

Special General Membership Meeting

There will be a special General Membership meeting at MPHS in room 111 on Thursday, Jan. 4, 2007 at 5:45 pm. This meeting will immediately follow the scheduled Executive Board meeting. The purpose will be to close nominations for the MPEA Bargaining Team that will negotiate the successor to our current Master Agreement. Nominations for a position on the Bargaining Team are currently open, and will be taken at the Jan. 4 General Membership meeting before it is closed. If there are the same number of candidates for the team as there are positions, in accordance with MPEA Bylaws, we will elect the team by acclamation.

We will also accept nominations for the Office of President (a 2 year term). Nominations were opened for this position at the last General Membership meeting

on November 16 and will continue to be open until the February General Membership meeting. Also, nominations will be accepted for the positions of External Communication, Elections Chairperson, and MEA-RA Representative.

Nominations may be submitted in writing via interschool mail to Robin Mower at MPHS. Written nominations must include the name of the person being nominated, the name of the nominator, and must be signed by the nominator. It is helpful, but not required for the nominee to include a signed statement accepting the nomination. If you submit a nomination via interschool mail, it is recommended that you notify Robin by email as well.

Holiday Spirit

Every year for the past um-teen years, Val Wolters has spearheaded an MPEA Community Service project by providing hundreds of books to children in Mt. Pleasant for Christmas. Teachers, including retired teachers, help her wrap the books for our Christmas Book Outreach project. Thanks to all who help Val with this project. Pictured are Val, Katherine Hughes, Joyce Castellon, and Janet Cummings.



Upcoming dates

Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, January 4, 2007
MPATC conference room - 4:30 pm

General Membership

Thursday, January 4, 2007
MPHS room 111 - 5:45 pm

Executive Board Meeting

Thursday, February 8, 2007
MPATC conference room - 4:30 pm

General Membership

Thursday, February 15
MPHS room 111 - 4:30 pm

So just what is this talk about trimesters?

There is rarely a day that goes by when I am not asked to explain something about the potential curriculum calendar to a teacher, a member of our support staff, or a parent. While I know that it will be repetitive for high school teachers, in order for all of us to have a common frame of reference, I want to address three points.

What are trimesters?

I'll start with the easy part, what is the trimester system? Arranging classes by trimesters is simply a way to deliver curriculum to students in fewer days with students taking fewer classes each day. Each class meets for a longer period of time. It is based on the idea that the longer classes allow the same curriculum to be delivered in fewer days and that it allows students to have 15 terms of instruction per year as opposed to 12 terms of instruction in our current curriculum calendar. I am not arguing that this is true or that it is false. I am simply stating the idea.

Why are we considering trimesters?

A more complex issue involves understanding why we are considering this now. This has been a frequent question asked by all constituencies outside of the high school. It is a response to the new Michigan High School Curriculum that has been proposed by the Michigan Department of Education and that has been imposed by the state legislature. When the state imposed the new curriculum going from one half required credit (Government) to 16 required credits (math, science, English, social studies), it became apparent that students would not be able to have many elective classes in delivery model with 6 daily classes

in a semester format. Because there are trimester models in place in several districts already, that model is getting a lot of attention statewide right now.

What is involved in such a change and where are we in that process right now?

Then we come to the really complex issue of what is involved in changing our calendar model. It goes well beyond simply changing when we teach classes. There are literally dozens of contractual issues that must be resolved before we can make a change. MPHS teachers have already received from the bargaining team a list of issues that were identified. Among the most serious, are seniority issues and what will constitute a full teaching load. We are currently working with a contract that expires on June 30, 2007. That means changes need to be made to the agreement that will be the successor to the current Master Agreement.

On November 27, 2006, the MPEA team met with the Board team for an articulation meeting. Together we identified many issues we need to resolve. The teams agreed on the need to meet from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. on December 8, 2006.

The morning of that meeting was essentially spent with the Board team explaining how they envisioned the plan working. In the afternoon we worked on identifying issues and explaining what the administration needs to address in its planning. We discussed at length, how trimester scheduling has been implemented in other districts and how that might work here. There is consensus that we must do something in response to the new Merit Curriculum. We have not agreed that it must be trimesters. Both teams are willing to look at other plans, but right now there seems to be more information available on trimesters than any other plan. We made it clear that the administration needs to present a plan that will allow teachers to predict how it might impact their curriculum and their own personal circumstances.

