

MRSA

Stories are circulating all over this country about a new public health issue: Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), an antibiotic resistant strain of staph. According to the American Medical Association, 85% of MRSA cases occur in individuals who have had a stay in a healthcare institution in the preceding year.

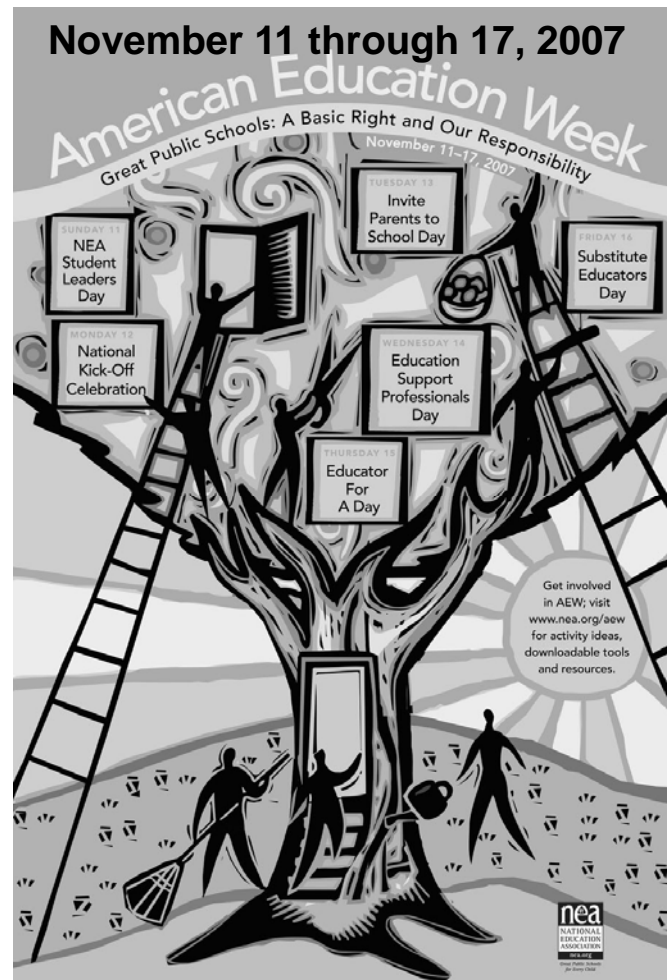
In a report issued on October 17, 2007, the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that:

Invasive MRSA infection affects certain populations disproportionately. It is a major public health problem primarily related to health care but no longer confined to intensive care units, acute care hospitals, or any health care institution.

Stories in the local and national press have concluded that such cases are on the rise in the public school setting. So, now more than ever it is important that teachers take the following precautions to protect themselves and their students:

1. Wash your hand frequently with soap and warm water.
2. Do not share personal items like clothing, towels, sports equipment unless washed or disinfected.
3. Take care of cuts before they have an opportunity to get infected.
4. Wash clothing with laundry detergent between each use.
5. Disinfect sports equipment, tables and desks.

Since MRSA is resistant to antibiotics, it is very important that precautions be observed in the classroom. Prevention is the best safeguard against the disease.



ON THE JOB INJURY FORM

At the October Representative Assembly, it was brought to MNEA's attention that the on the job injury form (Form 100) contained a reference to requiring teachers who are not on the insurance plan to go to General Hospital for care. Upon investigating the issue, MNEA President Erick Huth received confirmation from the Employee Benefits Office that teachers **do not have** to go to General Hospital for OJI claims. Apparently, the Form100 that was distributed was an old version of the form. The corrected form was distributed to principals on Friday, October 19, 2007.

BEP/CTE JUSTIFICATION FORM

Several teachers have inquired about the new BEP/CTE Justification Form. At the September meeting of the Professional Council, the administration indicated that the intent of the form was to have teachers explain items that might be in question. For example, when asked about paper borders for bulletin boards, the administration agreed that no explanation or justification would be necessary. Teachers do not have to explain every item—Just those that are not obvious at first glance.



