

**State School Employee Retirement Stimulus (SERS) Bill  
Update from Kathy Tucker MEA 12C UniServ Director**

Things are moving along on the MEA proposed School Employee Retirement Stimulus (SERS) bill. As of Thursday, February 12, a draft of the bill was ready to be introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. We were informed that the House version will be HB 4285 and that it will be officially introduced on Tuesday, February 17. We don't have a number or an introduction date for the Senate version, but it will probably be introduced next week.

We have also been informed that the Senate Education Committee has scheduled a public hearing in Lansing for Thursday, February 19, on the bill. So far all of the Lansing management groups are either opposing the bill or taking a neutral position. We are looking for some administrators who support the idea and would be willing to come to Lansing and testify at the committee hearing. We are going to need the help of administrators who are supportive of the SERS bill.

This is not going to be an easy battle and any help you can give us will be greatly appreciated. Encouraging your legislators to pass the SERS bill is something you can do now.

One of the questions I have heard frequently concerns the timing of submitting MPSERS retirement paperwork for retirement effective June, 2009. Our MEA Retirement Consultant recommends that anyone who wants to be eligible for any new stimulus retirement plan should NOT turn in paperwork to MPSERS until the time frame for eligibility is clear in the legislation. Those signing up for Mt. Pleasant's severance plan should ask Central Office to hold off on sending anything to MPSERS to protect the member's eligibility if the state does indeed offer a special retirement stimulus.

Our MPSERS consultant confirmed that the members who have **already sent in paperwork to MPSERS for retiring this year** would need to CANCEL that paperwork now **if they want to be eligible** for whatever the legislature may enact. If a person wants to keep his/her options open for now, then the paperwork that was already sent in should be canceled and then resubmitted and re-dated whenever and IF any plan is signed into law. There will be some cases where the paperwork has progressed too far to stop it now.

If a member has a specific situation that needs to be addressed, please call me. I will be happy to get the answers if they exist at this time or put the member in touch with those who may be more appropriate to deal with the individual's situation.

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**MPEA Staffing Process Workshop**

**When: February 23, 2009**

**4:30 p.m to 5:30 p.m.**

**Where: MEA OFFICE**

**625 N. Main Street** Conducted by:

**MPEA Professional Rights and Responsibilities Chairperson, Diane Benford**

**& MPEA President, Rick Trainor**

This session will be geared to new members who have little experience with our staffing process. A workshop for senior members who may be displaced will be conducted on March 24, after the initial staffing list has been posted. New members are encouraged to attend this workshop and bring their mentors.

**Topics to be covered:**

- **Timelines**
- **The internal application process – changing positions**
- **What if my position is eliminated – Teachers' rights under the contract**
- **Coping with the process and the rumor mill**
- **Staffing process etiquette and expectations**
- **Questions from members**

Due to space, this workshop will be limited to 40 members.

Email 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Rachel Drake, [rdrake@mtpleasant.edzone.net](mailto:rdrake@mtpleasant.edzone.net) to make your reservation.

## **News from Our Bargaining Team Members:**

### **Judy Baker - *Communications and Building MPEA to “Full-Capacity”***

At the recent MEA Bargaining/PA/ PR conference I was able to attend several informative sessions that addressed communications. As External Communications chairperson, I often find the line separating external and internal communications to be flexible and hazy, so I found benefit in all Rosemary Carey, MEA Communications Consultant, had to say about how to improve our communications.

With regard to our internal communications, Ms Carey asked us to assess how we communicate with our members and challenged us to be more strategic with this by providing information through a variety of means – that includes everything from printed copy to text messaging and including such formats as Facebook. External communications were also discussed and the importance of defining ourselves to the public, as opposed to someone else defining us, was an overwhelming message.

The most exciting session, however, was titled “Building Full Capacity Locals” which addressed building relationships with the community, the administration, and members. Teri Battaglieri, a dynamic speaker, presented us with an abundance of information and ideas, including a survey for members to complete that will identify our strengths and weaknesses. There was validation in that we are on the right track with our current efforts to improve communications with the Board members. Several EA presidents presented their experiences with the programs and resources available through the MEA to accomplish full capacity locals and inspired us to gear up for bringing our local to “full capacity”. Most excitedly was the announcement that grant money is available to support any new ideas we have toward getting members informed and involved. All in all, my first MEA conference was an overwhelming learning experience and I look forward to putting these ideas into action.