One of the major problems we identified is that a number of assumptions about how trimesters will be implemented includes an administrative right to reassign teachers wherever needed. We made it clear that we do not believe the membership would accept any plan that requires them to surrender their seniority rights and that we as a team would not support a plan that asks teachers to give up those rights.

At this point, we are waiting for the administration to present a detailed plan. Once we have that plan, we will present it to the MPEA Executive Board, and we will need to meet with high school teachers to share the plan and get input on it. - Rick

Communication Committee in Gear: Developing a Message

Judy Baker has stepped forward to chair the External Communication Committee (nomination to be conducted Jan 4). This committee, which includes Internal Communication chair, Lisa Johnson, met on December 7. Several projects are in the works including social activities for the MPEA, bio-information about all members, and the development of a message for the MPEA. A message is a strong statement that defines an organization. Messages are supportive of our goals, positive, simple, and geared to the audience. Most of us remember the message: "I teach, I touch the future." This is attributed to Christa MacCaullif and is a great example of a powerful positive message about our profession.

The heart of an effective communication strategy is a sound and consistent message. An effective message defines the group and its issues. If the group doesn't step up and define itself, some other group will, and you can't count on their definition being accurate or positive. This is one of the goals of the Communicatio Committee and we need your input. You will receive an email message from Gail Mitchell with more details about our efforts to create a "message". Please put on your creative thinking caps and help us out!

FYI - Meetings were conducted to interview groups of MPPS employees for their input on the qualities they would like to see in a new superintendent. The groups were also asked to profile the attributes of MPPS, and why a person would want to work here. Repeatedly, one of the assets of our district that was communicated was the quality of our teaching staff!

Contract Corner

Did you know that what at first appears to be overwhelming is really not? Your contract is actually only 60 pages long before it gets into the Appendices. The Appendix includes Salary Schedules, Schedule B activities - which are extra duty assignments, calendar, evaluation forms, and Letters of Agreement (clarifications or additional agreements made after the contract was ratified). The body of the contract is only 60 pages long. The MPEA has a history and reputation for "good contract language" that has evolved in the past 20 plus years. Dig in and read it! You will be surprised at what you might find out. Our contract's worth is in our ability to uphold it! You need to know it to uphold it.

Soon our Negotiation Team will begin to conduct "hearings" to identify what we, as members, would like to address in our new contract. Be thinking in that direction.

Retirement Meeting

On Tuesday, February 6, 2007a Damon Wilson from MEA Financial Services will be here to discuss retirement planning. The meeting will take place in room 111 at MPHS. It will be from 4:30 to 6 pm. Call 1-800-946-1960for additional information. It is open to all members and spouses, not just those considering retirement.

Building Full Capacity Locals:

The MEA has been working on a program to help build stronger local associations. This program is called “Building Full Capacity Locals”, or BFCL. They have divided the major functions of a strong local association into 8 “indicators”.

These include:

- Indicator 1: Member Advocacy (Bargaining, Contract Maintenance, and Member Defense),
- Indicator 2: Communications (including both internal and external, newsletters, websites, media relations, message development and socializing).
- Indicator 3: Financial and Membership Systems - (record keeping, checks & balances, accountability, budget development)
- Indicator 4: Governance (regularly updated Constitution and By-Laws, clearly defined roles and responsibilities of leaders and committee chairs and members)
- Indicator 5: Leadership Team (Knowledgeable, well-trained leadership that is strong, committed, proactive, responsive. Working together toward a shared vision and goals.)
- Indicator 6: Long-Range Planning (Shared vision with a meaningful plan including long-term and short-term goals, with a system of assessing and modifying the plan).
- Indicator 7: New Members (Ongoing opportunities for new members for training, mentoring, leadership, and social opportunities within the association).
- Indicator 8: Political Action/PAC (Active and engaged participation in the political process at the local, state, and national levels - informing members on all political issues of importance.)

Your leadership team of the MPEA has been reflecting on these indicators to help to build our association into a stronger more effective unit.

Contract Workshops

Look a workshop in January/February covering **salary, sick leave & work day**. The workshop will last one hour. Additional workshops throughout second semester will cover the following topics: evaluation process & mentor mentee programs, Article 10 & 13 - teacher rights, meet your leadership team, and the staffing process. These topics have been identified by executive board members as areas of concern for new members and some that even seasoned veterans have questions about. Please contact Kathy Davis-Gonzalez (775-2200 ext. 6040) if you are interested in participating. Date, time and place to follow along with additional information.

**Have a safe and
happy holiday break!**