



**Special points of interest:**

- Organizing for the schools we deserve
- Know your contract
- Retro pay
- New Salary (see website)
- Zone Update—wage reopener

# The Springfield Teacher

September 2017

Hope you all had a restful and relaxing summer. Many members have been busy during the summer working to build union power and collective energy to build the schools we and our students deserve. We will be trying out a new newsletter format this year. Please let us know what you think about it.

The Springfield Education Association and the MTA have brought a class action suit in the Massachusetts Superior Court on behalf of disabled teachers in the bargaining unit and against Springfield Public Schools for discriminating against these disabled teachers. A number of teachers employed by SPS have suffered injuries both on and off the job that prevent them from performing their regular teaching positions. SEA and these teachers have tried to get SPS to transfer these teachers to positions that can accommodate their disabilities, either through part-time hours or other accommodations that address their medical restrictions. Both federal and state law require employers like SPS to provide reasonable accommodations like the job transfers that these teachers are seeking. However, SPS has repeatedly refused to make these transfers, claiming incorrectly that the principals at each school have the authority to refuse to accommodate these disabled teachers. As a result, these disabled teachers are being denied job transfers that would allow them to return to work and are thereby losing income and benefits when they need it the most. Further, after denying these teachers their legal right to a job transfer, SPS is then firing these teachers for being unable to perform their former position. By bringing this lawsuit, SEA/MTA will seek a court order finding that SPS is violating the law, ordering SPS to begin complying with the law by making reasonable transfers for these disabled teachers, and ordering SPS to make whole those teachers that it has discriminated against by paying them for their lost wages and benefits.

## What is a union?

A union is an organized group of workers who collectively use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through a union, workers have a right to impact wages, work hours, benefits, workplace health and safety, job training, working conditions which are our students' learning conditions and other work-related issues.

All of the benefits and protections workers enjoy today came about as a result of the organized labor movement in this country. These include the minimum wage, social security payments, an eight hour day and weekends, overtime pay, the American with Disabilities Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act which requires employers to meet safety standards for their workers.

# **The New Lesson Plan Language**

## **NEW CONTRACT LANGUAGE – Lesson Plans**

Our new contract is still in DRAFT form at the time of this writing. There have been changes in some of the lesson plan language. Please see below:

### **5.E. Lesson Plans – please read the substantive changes below**

The goal of lesson plans should be to assist the teacher in preparation for effective lessons. It is understood and agreed upon that lesson plans are artifacts of planning and do not always reflect its implementation.

a. The lesson plans shall contain the following elements

Standard based objective

Direct instruction

Student Activity or practice

Formative assessments, this includes informal assessments that allow the teachers the ability to assess whether the students mastered the standard(s) being taught.

No lesson plan shall require minute by minute schedules.

Every attempt shall be made to limit the description of the above elements. Lesson plans should contain wording so the process is understood by both the teacher and administrator.

Lesson plans for Elementary ELA blocks will include each component of the literacy block. Only the Direct Instruction Section/Crafting for both Reading and Writing will follow the guidelines in 2a above.

Every attempt shall be made to limit the description of the components of the literacy block. Lesson plans should contain wording to be understood by both the teacher and the administrator.

b. Lesson plans will be available in the teacher's work space on the first day of the week. They will not be collected from every teacher every week but rather from individuals as needed for individual teacher professional growth. Once collected, the administrator shall provide written feedback within 3 school days. It is understood that the feedback is to be specific and aligned with supports for future lesson plans and teachers will not be required to resubmit the already collected plans or respond to the written feedback.

c. Teachers on Professional growth plans (Developing, Directed, Improvement) will follow the agreed upon plans.

## **NEW CONTRACT LANGUAGE – PREP PERIODS**

### **5.R. PREPARATION PERIODS – please read the substantive change to the language below**

“This time may be used to collaborate with other teachers or staff who teach the same or cross content area (no more than one time a week) for teacher determined collaborative planning and collaborative preparation of lessons, if the Principal is able to schedule it.”

The above language means that you determine how you are going to plan/prep for your students. Remember though that schools operating under the Level IV addendum to the standard contract have language that does allow administration to direct 2 preps per week.

**PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THIS IS “STANDARD CONTRACT” ONLY NOT THE ZONE CONTRACT**

(We'll be bargaining soon for a new ZONE contract)

## **SICK LEAVE**

This is a message to those recently hired members: Every newly hired educator is allotted 10 sick leave days. These days are recorded in hours (7hrs per day) therefore 70 hours are issued to new hires. Immediately, 1 day (7 hours) is deducted from your personal sick leave bank and donated to the Sick Bank. We all donate upon hire and then we all donate when the Sick Bank dips below 500 days. We do this so our colleagues, who are suffering from a serious medical condition and have therefore depleted their personal sick leave bank, may request up to 30 sick leave days from the Bank. So, to those newly hired: be aware that you have 9 days or 63 hours of sick leave in your personal sick leave bank. Please read Article 12 of our contract (available on the SEA website – seateachers.com) for the proper use of sick leave.