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### **Jane Leroux-Evans - *New Members – Strength and Future of our Union***

What a difference a year makes—or not. One of my goals last year was to improve the involvement and “connectedness” of our new MPEA members to the association. “New members” usually means those in their first 5-8 years of teaching or who are new to an association. I attended a couple sessions about this subject at last year’s Public Relations, Political Action and Bargaining Conference hoping to “make it happen” this year. I had some good ideas from the sessions and the best intentions, but it’s now almost March. I’m running out of time for this year!

Our new members are vital to the continued strength of our Union. I recharged my goal and attended additional sessions at this year’s conference. The sessions focused on the reality of the differences in the generations within our associations and presented plans, ideas, and MEA support to create/encourage understanding, unity and ACTION. I’m energized once again, but I know I can’t do it alone. Part of my plan is to involve ALL of you, the “Matures,” the “Boomers,” the “Gen X’ers,” and the “Gen Y’s.” A union is only as strong as its members, so be prepared to step up and do your part to put the YOU in UNION!

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### **Kim Nelson - *Oregon Trail Bargaining Simulation***

This year I attended the MEA Bargaining Conference for the first time. I was amazed at how many MEA members attended the sessions that weekend. I have to admit that I have not had much involvement in our association in the past but felt as though I really was a part if something when I was there. There was a specific energy in the air all weekend. We were all there for the same reason...representing our teachers and our association.

Since I am a first time bargainer, I attended many beginning bargaining sessions. All the sessions I attended involved team building, communicating with your team and association members, bargaining strategies and issues, and finally facts and figures for bargaining. As much as these sessions were helpful and will be useful with bargaining, the session that stood out most to be was a Bargaining Simulation called the Oregon Trail. Approximately fifty members of my group were divided into separate wagons traveling the Oregon Trail. The goal of the simulation was for your wagon to get to the gold! Each wagon had different assets ranging from physical necessities to people in the wagon with different trades. Of course along the way, wagons were hit with some sort of disaster that would force your wagon to bargain with other wagons for the assets you needed to keep your wagon going down the trail. This simulation was really an eye opener to the need for a cohesive and unified team. It also showed passion and determination for working toward the same goal.

**Rosa Johnson - *Highlight on Kindergarten***

I attended a session on the latest legislative updates with the MEA lobbyists. The Kindergarten bills were of particular interest to me; and the impact that they may have on the District. After Joe Pius' presentation to the district, any legislative action could contribute to district restructuring. I encourage all teachers to tune in to anything that may impact all of us directly or indirectly.

**KINDERGARTEN HOURS AND FUNDING.** This issue was dealt with in the 2008-09 state aid bill. Under current law, all kindergarten students count as per pupil FTE whether they attend for a full day or for a partial day. The State Aid Budget changed the funding scheme as follows:

- (1) Beginning in 2009-2010 FTE's for Developmental Kindergarten or Pre-kindergarten or a similar class intended to be the first of 2 years before grade 1 will be determined by dividing the number of class hours by the hours required for grades 1-12.
- (2) Beginning in 2010-2011 FTE's for regular Kindergarten will need to have 60% of the hours required for 1-12.
- (3) Beginning in 2011-2012 FTE's for regular Kindergarten will need to have 70% of the hours required for grades 1-12.

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**Rachel Drake - *Lawyers with Empathy OR Newbie Favorite from the MEA Bargaining Conference***

As a new officer attending the MEA Bargaining Conference, I expected to be overwhelmed. I'd heard repeatedly that "this is the best conference that MEA does." So, I went and sat quietly in sessions (OK, if you know me, you know I did not sit quietly for long!). I was impressed by the quality of sessions and the wealth of information presented. I was introduced to the bargaining aspects of many topics that affect teachers. Anyone who is interested in bargaining or wants to learn more about school contracts should consider attending next year.

One of the most interesting sessions I attended was "School Law – Tenure and Arbitration Update" presented by MEA attorneys Jeff Murphy and Dan Zarimba. The two presented a balanced look at recent cases. Amongst the case histories, they reviewed tenure policy, tenure board hearings and arbitration policy. Jeff and Dan gave a humanized view of the process, keeping the conception that each of these cases represented the life of a MEA member at the forefront of the presentation. Their session ended as many of the sessions regarding contract implementation ended; keep accurate records that the policies laid out by the contract have been followed.

**Rick Trainor- *Union Pride***

Once again the MEA Bargaining conference was an incredible source of information to help your MPEA Bargaining team and officers serve members. Whether it was information on finance, legal updates, or networking with leaders from across the state, it continues to provide tools that help us prepare to bargain and represent members.

This year one of the themes of the conference revolved around Union Pride, highlighted by economist Richard Levin's address to the 1600 plus members in attendance at the conference. We will be distributing copies of his booklet, Middle Class, Union Made, in the near future.

