

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

This November's election is extremely important for those of us who work in, and care about, public schools in Massachusetts. In particular, the Governor's race is critical. The Republican candidate told a group of Chamber of Commerce members, in the eastern end of the state, that public school leaders need to learn how to get around union rules. This is a blatant disregard of the collective bargaining laws of the commonwealth as well as a serious attack on the rights of every public school employee in the commonwealth. It is unconscionable for a gubernatorial candidate, who realizes he does not have the legislative support to change laws he does not like, to encourage public school administration to ignore the laws. This is not the type of person we want to be appointing people to the MA DESE Board or any other position of authority in this commonwealth.


This is a critical election that will possibly have a dramatic impact on public education for years to come. We need to elect people, at all levels of government, who will listen and put an end to harmful legislation and regulations such as:

- Under-funded and unfunded mandates.
- The deluge of DESE regulations that have timelines for implementation guaranteeing a lack of fidelity of implementation.
- An accountability system that is based on the crooked yardstick - - MCAS.
- An accountability system that is about shame and blame rather than support for the students who struggle.
- An accountability system that leads the public to believe the educators working in public schools, in gateway cities like Springfield, are unsatisfactory.

If this portrait of our school-based educators is accurate, then why is it that superintendents in surrounding, high-performance districts (according to MCAS) hire Springfield teachers, then, all of a sudden, they become exemplary educators?

I ask each and every one of you to vote in your own best interest and in the best interest of your students. If we act collectively in this election, it can be the first step in bringing back the joy of teaching for us and the joy of learning for our students.

Yours in solidarity,



What's Our Union Doing For Us?



This is my last article as your Vice President. Writing these has been, without a doubt, the most rewarding aspect of serving as the VP and I will miss this greatly. I will attempt to incorporate much of the flavor of my VP articles into the “Know Your Contract” articles.

I also want to thank all of you who have supported me in my role as your Vice President. I hope in that role I have kindled some to get more active – more involved in the issues that confront us. Whether it is on the political front or from the classroom trenches, pick the issue you feel comfortable fighting and join in at any level of involvement you wish.

Again this year, we are facing additional workload issues. We have a Joint Labor/Management Team in place to study and make recommendations. Progress is too slow and I believe not attacking the immediacy the workload environment calls for. The effects of an all too unwieldy workload are taking a devastating toll on our members. Case in point: the extremely time-consuming lesson plans required of almost everyone. The SEA leadership team is well aware of the crushing burden the workload issue has placed on you and has reached out to you for the data we need. We are in the process of waging a campaign of resistance to this mandate. **As always, the greater the number of vocal/active members who fight with us means the more expeditiously and meaningful the results will be.**

SEEDS is another hot issue for us (a Level 3 Grievance has been filed). Filing alone is not going to transform the rhetoric of SEEDS into the reality of SEEDS as a true developmental tool for teaching. I'm not saying everywhere, but I have seen evaluations that are simply “I GOTCHA” in nature. Even the most well-intentioned evaluators may not know the deflating impact of a Needs Improvement rating after an unannounced observation that may have been arrived at based on a fraction of what an educator does in a single day. Help us on this front also by informing us of anything that may seem to contradict the SEEDS process and logic itself!

Thank you all for working so hard on the front lines of education here in Springfield. It is not easy work and shouldn't be made more difficult arbitrarily.

I will miss serving as your Vice President, but hope to serve you well as the Professional Relations Associate.

Keep Smiling,

Peter J. Reese
Vice President

Executive Board Election Reminder

The Executive Board Election for the vacant Vice President, Retiree At-Large and At-Large positions will take place during extended day on **Monday, November 17 or Tuesday November 18, 2014.**

The **self-nomination** period ran from **September 11 – October 3, 2014.** A sample ballot listing the candidates is posted in each building from **October 7 through November 14, 2014.**

SEA Executive Board Candidates' Forum

An open forum for the contested Executive Board positions will take place on **Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 5:00 P.M.** in the SEA Community Room, 1000 Wilbraham Road. This is an opportunity for members to listen to the candidates and make an informed decision when casting your vote on November 17 or 18.



