of higher pay for new and selective veteran teachers, **except for Antonette Pepe**. In general, they have not been publicly supportive of our effort to secure a fair and equitable contract.

This School Committee election will impact us and the students we teach for the next four years. As we go to press, the Pioneer Valley Project, Greater Springfield Council of Churches, and the Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts are planning to go to the School Committee on October 20, 2005 with the following petition which has been signed by the two non-incumbent candidates for School Committee, **Orlando Santiago** and **Victor Davilia**.




**Pioneer Valley Project
Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts
Council of Churches of Greater Springfield
Petition to Springfield School Committee**

The loss of highly qualified teachers from Springfield schools has created a crisis that will take decades to overcome. The immediate victims are the children of Springfield, among the most vulnerable members of society. This community has a moral obligation to protect and educate our children. Further, we are deeply concerned that the flight of highly qualified teachers is feeding the flight of the middle class from Springfield and accelerating a system of educational apartheid in Hampden County, where students of color in cities like Springfield are in low performing schools, while white students in the suburbs are in high performing schools.

Low performing schools are the result of poverty and a lack of substantive resources, not teacher performance. Blaming teachers distracts from the real causes of our educational crisis. Failure to act to retain our dedicated and highly qualified teachers is only deepening the crisis. This situation requires your immediate action, as the elected leadership of the Springfield schools.

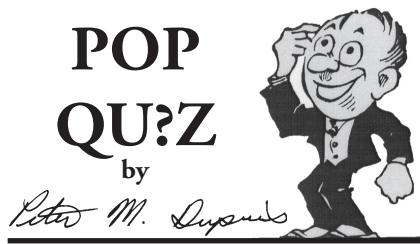
We, the below signed clergy and community leaders, have joined our names to ask and urge the Springfield School Committee to take a stand for the students, teachers and citizens of our community by voting to:

- 1) Give all teachers the step and column raises stipulated in the expired contract as required by law, and
- 2) Send the teacher contract to binding arbitration to find a fair resolution by a neutral and qualified party.



Let friends, neighbors, relatives, and parents, who are voters in Springfield, know which candidate(s) running for School Committee you, as an educator in Springfield, support. Ask them to do the same.





1. Could you explain how the amounts of the different bonuses/raises were determined?

First and foremost, we have filed charges against the district at the Labor Relations Committee over implementation of this very confusing and illegal way of paying some teachers.

Basically, there are three different groups of people who are receiving either a bonus or a higher salary than many veteran teachers. New teachers hired before the first week of August were hired under the old, "frozen" salary schedule and given a \$3,000 bonus. This is the first group.

In the first week of August, the Finance Control Board announced they would be paying higher salaries to newly hired teachers and veteran teachers working in the "critical areas" of SPED, ELL, Math, and Science. Following that announcement, the School Department's Director of Finances, Carey Sheehan, was given a new salary schedule and was instructed to calculate the salaries of new hires and critical area teachers from that schedule. New teachers hired after the first week of August were placed on the "new" salary schedule according to their education and experience (step and column). This is the second group. This new schedule creates two salary categories for new hires, those receiving a bonus and those on the new, higher pay scale.

The third group is veteran teachers in the critical areas. According to Carey Sheehan, he determined the salaries of this group of teachers by taking the pre-freeze step and column pay for each individual teacher and locating that step and column on the new, higher salary schedule and then increasing the individual's salary to the amount indicated on the new schedule.

SEA President, Tim Collins, is working on getting a copy of that schedule in order to help our members figure out how their individual pay was determined, and if it was accurately calculated.

Following the announcement of the higher salaries for critical areas, a number of members called the SEA and/or contacted the School Department to ask if they were eligible for the higher pay. I was told that, in order to be eligible, you must be both certified in one of the four critical areas and be teaching in that area. I was also told that the School Department is sending letters of explanation to those who inquired.

2. I've heard that, if the state decides to "takeover" a school, they can do what they want including firing teachers and counselors. Can they do that?

No, they cannot unilaterally "fire" SEA Unit A members. Dismissal of teachers with Professional Status (not to be confused with Professional License) is defined by state law. There is a process that must be followed. The process includes a reason for dismissal, a "good cause," and an appeal hearing for the teacher. The School Department has made a number of claims regarding their expanded powers over schools in any step of restructuring. Many of these powers override our Contract. We have submitted the School Department's claims to MTA's legal department. We expect a written response from MTA legal which substantiates the SEA position that neither the School Department nor the Department of Education can override the Contract. This response will provide the legal basis for the SEA to counter attempts by the administration to bypass our contractual rights.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nancy S. Fitchin

Please remember that stipends for this year can only be issued for courses or conferences that occur between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006. Courses or conferences that were attended last year cannot be submitted for reimbursement from this year's budget. Also, please note that if you received money during the last academic year or applied for a stipend and did not use it, you are ineligible for the current academic year.

