

Pupil Protection Law - Lists to be Released Very Soon

The State of Michigan has announced that the list of school employees with past offenses in their background will be released in February.

Most of the newspapers in the state have already submitted FOIA requests for the lists, so it is likely that papers will have the list the day schools have it. This could create a media frenzy and someone with a misdemeanor on his record from 30 years ago could be dragged through the mud as a result of the lists release. There are some things you should keep in mind.

- **First**, if you have a past conviction and you haven't been in contact with the Uniserv director, do so immediately.
- **Second**, the list may have errors on it.
- **Third**, the media may come looking for anyone connected to education to interview or make comments about people whose names are on the list.

For more information regarding the media and how to handle possible situations, please consult the MPEA website at www.iammea.org/mpea under "Documents".

Cancer Awareness Petition

Please consider signing this petition for a postage stamp that will help educate and make society aware of Ovarian Cancer. Your help is needed for Ovarian Cancer Awareness and information! Let's all be a part of awareness and helping to prevent others from going through this horrible disease by being advocates and being proactive for women's health with doctor's and other health professionals. Ovarian cancer is a silent killer. It whispers.....so listen!

www.petitiononline.com/ovca2006/petition.html

Upcoming Dates

Communications Committee meeting

Thursday, Feb. 2

West Intermediate library 4:30

Committee of the Whole Meeting

Monday, Feb. 13

Kinney Conference Room 6:30

MPEA General Membership Meeting

Thursday, Feb. 16

MPHS, Room 111 4:30

Regular Board Meeting

Monday, Feb. 20

City Hall 6:30

Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, March 2

MPHS, Room 122 4:30

MEA's Position on the Michigan High School Initiative from Lu Battaglieri

Many of you have raised questions and concerns about the proposed mandatory high school curriculum. Now that we have a bill—HB 5606— we believe it is imperative to give you MEA's position on this issue.

High standards are nothing new to MEA. We have long supported toughening Michigan's high school graduation requirements. We have advocated for a core curriculum that gives all students access to a rich, rigorous course of study that includes high level math and science offerings as well as language arts, social studies, and a variety of arts and electives. However, we believe that the state must adopt a flexible implementation plan and a long-term funding strategy so that all students have a chance to succeed.

This House bill would require high school students to take 16 mandatory credits. (Please note that the term "credit" is not clearly defined, and what constitutes a credit may ultimately be determined at the local level.)

From the desk of the President

MPPS AUDIT

The Audit of the Mt. Pleasant Schools was presented at the January 16 Board meeting. The undesignated fund balance grew about \$300,000 to just over \$1.8 M, but that was prior to when the salary increase for 2004-05 was paid, which reduces it to around \$1.7 M.

There was no representative present from Plant Moran, the auditing firm. In their absence, the business manager presented explanations of the areas where the auditors cited problems with the district's procedures. This is a departure from the past and a highly unusual practice for a public body. Also of concern is the fact that the audit is dated November 22, 2005. This contradicts what was indicated at the bargaining table in November, and that the audit was not presented or mentioned at the December 5, Board meeting also seems unusual.

Audits are due to the Michigan Department of Education by November 15. According to MDE State School Aid Update, November, Vol 14 No. 2, districts that fail to file their audited information with the state on time have their state aid payments held until all the required documents are filed, then the aid is paid in the month after requirements are met. The December 2005 Update, Vol.14, No 3 states that only eight of the Michigan's 714 districts were delinquent and had aid withheld. Mt. Pleasant was one of the eight districts. The January 20, 2006 State Aid Financial Status Report shows that the \$1.956 M was withheld in December, and delayed until January's payment.

NEA Midwest Leadership Conference

I was fortunate to be able to attend the Midwest leadership conference in Indianapolis on January 20, 21 and 22. Leaders from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa and Missouri attended training sessions and shared issues that are important in each state. It was interesting to hear how many states are facing the similar issues and attacks on the rights and benefits of school employees.

NEA staff from Washington DC presented an overview of election 2006. They identified Michigan as the number one state for NEA assistance in the 2006 election cycle. The Gubernatorial election and the U.S Senate seat held

by Debbie Stabenow are high priorities for NEA. We are likely to see greater assistance from the NEA this year than in any year since the 2000 voucher fight. This is encouraging as both the governor and Senator Stabenow are friends of public education.

There is also news that the national growth tree of health insurance premiums is leveling off. There are a number of factors impacting that change, but the two most important are reduced benefits and a shifting of more costs to employees. Unfortunately, in the states with the lowest single digit increases, there are still calls for workers to give up more, even when the financial position of the employer doesn't warrant it.

Contract Corner

Education Coordinator

In Appendix I B of our contract (what we usually refer to as Schedule B) are provisions for "extra pay" activities, such as coaching, Driver's Ed, camp, summer salary, etc. Section H explains the "Education Coordinator" position. Many teachers have applied for this position to increase their salary in their 2 last years, which affects their retirement pay. Your Contract reads:

"Any teacher who has been employed in the District at least seven years and who has working knowledge of the Mt. Pleasant School District's policies, practices, and curriculum may apply for a one or two-year position of Education Coordinator with specific assignment by the Board of Education to a building, a subject area by level, a grade, or to committee(s) of the Board. The Education Coordinator shall be available to meet, confer, do research, prepare materials, and perform similar responsibilities as directed when school is not in session (i.e., evenings, vacations, summers) for no more than fifty (50) hours per fiscal year. The Coordinator will be paid two thousand five hundred (\$2,500) dollars per year. Interested teachers shall apply in writing to the Superintendent by April 1. Selection shall be made by the Board of Education in its discretion by April 25. The final determination

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Building News

Contract Corner continued

of such selection is vested in the Board. No teacher shall be granted this assignment more than once."