On Saturday, the 27th of September, we held a training at the SEA office on the Contract and SEEDS. We have expanded our Legislative Board training to include any member who wishes to attend. Bright and early on that gorgeous Saturday morn about twenty of your colleagues showed up for the training. I really should clarify that it's not a top down PD format – here's the info, you go use it. No! It's not merely training but it's a two-way learning, information sharing, strategizing, etc. session. The morning went by rather quickly and some stayed past the 12 noon end time. There will be more of these “trainings” in the future. The next training session is November 1, 2014. Keep an eye out for emails from the SEA with more details.

Since the 2014-2015 school year began, we have filed five Level 3 Grievances.

One has been filed against a principal for what we contend are violations of: Article 1: Association Recognition, Article 4: Fair Practices, Article 20: Evaluation, Personnel Action and Personnel Files, and Article 30: Grievance Procedure. There are also non-contractual issues included in this Grievance.

The second one filed is around our contention that the contract language for SEEDS has not been followed in many instances across the district. This Grievance cites about half of the Articles of the SEEDS contractual language. We have based much of this Grievance on the study of teachers' evaluations performed in the 2013-2014 school year. We welcome ongoing submission of SEEDS data as this data may help support our claims.

The third Grievance is based on our contention that an individual was denied the ability to avail herself/himself of advancement under Article 26 Career Ladders. The denial to continue through the application process was denied arbitrarily and capriciously.

Fourth in line is a Grievance to settle the question around the GCN training we're all mandated to do. It is our contention that the district, if they don't provide the time and/or pay to you, will be violating Article 5.R Working Conditions. We also put in a demand to bargain over this issue.

Lastly, the fifth Grievance contends that Longevity pay is part of one's regular salary (Article 27.O). It came to our attention from a retiree that Longevity pay was not included in the formula for Sick Leave buy back! Hey! Work for 35 years for us, take very little time off, then we will not reimburse you 15% of \$10.64 per day of unused Sick Leave. Yikes!

Keep Smiling,

Peter J. Reese
Professional Relations Associate
Grievance Chair

SEA
Association Representative Election
REMINDER!!

If you haven't held your SEA Association Representative election as yet, please do so as soon as possible. There is one representative for every fifteen members, e.g. 28 members – 2 representatives.

Association Representatives, please complete and submit the election result form that was provided in the September mailing and at the September 11, 2014 Legislative Board meeting. If you did not receive one, go to www.seateachers.com, click on "Legislative Board" to download the form, or call the SEA office at 413-782-8300. **The form needs to be submitted to the SEA office by October 10, 2014.**

**School Committee
Meeting Dates**

Below are the School Committee meeting dates for October and November 2014. The full calendar for the 2014 – 2015 school year can be found on the SEA website, www.seateachers.com.

Unless otherwise indicated, all regular meetings will be held in Room 220, City Hall, 36 Court Street; Springfield, MA. Working Sessions will be held at a location of the committee's choice. The regular meetings will begin at 6:30 P.M. Working Sessions, Speak Outs, and Meetings with Student Representatives will begin at 6:00 P.M.

October 23, 2014 Working Session
1550 Main Street

November 13, 2014 Regular Session




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for faculty
on Mon, Tues & Wed,
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Springfield Teacher

**MAINE BUS TRIP
CANCELLED**

**Due to low response,
the Maine Bus Trip has
been cancelled.**

Communicating To Our Members

Keeping our members informed about issues affecting public education, your profession, and the children of Springfield is vital. The SEA offers four vehicles to accomplish this – the SEA website (www.seateachers.com), SEA Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SEASpringfieldMA) this monthly newsletter (*The Springfield Teacher*), and blast emails sent to your personal email address.

Remember to:

- ==> **Check Out** your website at www.seateachers.com
 - ==> **Like Us on Facebook** at www.facebook.com/SEASpringfieldMA
 - ==> **Look for** The Springfield Teacher distributed to your school every month
 - ==> **Submit** your personal email address (SPS CANNOT be used) by sending an email to mailing@seateachers.com* indicating your full name and school (please type “email address” in the subject line of the email)
 - ==> **Add** the Springfield Education Association email address (contact@seateachers.com) to your personal email contacts so that emails do not go into your junk mailbox
- AND
- ==> Of course, **OPEN** the emails sent by the SEA -- YOUR union!

