

**Our Most Sincere Appreciation and
Thank-You to the MPEA Negotiation
Team**

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Jane Leroux-Evans
Phyllis Marshall
Ted McIntyre
Linda Spycher
Rick Trainor
Kathy Tucker
Charles Richardson**

You have worked steadfastly in the past 4 + years for the benefit of **all** members. Your time, expertise, and dedication to securing a contract, in spite of many obstacles, is deeply appreciated. Thank you.

Upcoming Dates:

Mon, Dec. 19 Meeting with MESSA rep
High School Auditorium
4:30 & 6:30

Thurs, Jan 5 MPEA Executive Board Meeting

Monday, Jan 16

Board of Education Organizational meeting
& Regular Board Meeting
City Hall
6:30 PM

Monday, Jan 23 Peacemaking Awards
MPHS Auditorium
6:30 PM

Thurs, Feb 2 Committee meetings
Communications, PAC

Thurs, Feb 16 General Membership
MPHS room 111
4:30 PM

Questions about the New Contract!!!

Q. When will we receive retroactive pay – 1% for 2004-05?

A. This retro pay should be in your Dec 22nd paycheck.

Q. When will we need to make our decision about Super Care I or the Choices II option?

A. We will need to submit enrollment forms by January 6. Watch for enrollment forms and printed materials about the Choices II this week.

Q. When will we be able to meet with a MESSA rep to get all of the information that we need to make a decision?

A. Ron Stablein, our MESSA rep will make a presentation and answer individual questions on Monday, December 19. He will begin his presentation at 4:30 PM and will take questions and help individuals after the presentation. To insure we have enough room, we have scheduled the meeting for the MPHS Auditorium. Watch your mailbox this week for a hot pink flier confirming this information.

Q. When will our President's position be reduced to ½ time?

A. The President will remain a full-time position through the 05-06 school year. Beginning in the fall of 2006, it will be reduced to ½ time.

More questions on page 2

Senate Bills 895 and 898 threaten the quality and cost of your health insurance for the future. The House should be voting on this the end of this week. Please call your House rep (Bill Caul for Mt. Pleasant) to voice your concerns. Go to www.mea.org for more info on this issue.

Q. Exactly how much less will members receive who currently opt for Pak B, in lieu of Health insurance?

A. Despite what the paper said, it is not \$1300. It is \$2,122 for each of those members.

Q. What is the difference in the Sick Leave Bank? The new contract allows for us to take 1 hour of sick time, instead of a half day. How does this work with the AESOP system?

A. This is a detail that has yet to be worked out. It will take some time before we can state with any

reliability how it is supposed to work.

Q. Secondary teachers received an increase in their pay from \$10 to \$15(per class period) if they cover a class for another member. Can this also be applied to the elementary setting?

A. Yes. Any teacher who during his own prep time covers a class period for another teacher qualifies to be paid, but it happens much less frequently at the elementary level because schedules rarely match up to the needs of our colleagues.

Thank you to our Crisis Committee

Thank you to all MPEA members involved in Crisis Committee. This group has been active for 3 years, working to support the Negotiation Team in the effort to secure a Contract. Members who have given significant amounts of time include: Becky Smith (former Chair currently teaching in North Carolina), Mary Bentley (External Communication), Karen Turnbull (Internal Communication), Cindy Cooper (Hospitality), Jane Ogger (Picketing), Kathy Ling (Political Action), Jane Leroux-Evans (Rep from Negotiating Team), Sue MacPherson (Office Operations), and Julie Price (External).

Crisis Is Over, Momentarily!! Communication/PR Gearing Up

A crisis often makes an organization stronger, and in many ways that has happened in the past four years. Being in crisis has raised the importance of effective communication (externally) to our public on an ongoing basis. We can now put our energy into being proactive.

We are improving our communication with regular e-mail messages. Our website has updated information, calendar of MPEA activities/meetings, back issues of Chalkdust, political issues, links, and even some pictures of members!