The Professional Development Library has three new publications. A book, entitled Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning by Pamela G. Tucker and James H. Stronge, makes timely and interesting reading. The book discusses assessment of teacher quality and models that attempt to accomplish that. Two volumes of the magazine, "Educational Leadership," present thematic articles. The April volume deals with the adolescent learner and the September issue focuses on the whole child. You may borrow these or any other volume in our library by checking them out from our SEA office personnel.

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. e.g. 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.

For further information, refer to Article 6 (pages 18 and 19) of your
"Agreement Between the Springfield School Committee and the Springfield Education Association."

Are You Required To Take The Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure? Help Has Arrived!

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

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

When? **See the schedule for 2005-2006 below.**

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

What is the cost? **FREE!**

SCHEDULE OF TUTORIAL SESSIONS 2005-2006

TEST: November 19 (REGISTER FOR THE TEST BY OCTOBER 7TH TO AVOID A LATE FEE.)

Tutorial: November 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

TEST: March 4 (REGISTER FOR THE TEST BY JANUARY 20TH TO AVOID A LATE FEE.)

Tutorial: February 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 27, 28, March 1, 2, 3

TEST: May 13 (REGISTER FOR THE TEST BY MARCH 31ST TO AVOID A LATE FEE.)

Tutorial: May 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Test Registration Bulletins are available at the Office of the Licensure Mentors located at the PD Center, area colleges, or can be sent to your home if you call (413) 256-2892. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Slowinski or Fran Shute (787-6575).

What's Our Union Doing For Us?

Jennifer A. Stogner

Organize! Organize! Organize!

Yes, you guessed it, organizing your building is the hot topic this month. Some of you may not think this should be one of our priorities right now, with everything else going on. No action, big or small, can happen without organizing. It all starts with each of you.

Our reasoning behind organizing our buildings is that we need direct contact with one another so that we are all on the same page. We need to communicate with one another. We need to support and respect one another. This is how we do it.

How do I organize my building?

BAT Teams

Last year, the SEA introduced the Building Action Team (BAT) form. Teachers were given mini workshops on how to go about filling it out and the meaning behind it. Completing these forms is an important vehicle for communicating with your school quickly.

Each form has several slots for people called Action Organizers (AO). These people may be Association Reps or those who are willing to pass the word on. Each AO should have 4-7 people on their list, maybe more depending on the size of your school. You may find it helpful to organize by grade level or teams.

The Action Organizer passes on information such as details about an upcoming action or any information the SEA needs to tell people. The AO then goes person to person and speaks briefly relaying the message. Some AOs have held 10 minute meetings for the people on their list. The purpose is to make personal contact. Information is given and questions may be asked and answered.

Thank you to the following schools for turning in their BAT forms: Beal, Brunton, DeBerry, Harris, Homer, Indian Orchard, Kensington, Milton Bradley, Warner, and Springfield High. Others schools are working on them. Please, if you need help organizing your BAT form, call the SEA office. Tim, Mary, and I will come out to your school and help you.

10 Minute Meetings

Holding a 10 minute meeting is another great way to get the word out. Some schools have set up a monthly 10 minute meeting to talk about what went on at the Legislative Board meeting or about an upcoming action. This is also a place for questions to be asked and answered. These meetings are effective and short. You can get your message out to people so they are informed.

With each of these vehicles of communication in place, people in your building will be aware of what is happening. It gives everyone a chance to voice their opinions, too. Any unanswered questions should be directed to Tim, Mary, or me. We are here to help you.

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What can you do to help?

Throughout this crisis, Strategic Action Committees worked on strategies and actions which will help end the crisis. Many SEA members have stepped up to do this important work. This year the Strategic Action Committees have evolved into one committee: the Strategic Organizing Committee. Many people helped last year and over the summer. We continue to meet about every two weeks. This is where we need you, too.

In this committee, we discuss upcoming actions and plan future events. Everyone has a voice on this committee. All are welcome to attend. Many of you have expressed anger and say that we need to do something bigger, more dramatic. This is the forum to which you can bring your ideas. We need to hear from everyone about what they are willing to do. We are looking for ideas. We need to plan actions that will be well attended.

We want to hear from you!

Every action big or small makes a difference. People are listening to what we are doing through radio and TV news. They are also reading about us in our local papers, as well as the *Boston Globe* and *MTA Today*. Our voices are being heard.

What we need this year is unified actions with the commitment from large numbers of members. We have

approximately 2,500 members. Let's unite in solidarity and get ourselves to rallies and actions. The public, and especially our elected officials, need to know that we ALL are in a crisis, not just a few of us. Big numbers do mean something. We need to stay on the radio and stay in the news. To do this, we need you.

Please, if you need anything call the SEA and ask for help. You can also email me at jstogner@seateachers.com. Thank you for your help.



