



The Springfield Teacher

January 2018

MTA/NEA NOMINATION FORMS

This year is an election year for the MTA President and Vice President. It is important that Springfield is fully represented and that our voices are heard when it comes to this election. Only members who attend the MTA Annual Convention can vote for those positions. Please consider running for this important job. Most teachers go to Boston after school on Thursday, attend the MTA convention on Friday and Saturday and are home at about 6 on Saturday. It is a great opportunity to be a part of the decisions that the MTA establishes for the upcoming year. Last year at the MTA annual meeting Tim put forth and got passed unanimously two new business items. The first one moves “that the MTA legal staff prepare to initiate a lawsuit should the Legislature and the governor fail to fully fund the recommendations of the joint House and Senate study commission recommendations on Chapter 70 funding (foundation formula) in this legislative session. This failure would be a clear violation of the governor’s and Legislature’s constitutional obligation to “cherish public education.” The second one moves “that the MTA legal staff prepare to initiate a lawsuit should the Legislature and the governor fail to fully fund the recommendations of the joint House and Senate study commission recommendations on Chapter 70 funding (foundation formula) in this legislative session. This suit would prevent DESE from implementing its accountability system until these recommendations are fully funded.” This is the kind of important legislation that is proposed and acted upon at the Annual Meeting. The self-nomination forms are in your building and available on the website. The nomination form is due at the SEA office before 5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 26, 2018. The election will be done electronically so be sure we have your current personal email address so you will receive the ballot.

HELPING OUR NEW STUDENTS FROM PUERTO RICO

As you all know, we have been joined by several hundred new students from Puerto Rico. We have \$5000 available to us from the MTA’s Mass Child program. We can purchase supplies that these students need like winter coats, boots, hats and mittens, school supplies, etc. We are working on identifying the organizations that can distribute the things we buy. Meanwhile, If you have students in your school who need supplies you can contact us with a list of what you want to buy, then buy the supplies, and we will reimburse you. If you would like to help with this project please email us at contact@seateachers.com or call the office at 782-8300.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR & SUSPENSION

With all the talk about suspension rates and students' ability to access the curriculum, I thought I'd have a William Putnam III moment.

Suspension, to most of us, is something they do to students in 1 to 3 day increments for a myriad of offenses. Administration is all too fearful of hitting the dreaded 10 day "limit." "You know we can only suspend for a maximum of 10 days." As I've fielded calls in the office from not only fearful, frustrated educators, but also those that have been actually battered by students, I've taken a good look at the Massachusetts General Laws and the regulations written to comply with the laws.

I think what pushed me in this direction was a seemingly innocuous statement about a principal who informed her/his staff that suspension days can be calculated using hourly increments of in-house suspension. We, at the SEA, have not recently awakened to the fact that student behavior has been increasingly disruptive and unsafe; we've expressed our concerns to management every chance we've gotten. Anyway, I was incredulous to think that with teachers' hands being tied as it is, administration was going to count hours towards suspension that is limited, in their eyes, to 10 days per school year. Our only recourse, or so I thought, was for staff to press charges on the students who threaten, sexually harass, and actually batter them. The reluctance to suspend or only suspend for short-term periods has left our members with the bulk of the outlandish behaviors right square in their laps.

The only place I've seen the 10 days of suspension mentioned is in MGL 37H ³/₄. This section of MGL addresses the behaviors/reasons for suspension that are found outside of MGL 37H and MGL 37H ¹/₂. These are the rather commonplace disruptions these days: flinging chairs randomly across the room, running the halls for periods at a time, destroying rooms by throwing materials around, cursing profusely, constant yelling--all those things that some of your students do on a daily basis to disrupt the learning of others. So, for 37H ³/₄ a child can be suspended for more than 10 days if certain steps have been taken. These steps are spelled out in the law and the regulations. Basically there needs to be attempts at addressing and correcting the behavior(s) informing parents, producing the charges and evidence, holding a hearing and having a process in place for appeal.

37H does not mention any 10 day limit and states the basis for long-term suspension or expulsion as instances where a student is in possession of controlled substances, weapons, or has committed assault on an educational employee of a school. Suspension can exceed 90 days and expulsion is also an option. There is a protocol in place that the school/district must follow in pursuing the long-term suspension/expulsion of a student.