By utilizing these four vehicles of communication, you will stay informed and on top of important information affecting you and the children in your charge.

* This email address is being used for the sole purpose of gathering information and should not be used for regular correspondence with the SEA office.

Just For New Teachers December 5, 2014 Sheraton Four Points Norwood, MA

MTA's 13th annual **Just for New Teachers Conference** presents the perfect opportunity to meet with fellow educators and get tips on everything from classroom management, working with parents and assessing student progress to addressing bullying and creating great lesson plans.

This conference is open to members who are in their first four years of practice. NEA/MTA student members entering the final year of an educator preparation program or who have completed student teaching and any other students enrolled in education degree programs are also invited.

This is a one-day conference, brought to you by MTA's New Member Committee.

Look for further information about the program on the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, and in MTA Today, our state association magazine.

A DAY TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY
(Sponsored by the New Teacher Committee)

When: Saturday, December 6, 2014

Cost: \$35.00

Departure: 7:00 a.m. from the SEA parking lot

Arrival: 10:30 a.m. two drop off points - Times Square area and Museum area

Pick-up time: **Promptly** at 6:00 p.m. Rockefeller Center (driver will confirm)

Return time: 9:30 p.m. at the SEA

Please complete the registration form below and send it to the Springfield Education Association, 1000 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA 01109 with a check made payable to SEA for \$35.00. There will be a waiting list. If there are cancellations, refunds will only be made if the space is filled.

If the bus is filled, the tip for the driver is included in cost. If not, we'll pass the hat.



Registration for Day Trip to New York City
(Sponsored by the SEA New Teacher Committee)

First Come First Served

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number: _____ Cell _____

Personal E-mail (not sps) _____

(Please print clearly)

Enclosed is a check for \$35.00. I understand it is my responsibility to be at the return pick-up area (Rockefeller Center) before 6:00 p.m. as the bus will leave promptly at 6:00 p.m. If I am not there, I will be responsible for finding an alternate way to return to Springfield.

SEEDS Survey Results

The District and SEA are in agreement that our current evaluation system must be improved to make it more effective. Over the summer, a team including SEA leaders and bargaining team members, principals, administrators, union leaders, senior SPS leaders, and the school committee met to make changes to the SEEDS process. All parties acknowledged that the process of improving SEEDS will be ongoing, and that it is not possible to perfect SEEDS in a single year. The results were presented at PD in August.

In preparation for these discussions, the SEA conducted an on-line survey about SEEDS. The survey was completed by 980 educators. The results of the survey are below. They are listed in order of priority.

Final Results from the June 2014 SEEDS Survey Listed in Priority Order	Percent of respondents who rated this high priority or priority
A standard model of SEEDS with clear guidelines which are presented and discussed with educators and evaluators at the same time	93.6%
Additional time provided during the day or extended days to complete the required work.	92.7%
Consistent expectations for amount of evidence required across schools.	91.7%
Clear explanation of needs improvement and clear guidance on how you can improve your rating, resources being made available, timeline for follow-up observation and meetings.	89.7%
Consistent timelines across the district and electronic reminders of submission dates.	89.4%
Ratings of unannounced observations should not occur until after there is a conversation and the educator has the opportunity to talk about what was happening during the observation.	88.7%
Educators (Unit A members) on two-year plans should do self-assessment only in first year and evidence should span across two years.	88.4%
Alternative evaluator, or other recourse if educator believes their evaluator is biased.	84.0%
Consistency across schools on how educators who teach across many grades determine their team goals.	81.6%
Limit the amount of evidence.	81.1%
Consistent plan for when educators switch schools or subjects.	78.4%
A way to associate the evidence with the goal, not just the standard.	76.4%
More encouragement to educators during conferences.	71.0%
Unannounced observations should not result in a rating of exemplary, proficient, needs improvement or unsatisfactory.	69.5%
Differentiated ratings for individuals on team goals if needed.	66.1%
Keep the 'self' in self-assessment; only share the educator's summary of their strengths and weaknesses from the self-assessment with the evaluator, not the full assessment.	65.3%
Retiring educators, in their last year, should be exempted.	65.1%
More content area training for assistant principals.	64.9%
Educators should have the option to submit hard copies of their SEEDS work.	58.5%
Educators should sign a hard copy and date it and then it can be uploaded.	55.1%
Do away with announced observations.	36.9%
Unannounced observations should be longer.	30.0%