MNEA SPECIAL ELECTION

The MNEA Special Election was conducted at the October 18 Representative Assembly. The following individuals were elected:

MNEA Executive Board:

Finance Officer:

Kenny Martin, McGavock High School

District Director, Hillwood Cluster (District 2)

Nancy Holland, Bellevue Middle School

District Director, Maplewood Cluster (District 3)

Theresa Wagner, Gra-Mar Middle School

District Director in the McGavock Cluster (District 9)

Nancy Ivancic, Hermitage Elementary School

District Director in the Overton Cluster (District 5)

Marie Nowell, Haywood Elementary School

District Director Stratford Cluster (District 10)

Russell Jones, Dalewood Middle School

Nominations and Elections Committee:

N&E Committee Member Hunters Lane Cluster (District 1)

Tera Shaw, Brick Church Middle School

N&E Committee Member Antioch Cluster (District 8)

Allison Bohannon, A.Z. Kelley Elementary School

N&E Committee Member Stratford Cluster (District 10)

Jenny Schnell, Inglewood Elementary School

N&E Committee Member Whites Creek Cluster (District 11)

Frankie Holloway, Bordeaux Elementary School

UPCOMING EVENTS

November



- 1 Making Sense of Retirement
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 5 Taking a Stand: Creating Safe Schools
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 8 MNEA Executive Board
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 13 School Board Meeting
Bransford Avenue Administration Building
- 13 Ready to Retire?
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 15 MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 27 School Board Meeting
Bransford Avenue Administration Building
- 29 Introduction to Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace

December

- 3 TEA Member Assistance Program
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 4 "No Name Calling Week" Workshop
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 6 MNEA Executive Board
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 11 School Board Meeting
Bransford Avenue Administration Building
- 13 MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

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Stephen Henry, Vice President
Kenneth Martin, Finance Officer
Diane Jarrell, Secretary

UniServ Coordinators: Forestine Cole, Ralph Smith, Gloria Towner
MNEA Staff: Teresa Hayes and Helen Conlee McMackin

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

The **2007-2008 Educational Agreement** is currently at press. However, an electronic version of the document is currently available at <http://mnea.com/Agreements/contract.pdf> or on the Human Resources tab of the www.mnps.org.

Paragraph 2 below describes the conditions under which teachers are to be paid for covering classes when a substitute is not available.

Article IV, "Teaching Conditions" Section A, Planning Time for Teachers

The Board and Association agree that there should be greater utilization of the local school staff and more flexible scheduling which would enable individual school administrators to provide planning time and duty-free lunch periods for teachers because of the importance of planning in promoting effective teaching.



1. All teachers shall have a planning period which shall be free of student responsibilities except for emergencies. This duty-free period shall be used for the purpose of preparation, grading papers, contacting parents or other items connected with the professional duties of the classroom teacher. Elementary principals and teachers shall plan cooperatively to ensure that an individual teacher's planning time is comparable to an average secondary planning period. (2003)
2. Any teacher covering a class because the system is unable to provide a substitute for another teacher shall be paid the highest substitute rate available, exclusive of the substitute bonus. Such additional compensation shall be prorated for the time period or percentage of the class that each teacher covers. When a class is split among several teachers, the substitute rate will be divided evenly among all teachers receiving students. (2003)
3. Starting with 2005-2006 school year, the Board will provide one (1) Code 10 Leave Day per semester to each special [education] teacher who has an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) caseload. Each Code 10 day shall be used for the purpose of preparing and implementing IEP's. (2005)

PERSONAL LEAVE APPROVALS

This year more than any in recent memory MNEA has received numerous inquiries about the denial of leaves, particularly personal leave days. Personal Leave days are not supposed to be used during the first two weeks and the last two weeks of each semester, on the day prior to or immediately following holidays or on scheduled inservice days. However, if you have a family or other obligation that cannot be rescheduled and want to take a personal leave, your request can be appealed up the administrative structure. MNEA advises that such requests only be made in cases where the date cannot be changed.

Opportunities to Help Others at Vanderbilt Medical Center

Volunteers are needed to assist patients and families at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. There are many ways to assist including offering age appropriate diversionary activities, serving as an Ambassador escorting and assisting patients, families and visitors throughout the medical center, and offering emotional support through visitation in various areas of the hospital. Hospital volunteers make a weekly or bi-weekly volunteer commitment.