37H ¹/₂ is similar in nature to 37H, but is concerned with those students who have had a felony criminal complaint or a felony delinquency complaint issued against them. The principal may decide how long the student should be suspended if the student's presence would have a negative effect on the general welfare of the school – i.e. long-term suspension/expulsion spelled out in the law/regulations. Again, there is a protocol to follow.

The on-going upward spiral of extremely disruptive behavior has placed Springfield in another vulnerable position as far as performance and the State are concerned. How high would we soar if the teachers could spend most of their time teaching? How many times am I going to read in an observation that the kids weren't totally engaged in class when some kids have completely usurped the authority/validity of the teacher vis-à-vis an inadequate program to address antisocial behaviors? How often are we going to hear "he doesn't have control of the class?" when the habitual disrupters of the educational process are removed and rewarded for "behaving" for ten minutes or so outside the classroom?

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Tired of being hit, kicked, scratched, spit on, sexually harassed, threatened, etc. then file charges with the police or juvenile court. Tired of little or no real help with the serious behavior issues in your school that preclude many students from accessing their right to an education, then submit contractually approved office referral forms to have the student removed from your room. The student should not return to you until you receive a written disposition of the matter on the approved form. Please read Article 7 of the Contract. If office referral forms are not being returned to you prior to the student's return and this seems to be school-wide, please have staff compile all of their referrals that have not been addressed and contact the SEA.

Remember the official office referral forms are yours to fill out as you believe will properly convey the event(s). Also remember, PBIS or any other behavioral initiative does not supersede Article 7 of the CBA.

Peter Reese, Professional Relations

SEA/MTA/NEA - Dues paid for 2017

January-June

13 Pay Periods @ \$40.87=\$531.31

August-December

9 Pay Periods @ \$40.95=\$368.55

\$894.98

TOOLS 4 TEACHING

A Free Recycling Store for Teachers

When: The 2nd and 3rd 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.

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

BUILDING REP TRAINING

Our next building rep training will be February 3rd from 8:30-12. The rep training is open to all of our members. During this training we will run two sections simultaneously. One section will discuss and explain the roles and responsibilities of a building rep. The other section will examine the contract in detail. You are welcome to attend either section. The training include a hot breakfast sandwich and coffee. Email us at contact@seateachers.com and let us know you will be attending .

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers know what they need to grow professionally! Professional Development funds are being requested at twice the rate of last year. Recently, the members of the PD- committee met to discuss a vision for the seven (7) professional development days we attend throughout the year. Our contractual agreement with the SPS is to collaborate and develop workshops that meet the needs of educators, counselors, and vocational staff. The goal of the PD-committee is achieve this outcome for future PD's.

The PD- committee is working on a survey tool to solicit your input to create workshops that address the topics educators' want for professional development. This survey will be available online in the near future. We want and need everyone's input!

There are a number of professional development opportunities available through the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA):

Please consider applying to the **2017-2018 MTA Next Generation Leadership Program**. This program will teach MTA members how to create bottom-up activism and help make local associations powerful and effective organizations. All members who are interested in engaging more actively in their union are welcome to attend -whether you've been a member for 1 year or 20 years.

The program requires commitment for the entire session you choose. MTA will provide overnight lodging in a hotel nearby the training location, if needed.

Sessions will be held in different regions of the state, each over one weekend, according to the following schedule:

- MTA Holyoke Office | Friday, December 8 at 4:30 pm - Sunday, December 10 at 1:00 pm
- MTA Lynnfield Office | Friday, January 26 at 4:30 pm - Sunday, January 28 at 1:00 pm
- MTA Auburn Office | Monday, February 19 at 4:30 pm - Wednesday, February 21 at 1:00 pm (February break offering)
- MTA Raynham Office | Monday, April 16 at 4:30 pm - Wednesday, April 18 at 1:00 pm (April break offering)
- MTA Headquarters in Quincy | Friday, May 18 at 4:30 pm - Sunday, May 20 at 1:00 pm

Visit the MTA/ Professional Catalog for additional information pertaining to the variety of relevant workshops and conferences available for educators in and outside of the classroom.

http://massteacher.org/news/conferences/pd_catalog.aspx

The Professional Development Committee has funds that can be used to attend conferences, workshops and classes. Each SEA member is entitled to \$300.00 every other year. If you are interested in using the funds you must complete and submit the "Application for Professional Development Funds" form. Once you have been approved for funds and have attended the event, you need to submit the "Request for Payment" form. Both forms can be found on the SEA website, www.seateachers.com. You can either mail the forms to the SEA office or email them to me at **amurph-brown@seateachers.com**.

