



Special points of interest:

- Our Wins!
- Dress Code
- Labor Management Teams
- Pay Day Hangout

The Springfield Teacher

October 2017

ISSUES

Hope you had a smooth start to the new school year. We continue to be concerned about the amount of ridiculous demands that are being placed on teachers. We believe that the district has agreed with us that the SEEDs process should be about development and not about collecting more junk to prove we can collect junk. We have heard from schools where teachers are being asked to collect 103 pieces of evidence for their SEEDs. 103 PIECES!

We have also heard from teachers who are expected to upload their “mapping” of units. These are simply lesson plans that are done on an elongated time line and therefore should only be collected when an evaluator is concerned about a teacher’s implementation of a lesson. We have scope and sequence documents which are produced by the district for teachers to use to plan out units. Why teachers are being asked to duplicate tasks that have already been done is unclear. The lesson plan language that was agreed upon was designed to simplify teacher’s lives, not complicate them. Thankfully, it seems that everyone is beginning to understand that lesson plans are artifacts of planning and do not always reflect implementation. We also agreed that lesson plans are not to be collected from every teacher every week but rather from individuals as needed for individual teacher professional growth. So the fact that you are being told to hand in or upload technology related lesson plans is a violation of the contract. If a principal has concerns about an individual teacher’s professional growth in the area of technology they could request to see a lesson plan so they can help that teacher grow in that area. If there is concern about a teacher reaching the assessment goal (which is all mapping is about – teaching to the test) then that should be addressed on an individual basis. So all in all, lesson plans, unit mapping and technology plans should be dealt with in the same manner in which we deal with our students – DIFFERENTIATED.

We have also heard about the collaborative use of planning time where teachers are being told they must all go to the same room one day a week to collaborate. While we would define collaboration as people deciding mutually to work together to accomplish a goal it seems that the district believes that forcing people to sit in a room together, whether or not they have a common goal, is good collaborative practice. We are in continuing talks with them about what the new prep time language actually means but we are adamant that it does not mean that a principal can tell a group of teachers to give up their planning time. We will keep you posted.

We have also heard of buildings where teachers are being told to contact every parent within the first two weeks of school and then send the contact log to their principal. While this sounds like a lovely idea, the reality is this: most schools have 3-5 phones that can actually call out of their building. So if those calls are to be done during teachers extended days (because remember, “Preparation periods are those periods during which a teacher is preparing lessons, materials, and instructional strategies often (*but not required*) in collaboration with other teachers or any other educational activity that the teacher, in his/her professional judgment deems necessary for his/her effective classroom performance”) it would be physically impossible to meet that goal. Planning time is to be teacher determined and should not be used to fulfill a requirement that may or may not lead to effective classroom performance.

FROM THE PREZ!

I have been going to different schools each week visiting with teachers, checking in and listening to concerns and issues. My goal is to get to 58 buildings in 45 days. It's a daunting task but I am so appreciative of everyone who has let me interrupt their early morning preparations or their lunch to share ideas and issues with me. Watch for me – you never know where I'll show up next!

Maureen

OUR WINS

What we often don't talk about but what we should really brag about more often are our successes. For instance, did you know that we were able to get 3 of your fellow members their jobs back after being wrongfully terminated? It wasn't easy for our members, as we all know the wheels of justice turn slowly, but the good news is they did turn in the direction of justice!

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

We've recently heard about a couple of fundraisers that were being held to benefit our members who are facing challenges outside of school. Please let us know about these events so we can share the information with everyone. We are a community of teachers and many of us want to be supportive of our fellow members.

DRESS CODE

The dress code language also seems to be causing some confusion. Teachers are being told that they cannot wear jeans, flip flops, sneakers, etc. That is not what the language says. "You must present a professional work appearance. Employees shall wear neat, clean work attire. Employees are expected to dress in a manner that is normally acceptable in similar professional environments" is exactly what the language says. We know that people in education wear jeans, sneakers, flip flops and look neat and clean! The language deliberately does not name particular requirements.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

We have been using our collective power to improve working conditions for our members. We have created a labor management team to address school climate and culture in a building where some members were feeling targeted and unsafe. We have begun meeting and listening to members about what can be done to make everyone in the building feel valued and heard.

NEXT GENERATION TRAINING

We have had three different groups of teachers go through organizing training called Next Generation Training that is run by the MTA. It is focused on how to build our collective power and engage members to bring about changes that improve the working conditions for all of us. We are hoping to have another one of these trainings this fall and if you are interested in learning how to use your energy to build our union power please let the office know .