**FROM THE PRESIDENT:**

**Staffing and Retirement Etiquette**

It is once again the time of year when we begin to develop the staffing list for the next school year. That means it is time for me to renew my annual plea and primer on staffing process etiquette.

This year, it will be complicated by the addition of a local, and possibly, a State severance incentive that will heighten the need for us to be diligent about being respectful of each other as the process moves forward. The concern about budget cuts and the existence of the incentives increases the speculation about which of our colleagues will be starting a new chapter in their lives next fall (i.e. retirement).

With the increased speculation, I renew the reminder that it is always inappropriate to ask colleagues about their intent to retire. Even if you think you are close friends with those who teach with you, for the most part we are colleagues and not close personal friends. It is extremely disheartening for me to hear senior teachers tell me they feel a colleague seems to be giving them the bum's rush out the door. Ultimately, it is about respecting those who have done this work for many years.

I also encourage senior teachers to reply to unwelcome questions by simply stating that the question is inappropriate. Those who have given 20 to 30 years of their lives work to public education do not need to be embarrassed to assert the rights they have earned. One of them is the right to make their own determination about what is best for their own lives, in their own time, without being quizzed by fellow teachers.

**Staffing Time Lines**

Diane Benford and I will be meeting with the Human Resources staff on February 19, to review and finalize the staffing time line for the current year. We will have materials ready to be distributed at the General Membership meeting in room 111 at MPHS on the afternoon of Thursday, Feb 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:45. *-Rick*

**News regarding the Governor's proposed  
School Aid Fund Cuts for 2009-10  
From Kathy Tucker**

The goal of the federal stimulus plan (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) that just passed is to **prevent large reductions** in state spending for education.

To give you some perspective on the amount of money in the plan:

\* School Aid Fund revenue (without the federal stimulus) is projected to be \$11.4 billion in 2008-09.

\* The projected deficit in the School Aid Fund for 2009-10 is \$164 million.

\* The Governor's K-12 budget for next year cuts \$164 million in K-12 spending, mostly through a \$59 reduction in the foundation allowance.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 would provide **\$1.6 billion** over the next two years for education related "State Fiscal Stabilization." Again, the goal of the Congressional plan is to prevent large reductions in state spending for education.

States will have some discretion in spending this money on education, but there is certainly enough money in the plan to more than offset the projected \$164 million shortfall in the School Aid Fund.

*We may have to make sure that the Michigan Legislature does the right thing with the money and does not funnel money from the School Aid Fund to other departments.*

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**CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES**

**General Membership Meeting**

Thursday, Feb. 19

MPHS Rm. 111

4:30

**Board of Education Meeting**

Monday, Feb. 23

Kinney Conference Room

6:30

**Chalkdust Deadline**

Friday, March 6

**Executive Board Meeting**

Thursday, March 12

MPEA Office

4:30

**Deadline to submit MPPS retirement  
incentive**

Friday, March 20

**BUILDING NEWS**

**Oasis**

Oasis High School and Central Michigan University are engaged in a twelve week mentoring program that has been bringing an exciting energy to our Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Dr. David Kinney's Sociology 530 class is completing their Capstone Project at Oasis High. Thirty-eight CMU students have been paired with 38 OHS students for an in-depth mentoring experience. CMU and OHS pairs are completing a portfolio of assignments that are aimed at strengthening social/emotional and academic skills. OHS seniors who have chosen to work with a CMU mentor are getting help as they prepare for their post high school experience. This includes help with resume writing, college applications, job applications, filing for financial aid and scholarships, as well as mock interviews. Each year for the past seven years, OHS has worked with Dr. Kinney's SOC 530 class. This is the first year we have tried the Mentoring Portfolio Project, and we are very excited about the momentum so far.

**Jack Carbee's Top Ten Reasons to Take the  
Early Retirement Incentive:**

10. You can once again say "Merry Christmas" and "Happy Easter" without getting a lawsuit filed against you.
9. You no longer count down the days until Spring Break or dread Labor Day
8. Every day is "jean day".
7. You no longer sleep with the phone hoping for an early morning phone call announcing a delay or cancellation.
6. Correcting papers means stumbling on misprints in the Wall Street Journal or USA Today.
5. Wednesday afternoons are for cocktail hour instead of faculty meetings.
4. In-service means attending church or taking the car for an oil change.
3. Retirement is like working in an orphanage- parents never call.
2. You are no longer implicated in the biggest lie ever - No Child Left Behind.
1. Every day is Saturday.