The changes that were bargained for this year are:

- Evaluators will conduct a post observation conversation with the educator, prior to rating an educator's observation, if the evaluator feels the observation may not have reached the level of proficiency.
- Guidelines for post-observation conversations will be made available for educators and evaluators, to improve the quality of the conversations and their impact on instruction.
- Announced Observations will now be OPTIONAL. An educator or evaluator may request an announced observation at any time, as long as the request is received no later than 10 days after the formative.
- Rubrics that differentiate the focus for new educators and veteran educators will be made more visible.

The PowerPoint that was presented at the August PD includes more information about the changes and is available on the SEA website.

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FIVE SATURDAYS

December 6 & 13, 2014
January 10, 24 & 31, 2015

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Marilyn Spedding (413) 596-3309
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Tools 4 Teaching



*Recycling Store for Springfield
Teachers*

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Established in August of 2013, the SEA Committee of Retired Teachers created an environmentally responsible way for recycling resources to help Springfield Public School teachers. On a monthly basis, retiring teachers, teachers who are taking new assignments, local businesses and organizations are given the opportunity to divert usable materials – both purchased and homemade - which are then repurposed, organized, and made available to current teachers.

When: **Second AND Third Thursday** of each month.

Springfield Public School I.D. needed for shopping.

Time: 3:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

Location: 70 Tapley St. in the Congressman Richard E. Neal Municipal Operations Center at the corner of St. James Avenue and Tapley Street (behind the big green storage tank) and across the street from Oak Grove Cemetery. Please use glassed-in front entrance and follow signs for Tools 4 Teaching.

Tools 4 Teaching will follow the SPS schedule for school closings (snow days and/or emergencies).

Please support our 2014 - 2015 contributors:
STCU and Big Y!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Maureen Colgan Posner

The Professional Development Committee will meet with Kate Fenton and her staff on October 8, 2014. We asked to see the evaluations that were done regarding the August Professional Development. If you have any specific feedback or concerns that you would like to share with the committee regarding the August Professional Development, please send your feedback to me at moposner@comcast.net. Our goal is to get SPS to recognize that good professional development is going to have to be differentiated and targeted toward the needs of teachers, especially as it relates to SEEDS evaluations.

Remember, funds are available to SEA members who did not use funds last year (2013-2014 school year) to attend conferences, workshops or classes. If you would like to apply for funds, please read through the guidelines and complete and submit the forms to the SEA, 1000 Wilbraham Road; Springfield. The guidelines and forms can be found on the SEA website, www.seateachers.com

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. For example, 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.

Extended Day

Extended Days are to be held on the first and third Monday or Tuesday of each month (for a maximum of twenty work weeks during the school year). All teachers shall remain one hour and fifteen minutes beyond the end of the instructional day. In the event the first or third Monday or Tuesday of the month occurs during a vacation week, the day will be made-up the following week. The district posted a calendar for the Extended Days so that there is no confusion as to when an Extended Day is being held.

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 whether the extended day shall occur on Mondays or Tuesdays, and will develop a plan to make-up school cancellation days (but not on a Friday or the day before a holiday or school vacation)."

SEA Building Rep & Membership Training

Saturday, November 1, 2014

SEA Office

1000 Wilbraham Road

Springfield, MA

8:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.

Full Breakfast

9:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Classroom Management:

**Acquiring and sharing the skills of classroom management
so we can strengthen what is happening in the building.**

(see an Association Representative or the posting in your building for more information)

Register no later than Tuesday, October 28, 2014 by:

Sending an email to contact@seateachers.com (type Rep Training in the subject line of the email)

or

Visiting the SEA website, www.seateachers.com, to submit your registration online

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