NEW ENGLAND CONSULTING SERVICE

GRADUATE COURSES FOR EDUCATORS

3 Graduate Credits

67.5 PDP's

4.5 CEU's in 5 classes

INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING STRATEGIES

Course number-16.748

Instructor: *Michael Smist*

This course is appropriate for all K-12 Educators

FIVE SATURDAYS

December 3,10,17, 2005

January 7,21, 2006

For information and registration call:

(239) 498-9451

or

(413) 596-3309

Fitness Benefit Forms

Fitness benefit forms are available from City Hall Insurance Office for the \$150.00 benefit. The forms need to be returned to:

CIGNA Healthcare
Scranton Service Center
Attention: Shelby Price
P.O. Box 3299
Scranton, PA 18505-0299

ATTENTION ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

If you have not returned the Association Representative List for your building for the 2005-2006 school year, please do so as soon as possible. Send it to: SEA, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109 or fax it to 413-783-8812.

Do NOT Send It Through Interoffice Mail.

**City of Springfield Employees
On the Job Injuries
Call Occupational Health &
Rehabilitation, Inc.
24 hours a day**

140 Carando Drive
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 746-4006
Hours of Operation:
Monday – Friday 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Accessing OH&R Services

During hours of operation, the injured employee should:

1. Fill out an accident report and obtain the principal's signature.
2. Call OH&R and ask for the patient Services representative.
3. You will be scheduled in the next appropriate and available time slot with an Occupational Medicine Clinician.
4. You will receive a full medical status report after treatment.

After hours of operation – nights, weekends and holidays, the injured employee should:

1. Contact your supervisor to report your injury immediately.
2. Call the after hours nurse (AHN) toll-free at 888-542-4455. The AHN will be paged and promptly return your call. Please be sure to include your complete telephone number, including the area code.
3. Describe the injury in detail. The AHN will recommend appropriate care, i.e., referral to OH&R the next day or referral to the Emergency Department at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.

**Remember, calling first
decreases your waiting time!**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD
ELECTION**

The Executive Board election for the vacant Recording Secretary, six Member-at-Large, and one Retired-at-Large positions will take place during extended day on Monday, October 24 or Tuesday, October 25, 2005.

Members who chose to run for these positions must plan to attend the Executive Board training being held for the entire Board, including newly elected members, on November 18, 19, and 20, 2005.

**HAS YOUR
ADDRESS CHANGED?**

If your address, telephone number, or e-mail address has changes, please e-mail the SEA office at contact@seateachers.com.

We will also inform the MTA and the NEA of the address change so you can receive the mailings from our affiliated associations.


PRESIDENT'S NOTES

- Kudos to all of our Association Representatives who have stepped up to the plate to disseminate critical information and assist members in their building, especially Frank Simpson who recruited five new Reps in his building and who has been working hard for our members at Commerce, and to the many new Representatives who have joined the Legislative Board this year!
- Kudos to Garry Bridges, husband of Chris Bridges – Milton Bradley and John Hamerly, husband of Miranda Hamerly – Rebecca Johnson for constantly supporting our efforts by attending all of our public actions!
- Tell Congress to protect student aid, oppose vouchers! In response to the rising costs of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Bush Administration and Republican Senate and House budget leaders plan to move ahead with tax cuts while cutting funding for programs that help low and middle-income families, including loans for college students.

Over the next two to three weeks, lawmakers in the House and Senate will decide whether to extend the tax cuts and which programs to cut and by how much. At the same time, the Administration and its allies continue to push for a \$488 million voucher program aimed at private school students displaced by Katrina and Rita.

Members of Congress will be home next week during their weeklong recess. Let them know that common-sense budget priorities do not place tax cuts above assistance to college students and others who need help. Along the same lines, urge them to oppose vouchers because they are ineffective and unnecessary and would disrupt urgently needed help for displaced students. If possible, schedule a meeting with your Member of Congress and some of your colleagues. Your voice is critical to passing a budget and hurricane education relief package that helps students and schools.

Tell your Senators and Representatives to pass a Fiscal Year 2006 budget that funds the nation's priorities, such as college loans, and does not include tax cuts that we can't afford. Urge them to oppose private school vouchers in any education relief package for students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

<p>EXECUTIVE BOARD</p> <p>PRESIDENT Timothy Collins</p> <p>VICE PRESIDENT Jennifer Stogner</p> <p>TREASURER MaryAnn Dion</p> <p>ASSISTANT TREASURER Susan Fielding</p>	<p>AT-LARGE MEMBERS</p> <p>Marilyn Daly</p> <p>Peter Dupuis</p> <p>Margaret Fitzpatrick</p> <p>Sara Palmer</p> <p>Donna Kells Wagner</p> <p>Ronna Tillman</p>	<p>SEA E-MAIL ADDRESSES</p> <p>Timothy Collins contact@seateachers.com</p> <p>Charlene Lonczak clonczak@seateachers.com</p> <p>Success Press successpress@seateachers.com</p> <p>E-mail General Information or Questions to: contact@seateachers.com</p> <p>Peter Dupuis pdupuis@seateachers.com</p> <p>Sandra Forni-Torres sfornitorres@seateachers.com</p> <p> helping teachers teach</p> <p><small>© GCIU 263-c</small></p>
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