## **NEW MEMBER HANG OUT**

We also have the New Member Hang Out group that is starting to meet as well. They will be meeting every Second and fourth Tuesday. The location will rotate depending upon the needs and decision of the group but it is going to start at Sam's on West Columbus Avenue next to the Hall of Fame. The group might decide they need a change of venue or have a more convenient location and so the New Member Hang Out may become a traveling event. This month Nathan Bills, next month Paddy's, next month who knows?! Come meet other new members, share ideas, challenges, concerns, successes! For more information call the office.

## **ALANA**

Two new groups have been organizing and building union power!

ALANA—African American, Latino, Asian, Native American teachers started by organizing the first social of the group that was attended by over 70 teachers of color! There were door prizes, refreshments and a diverse menu that was enjoyed by everyone! Their next event is September 14th at Palate, 1168 Boston Rd, at 6:00. ALANA members are inviting all SEA members to join them for a welcome back celebration!

## **SALARY**

Please look at your pay for this first two-week pay period. Look for the EQL REG amount this is 1/22 or 1/26 of your base salary (depending on whether you receive 22 or 26 paychecks. Take the amount reported and multiply by the number of pay periods you signed up for (22 or 26). For example: a teacher on Step 9 with a Masters will be paid \$64,757 for this school year. This teacher receives 22 pay checks. The EQL REG should be reported as \$2,943.50 (64,757 divided by 22 = 2,943.50). That's your base salary. If you are entitled to any critical needs, longevity, work-shop, etc. pay, that is reported separately from your base pay. Check to see if that is accurate as well.

## **ZONE UPDATE**

Commerce High School joined the Springfield Empowerment Zone as of September. Commerce teachers please be sure to check your paycheck so you can be sure you've been placed onto the appropriate step on the contract.

For the other zone schools, we have requested that the district reopen salary negotiations to address the inequity that the non-zone contract has now created around salary and hours and days worked.

Many of the zone schools have been consolidated or renamed. This chart shows each school along with their administrators.

Make sure you've elected your TLT members and that there is a communication loop that keeps all teachers informed and involved in decision making. Remember the goal of the TLT is to empower teachers to make the decisions that they know are going to make their students successful!

## **PEAPS**

The PEAPS testing group is starting their "Movie Tour" as they are calling it with their first showing of their own movie that will inform and educate people about the overuse and misuse of standardized testing. Their first stop on the tour is Chestnut Middle School Auditorium on September 20th at 6:00. Childcare and pizza will be served. Please come and be part of the conversation!

The PEAPS specials group will be meeting September 13 from 6-8 at the SEA office to review the information that has been collected so far and decide on next steps. If you want to see music, drama, art, and shops return to our schools please join the group and be part of the conversation!

## WHY SHOULD I BE A UNION MEMBER?

We believe that there will most likely be a case heard this year in the United States Supreme Court that will essentially make all states what is called “right to work states.” That means people do not have to join the union to benefit from the collective bargaining the union does. That sounds like a pretty good deal right? Why not get something for free? When 50% or more of the Springfield Education Association members begin to feel that way, the union will be decommissioned??? Which means we will no longer have collective bargaining rights. The district would no longer have to bargain over salaries, working conditions, or benefits.

So it is important to think about what are the benefits of belonging to a collective group of people who work together to protect our jobs but more importantly our profession. So some simple answers to the question “What does the union do for me?”

I know it often seems we’re disrespected and not paid nearly enough for all the work we do, but do you think you would have any of the following if the district didn’t have to negotiate over these benefits?

- \***Paid lunch duty**
- \***40 minute prep period each day**
- \***7 hour work day**
- \***5 day work week (no weekends as some charter schools require)**
- \***sick time**
- \***raises (usually and despite being too little)**
- \***health insurance—75% paid by employer, 25% by employee**
- \***Legal representation that is paid for because you are a union member**

**Or just ask a teacher who got their job back after being wrongfully terminated why you should belong to the union!**

In our new contract language, we agreed to create Labor Management Teams that will address issues around vocational education, libraries and librarians, and related services and the special ed department. We have heard from some of you who want to participate on these committees. If you have not told us you want to participate on one of these teams, please call the office so we can add you to the team. We are also starting a Discipline Task Force to look at causes and solutions to the discipline challenges teachers seem to be facing in many of our buildings. If that task force is something you would like to get involved in, please let us know by calling the office.

Building rep elections need to be done by October 6th. This is another way to get involved.

**FREE!**

New classroom supplies and gently used educational materials

**Tools 4 Teaching**

### **The Recycling Store for Springfield Public School Teachers**

**When:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> THURSDAY of each month (except July) 3:00-5:30 . We follow the SPS schedule for school closings (snow days and/or emergencies). An SPS ID is required for shopping.

**Where:** 70 Tapley St. in the Congressman Richard E. Neal Municipal Operations Center across the street from Oak Grove Cemetery at the traffic light. Please use glassed-in front entrance and follow signs for Tools 4 Teaching.

**Who:** The SEA Committee of Retirees; we also welcome volunteers from the community. For more information email Chris Williams at [chrisew76@gmail.com](mailto:chrisew76@gmail.com) .

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