Prior to volunteer training volunteers will attend a personal interview, complete a background check and health screening. If you are interested please contact Andy Peterson in Volunteer Services at 615-936-8871, to schedule a personal interview. In addition to weekly and bi-weekly volunteer opportunities there are selected opportunities for groups to participate in service projects.

Of note...

Pam Rosas, MNEA member and kindergarten teacher at Norman Binkley Elementary, was honored with \$1,400 worth of classroom materials through Office Max's "Make My Day" teacher recognition contest. Ms. Rosas was nominated by her principal, Dr. Carol Hammond. There were only 1,000 educators nationally who received this award.

Congratulations!

FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Is teaching stressing you out? Is teaching harder than it was 20 or 25 years ago? Are you thinking about re-tiring? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are not alone.



Teachers ask me nearly every week about retirement. Some want to retire before the age of 55 and with fewer than thirty years of creditable service in the state retirement plan. Unfortunately, such teachers would sustain such a heavy penalty that to retire does not make sense.

The Tennessee Consolidate Retirement System (TCRS) is just what it sounds like: a retirement system that has combined several different groups: 1. teachers (the largest group), 2. state government employees, and 3.

employees of local governments ("Political Subdivisions") that have opted to participate. Each group is accounted for separately. In fact, each Political

Subdivision has its own actuarial valuation done at the same time that calculations are done for state employees and teachers. State Law requires that the TCRS maintain roughly enough money to pay all obligations at any given point in time.

The fund has three sources of revenue: 1. employer contributions, which vary based on the amount that the actuary determines is needed to cover each employee group, 2. employee contributions, and 3. investment income. TCRS has historically been between 90% and 100% funded, which is very good for any public pension plan and gives teachers and other participants a certain level of security because we know the money is on hand to pay our pensions when we need it.

The formula for calculating a TCRS pension is very convoluted! The average teacher retiring after 30 years of service will receive about 48% of the average of her highest five consecutive years of salary ("Average Final Compensation"). Here is the formula for calculating your retirement: .015 times the Average Final Compensation (AFC)

times years of creditable service plus .0025 times the AFC times years of creditable service above the Social Security Integration Level (SSIL). Then, multiply the sum by 1.05. Got that? Oh, yeah SSIL is currently \$48,600.00 now and will increase to \$51,600.00 on January 1, 2007.

Teacher A is 57 years old and has 32 and a half years of creditable service under TCRS. Her Average Final Compensation is \$56,400. Here is how to calculate her benefit: $(56,400 \times .015 \times 32.5) + (7,800 \times .0025 \times 32.5) \times 1.05 = (27,495 + 633.75) \times 1.05 = 28,128.75 \times 1.05 = 29,535.19$ or 52.36% of her Average Final Compensation.

Teacher B is only 54 years old, has an AFC of \$46,000 and has only taught for 25 years. This teacher's monthly benefit will be 1,058 per month

according to the benefit calculator on the TCRS website. Her annual pension would be \$12,696.

Teacher C is 60 years old

and has 30 years of service under TCRS and the same \$46,000 AFC as Teacher B but her pension will be MUCH higher. She will receive \$1,811 per month or \$21,732 per year according to the benefit calculator. Obviously, the five extra years of service really paid off for Teacher C when compared to Teacher B. Teacher C will get the extra \$9,036 (before cost of living adjustments) each year for the rest of her life!

Basically, the idea that I am trying to convey is that, if you are thinking of retiring, go to the TCRS website and calculate the pension you would receive if you retired today. Then, make your decision based upon that information and the advice of the counselors at TCRS who will be more than happy to talk to you. Metro teachers are lucky because we live right here in the state capital and can easily schedule an appointment with a counselor. Everyone I have ever talked to who knows about TCRS retirement recommends a personal consultation over a telephone interview.

The TCRS Benefit Calculator is a powerful tool for estimating your retirement income.

Go to:

<https://ja.state.tn.us/treasury/tcrs/iirc/StateTeachersInput.jsp>



More details and up-to-date information at www.mnea.com