Look for a Survey soon from the External Communication committee. We are gathering data on the involvement of our teachers in the Mt. Pleasant community. We will also be gathering data on teacher's professional development and activities outside of the school day to post on our Website. Watch for a Communications Meeting Feb 2. Send your feedback about the information in this issue of Chalkdust by Dec. 20th at 3:00pm for a holiday gift. Send to ljohnson@mtpleasant.edzone.net

Contract Corner

Article XI of our Contract addresses Sick Leave and Article XII, Leave of Absence. Look closely at the changes in the use of the Sick Leave Bank, and defining how a Professional Day is used.

What has stayed the same is this:

At the beginning of each school year you are granted:

10 sick days

1 professional day

2 personal days

If you do not use **professional** days, they accumulate, without limit, for following years. Intent to use a professional day should be submitted in writing one week in advance (Leave Report or Request Form) with an explanation of how the day will be used. It may be used for "any educational purpose at the discretion of the teacher". (See ArtXII, B, 1, a.) If you need more professional days, you may ask your principal or supervisor (in writing, of course) and you may get permission to use a "school business" day.

Your two **personal** days are a bit different. If they are not used in the school year, they are carried over to the next school year and may be used as **personal days** until October 31. After that, the unused personal day becomes a professional day. Read your Contract language carefully!!

**MPEA Christmas Outreach Book
Donations**

For over a decade, our MPEA has contributed to the children of our area through the Christmas Outreach Program. Val Wolters (Ganiard) collects books from teachers around the district, then gets them to the distribution site each December. The MPEA External/PR Committee has budgeted \$200 a year for this project. Thanks to the involvement of many, we have over 750 books with stickers inside that say, "Readers Are Leaders! Mt. Pleasant Education Association." Please keep this project in mind throughout the year, and send books through inter-school mail any time to Val at Ganiard.



Take Some Time for Yourself

Congratulations! You've made it to the holiday break! For new teachers, that's quite an accomplishment. The rest of the good news is that things will start to get better after the holiday break since you're beginning to feel more comfortable with your students and your teaching.

Use the holiday break as a time for rejuvenation. Try these tips to help you survive and thrive.

- Put problems behind you. Use the new year as a fresh start if need be. Focus on the future and what you want for yourself and your students.
- Continue to have high expectations but also face up to reality. Pace yourself and leave room for mistakes. Be clear about your goals and what you want for your students and for yourself.
- Concentrate on polishing your teaching techniques. Work on improving weak areas. Ask for help from your mentor, your colleagues and the association.
- Write in a time on your calendar for regular exercise. It's a great stress reliever.
- If you can, leave your teaching at school. If you have to lug schoolwork home, get it done early in the evening.
- Get plenty of sleep. Leave your classroom issues back in the classroom. Don't lie awake worrying about how you should have handled Johnny or Susie in class. Tomorrow is a new day.
- Observe good eating habits. Organize a regular eating plan.
- Don't feel you have to do everything. Get over it! You can't do it all and you won't. Set and recognize reasonable goals for yourself and your students.
- Keep a "to do" list. Review it daily and try doing at least one or two things you can check off. It will bring a real sense of accomplishment.
- Find a friend who can be a trusted listener. Your mentor and association rep can fill this role. Don't vent in public; find a private place for your conversations.
- Don't procrastinate about things you have to do. Get those papers graded rather than let them hang over you. Just think-if we spent as much time doing the job as we do avoiding it, we could have more time for ourselves.
- Learn to tolerate and forgive. Walk a mile in someone else's shoes to try to understand why he/she might behave in a particular way.
- Learn to plan ahead. Develop a personal style for getting things done. Organization keeps stress to a minimum.
- Learn to have fun and laugh at yourself. Smile often - hopefully, you've done this before December!
- When you're facing a stressful situation, ask yourself, "What's the worst thing that can happen as a result of this?" Anything less than the worst happening will be a pleasant surprise.
- Reward yourself for your professional achievement. Celebrate your accomplishments.