NEW MEMBERS

We have once again hired over 200 new teachers this year. If you have new teachers in your building (you must give the volume of new hires) please reach out to them, offer your advice, experience and just a caring and listening ear. As we face the loss of collective bargaining rights it's crucial that we educate our new teachers about the importance of belonging to the union.

BUILDING REPS

In an effort to save money we will no longer be mailing meeting reminders to buildings. You should have received a copy of the scheduled meetings for the year. If you haven't got it, it can be found on the web site under Calendars. Every building should have completed the building rep elections at this time. Please return your election form to the office so we can update our lists.



Central High School educators with Cedric Cunningham from the ALANA steering committee.

ALANA

ALANA celebrated the wonderful work educators of color do at the Welcome Back event hosted at Palate Restaurant. ALANA is working to identify the concerns of educators so that the Union is strong and able to respond to these issues.

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 to make change.

NEW MEMBER HANG OUT

Want to be speak, listen, and be heard? Then come to the next New Member Hang Out hosted by the SEA. Any teacher in their first 5 years of service in the Springfield Public Schools district is invited and encouraged to come! The purpose of these hang outs are to get to know each other as new members in a casual setting and to help each other find our place in the union; whether that be taking on the responsibility of being a building rep, joining a committee, or simply being a messenger to your colleagues for union business.

WHEN: Every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month @ 4:00

WHERE: Check the SEA website, as we may move each month

For more information: Call the SEA office 782-8300 or email Erin Burns at burnsy.erin@gmail.com

SPECIALS GROUP -PEAPS

The specials group continues to work on identifying which specials our students get and how their experiences differ from their fellow students with in the Springfield public schools as well as students who attend public schools in other towns and cities around us. The specials issue is not unconnected to the testing issue; how our money is spent or wasted clearly impacts the choices that are given to our children. The group is collecting the information with the hope of sharing with the members of the school committee as well as our city council members. We need our elected leaders to start speaking out about the fact that our students are not receiving an equitable education due in large part to underfunding but also to the wasted money we spend on testing.

LABOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Our Labor Management teams are meeting or met for the first time in October. The SPED and related services group met on Wednesday, October 11 at 4:15. The Library and Librarians group will be meeting on Wednesday, October 18 at 4:15. The Vocational group will be meeting on Monday, October 23 at 2:30. The discipline task force met for the first time on October 4. If you are interested in any of these groups and we somehow missed including you in the invite to these meetings please let us know so we can add you to our list for the groups.

PAY DAY HANG OUT

We had our first payday hangout at Nathan Bills on September 22. We went to where we know our members already are and got a chance to talk and mingle. We also used it as an opportunity to talk about the upcoming Supreme Court Case that may dismantle the current collective bargaining rights as they currently exist. More importantly the hang out gave members the opportunity to win some raffle prizes like a free appetizer from Nathan Bills or gift cards to places like red robin or Barnes and Noble. Our next pay day hang out is going to be at Paddy's on October 20 after school. Hope to see you there!

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 decertified. 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?”

We 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 benefits if the district didn’t have to negotiate us?

***duty free paid lunch**

***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!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Erin Burns has been a teacher at Chestnut South for the last 3 years. She teaches Humanities to 7th graders. She feels fortunate to be in a Zone school where the Teacher Leadership Team is allowed and encouraged to represent teachers so that they are the people who are making the decisions that affect their students directly. She has also been active in our “Testing” group that is working to address the overuse of standardized testing in our schools. She also is a member of the MTA New Member Committee and has been working hard to create a space for our new members to get together and discuss issues that are unique to them.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Recently, there was a ruling in the courts that said that a person’s search history on their computer is public information. It is very important to remember that your work computer (SPS issued computer) should be used for school work only. One of our members also pointed out at the LBoard meeting that when you plug your phone into your computer to recharge it your phone browsing history can be uploaded to your computer. All this as a way of saying be very careful when you use your SPS computer and be mindful of the Springfield Public School Policy on computers and social media use. Also, look at the great information that is shared at the Lboard meetings – worth attending!

SPS EMAIL

Some of you have asked whether or not you are obligated to open SPS emails or respond to texts after school hours or on weekends. You are under no obligation to open or respond to any communication from the schools during your own personal time. For example, if your work day ends at 3:30 on Friday and your principal sends out the next week’s update at 5 on Friday you need to read it once you **start** work on Monday. If you choose to check email or texts on your own time that is your choice, you are not obligated by the contract to do so.

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