New Language:

From time to time, emergencies arise and teachers are asked to fill in for another teacher.

This often happens with a first hour, or last hour prep period. In **Article X – Rights of the Teacher, L.**, there is a clause to pay for the teacher who "substitutes" for another teacher.

"No regularly assigned teacher will be used as a substitute teacher, except for short-term emergencies and then only with his written consent. If a teacher agrees to serve as a substitute for another teacher, he shall be compensated at the rate of fifteen dollars (\$15.00) per class period if the substitution period is in excess of his regular class load."

Also a new clause has been added, *"If a teacher loses his preparation time due to the absence of an art, music, physical education, special education, computer teacher, media specialist or RESD personnel, etc. the teacher will be compensated at the rate of twenty dollars (\$20.00) per class period."*

Change in Sick Day rules.

The letter of agreement clarifying use of sick days was modified in our new contract. The letter defines that paid leave time may be used in half or full day increments, but the following provision is added:

"However, with prior administrative approval, leave time may be taken in one-hour increments (i.e. .17 of a day, except at the high school which will be .2 of a day). Any portion of an hour or class period will be charged as a full hour or class period."

It is important to note that use of hour increments requires prior administrative approval. That means you need to make arrangements with your building administrator before your absence, and you must fill out a leave request for the absence.

In Memoriam

Staff members are mourning the loss of Fancher secretary Dar Bond who passed away on Tuesday, January 31. Beginning in February, 1994 Dar worked in the Career Center at MPATC for several years. She eventually moved into the copy room at MPHS where she remained until the move to Fancher. Dar will be remembered for her thoughtfulness, generosity, courage and the ever present smile that always greeted us. She will truly be missed.

It does not include the two credits of foreign language that the Superintendent of Public Instruction had proposed.

Here is the House version of the proposed requirements:

- * 4 credits of English language art
- * 4 credits of mathematics
- * 3 credits of science
- * 3 credits of social science
- * 1 credit of physical education/health
- * 1 credit of fine arts/music

All of these must be “aligned” with State Board of Education course content expectations.

We recognize the urgency to ensure that our schools are meeting the needs of students and employers in the current and future economy. Our members know the challenges of trying to prepare students for high-tech, knowledge industry jobs using outdated textbooks, inadequate technology, and with limited interaction with the business community.

However, one size does not fit all in any education-related reform effort. The proposed high school graduation requirements are a good model or goal for all students. Indeed, many school districts already require such courses—and more.

Rigor alone will not make students and schools successful. Public schools must be prepared and equipped to meet the needs of all students, including potential

dropouts, those with special needs, and others who may not succeed in the traditional college-prep program.

We support maintaining a strong vocational education option and career-related electives for students who may not be bound for a four-year college or university, but who may be well-suited for the many lucrative technical jobs in the 21st century economy.

In addition, we will work to ensure that arts education—a critical contributor to student success that often keeps potential drop-outs in school—is not affected. While the recommended requirements include one credit of arts education, we are concerned that districts may be tempted to cut such courses in the process of beefing up other programs.

So, while we welcome the spotlight on high school curriculum, we caution that flexibility is needed and much work remains to be done. We will urge lawmakers and the Michigan Department of Education to work with educators to ensure that this time we do it right—with the planning and funding necessary for success.

While the House already has a bill out, the Senate has scheduled hearings. I encourage you to consider attending one of those hearings and sharing your views and concerns. You can find more information about dates and locations of the hearings at <http://www.mea.org>.
*Note: The hearing that is closest to Mt. Pleasant is **February 16:** Public hearing at the Midland County Educational Service Agency (ESA) at 4:30 p.m.
Address: 3917 Jefferson, Midland, MI 48640

Editorial - Witch Hunt of the 21st Century

I am sure that most of you have heard about this new “School Safety” or Pupil Protection Law. You will hear a lot more about it when the “LIST” comes out. It is unfortunate that the first official communication from our new Superintendent of Personnel had to be this kind of news. I am sure that wouldn’t have been her choice. The law requires that every district employee be fingerprinted and have a criminal history record check by the Michigan State Police and the FBI. School districts in Michigan must foot this bill unless legislation passes to fund this law. For Mt. Pleasant Public Schools with 648 employees at a cost of \$70 each, that would mean a cost of \$45,360.

Don’t get me wrong. I believe that we need to protect our students with the utmost scrutiny. We should not have sex offenders working in our schools. We already are screening every volunteer and new employee. This bill was passed in response an incident in northern Michigan, and I believe that it is overkill.

After 20+ years of dedicating a large portion of my life to educating and helping students, I feel like we are all under suspicion. Your personal history is now going to be a matter of public knowledge. This is the kind of information that the press likes to publish. We hear more about the teachers who sexually assault, show a bad movie in class, etc. than the wonderful things that I see teachers doing on a daily basis. Some of us may have had problems way in the past, and that may be dragged up – even though our lives have changed, and we’ve been successful teachers for many years. I hate to see the cause of “protecting students” be a vehicle for undermining the profession of teaching.
(Editorial opinions are not necessarily the position of the MPEA or MEA).