What is the NCUEA?

The Springfield Education Association is a member of the National Council of Urban Education Associations

The mission of NCUEA is to promote and advance quality public education in urban schools by empowering and supporting local associations, leaders, and members. In carrying out this mission, NCUEA focuses on the following areas:

- **United voice for urban education**
- **Promotion of and advocacy for local associations**
- **Partnership with NEA**
- **Partnerships with education-focused organizations**
- **Training for local urban leaders**
- **Human and civil rights for all**
- **Celebration of diversity**
- **Communication among local associations**
- **Staff/Leadership relationships**
- **Quality working conditions**

As representatives of the SEA and the MTA, Audrey Murph Brown and I attended the NCUEA Fall Conference in Portland, Oregon from November 29th through December 2nd.

Breakout sessions topics included: Community Schools, ESSA Implementation, Conversations with NEA President Lily Eklesen Garcia, 21st Century School Design, and more.

Audrey and I were invited to speak to attendees about the work going on in Springfield around building the schools our students deserve. We shared information about our ALANA group, our work on NoOn2, our coalition building with parent and community groups/Movie Tour, a more open bargaining experience, and our expanding organizing goals, including the rolling out of the NEA's *My School, My Voice* campaign checklist.

This checklist is just the beginning of bringing educator voice (*now mandated by the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA*) in the most authentic possible way. Please be looking for a link to this survey from the SEA, and complete it in the most honest way you can. The questions are very general at this point, but will be followed by more targeted questions in a future survey. This is our opportunity to be heard! The data collected will be to inform and design, not to shame, blame, and punish!

Brenda Dunn, Vice President,

Audrey Murph-Brown, Professional Development Chair

NEW MEMBER UPDATE

The MTA has assigned staff member Ashley Adams to help us reach out to new members. He and our new member engagement coordinator, Erin Burns, have begun planning ways to engage with new members (those within the first 5 years of employment). We know that teaching in Springfield can be overwhelming, exhausting, draining and difficult. But experienced teachers also know that it can be incredibly rewarding, fulfilling and gratifying. We want to help all new members navigate the challenges so that they can reap the rewards. Keep watching for information about upcoming events. We would love to hear suggestions as well. Email **contact@seateachers.com** if you have ideas to help welcome new teachers or, if you're a new teacher let us know what we can do to help!

**SEA- African | Latino | Asian | Native | American- Educators
(ALANA)**

Did you know?

- ⇒ Students of Color (SOC) comprise over 80% of the entire Springfield Public Schools' (SPS) student body
- ⇒ ALANA Educators comprise only 15% of SPS faculty

Did you know?

SOC are more likely to succeed when taught by teachers who share common life experiences. Similarly, ALANA Educators thrive where the working environment is healthy and respectful. The Springfield Education Association (SEA) is very concerned about this disparity, the reasons it exists, and the impact it has on students. Most importantly, the SEA wants to do something about this issue.

In conjunction with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), the SEA is one of a handful of locals across Massachusetts that has begun to address issues specific to needs of educators of color. The SEA has joined the National Educators Association (NEA) ongoing dialogue of addressing the school to prison pipeline of black and brown students.

ALANA Educators and Allies meet regularly to educate and transform the manner in which the SPS is engaged in the recruitment and the retention of educators of color. Join us in our gatherings to share your joys, challenges, and ideas to help create cultural competent learning communities that embrace the strength of our diversity.

The SEA/ALANA is committed to creating the schools our students deserve.

VISION

ALANA-Educators creating opportunities for change.

MISSION

To create a supportive, dynamic, and collective Union focused on building a diverse and culturally proficient environment for African, Latino, Asian, Native, American Educators in the Springfield Public Schools while empowering ALANA- Educators.