

The Slate



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Why is my paycheck wrong?

It's a new school year and it's time to be confused by big brother! Don't be shocked when you look at your MNPS paycheck. In the summer of 2006, MNPS abandoned its former payroll system and converted to EBS, the Metropolitan Government's payroll program. Since that time teachers, time keepers, administrators, and anyone else who receives a paycheck or works to produce one has been frustrated. EBS was designed to pay hourly employees who work a 12-month calendar and requires a workaround in order to pay 10-month salaried teachers.

If you are a new employee to MNPS, your "Statement of Payroll Earnings and Deductions" (your pay stub--sometimes called "a payroll advice" by Metro government) will not make sense when you first look at it. Specifically, your salary will show the amount that you have ACCRUED for the current **calendar** year. Be careful! If you are a 10-month employee, the "accrued" amount does not actually represent what you have earned in a two-week pay period even though it seems like it should. The hourly rate that shows on your check is actually the rate at which you earn your pay but has little relation to the "current" column.



According to our agreement with the Board, teachers will be paid equal amounts over 21 pay periods, which is 210 days. This methodology allows for each 10-month employee to be paid for the entire year with no breaks in pay due to unpaid holidays such as the two days before Thanksgiving, the four days at spring break and Good Friday. Remember the following:

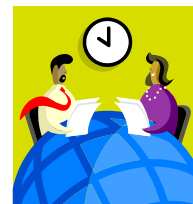
1. Ignore the hourly rate on your paycheck stub unless you have a deduction for an unpaid leave.
2. Take the amount in the CURRENT column and multiply it by 21 to find your annual salary.
3. Access the MNEA paycheck calculator (www.mnea.com/payworksheet.xls) to verify you are being paid correctly.
4. If you are certain there is an error, call MNEA for assistance.

Let's flex our parent conferences

As part of MNEA's 2008-2009 agreement with the Board, schools will now be allowed to flex the Parent-Teacher Conference Day. **Schools must submit a plan by the end of August.** See exact agreement below.

Article VI, Section D, Parent-Teacher Conference

An alternate Parent-Teacher Conference schedule may be established by each school. Principals will consult with members of the faculty to arrive at mutually agreeable alternate dates and times for parent conferences. The alternate days must take place within the same payroll period as the Board scheduled date for Parent-Teacher Conferences [between October 11 and October 24 for the current year]. All faculty are required to be present on the alternate days and times so that parents may meet with all of the appropriate personnel without having to make multiple trips to school. Individually planned teacher schedules will not be accepted. In the event the faculty and the principal do not agree on an alternate schedule, the conference will be held on the date designated on the board-approved calendar.



The alternate Parent-Teacher Conference schedule must be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning no later than the last school day in August. If no plan is submitted by that date, the school shall hold the conferences on the date on the board designated approved calendar.

Starting your FAC

Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) should be formed by September 15. Refer to the FAC language starting on page 51 of the **Educational Agreement** (<http://www.mnea.com/Agreements/contract.pdf>) for how to form the FAC. Also, MNEA will be holding FAC Training on September 23 and 30. See page 4 of the August 12 Slate or go to www.mnea.com/uofmnea for more information.

Know your contract

Where's my lunch anyway?

This time of year, MNEA traditionally receives a number of calls about the infringement of duty-free lunch. Duty free lunch is not only a statutory right but is also guaranteed in the *Educational Agreement*.



Article IV, Teaching Conditions, D. Duty-Free Lunch Period

All teachers shall be entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least thirty (30) minutes except in emergency situations. (2003)

Can I use my sick leave?

MNEA has received a few calls from various schools related to the advancing of sick days. Tennessee Code 49-5-710 (3) requires the advancement of five sick days to new employees. The sick leave provision in the *Educational Agreement* guarantees a superior benefit. Teachers are advanced their annual ten-days so long as they report to work. However, if you use the entire allotment before the end of the year and leave MNPS, you may owe the district for unearned sick leave.

Article VII, Leaves of Absence, A. Sick Leave

1. Definition. "Sick Leave" shall mean leave of absence from post of duty one-half (1/2) day or more because of illness of a teacher due to natural causes or accident, or illness or death of a member of the immediate family of a teacher. ("Immediate family" shall include only the following: wife, husband, parents, parents-in-law, children, children-in-law, grandchildren, brother, sister, grandparents, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and also any other person living in the home of the teacher as a member of the family at that time.)

2. Allocation. Sick leave for teachers shall be granted with full pay at the rate of one (1) day for each month a teacher has been on the payroll not to exceed twelve (12) days per year, and shall be cumulative throughout his/her employment. For the purposes of allocation of sick leave, the Presidency of the Association shall be considered a post of duty.

Note: Per Article VII, Section E, Subsection 6, fully paid personal leave days, which remain unused at the end of the work year, shall be credited to accumulated sick leave.

UPCOMING EVENTS



September

- 3** **Praxis II (PLT) Workshop**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 11** **MNEA Executive Board Meeting**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 15** **Faculty Advisory Committee**
Election Deadline
- 18** **MNEA Representative Assembly**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 22** **Professional Council**
4:00 p.m. at Central Office
- 23** **Faculty Advisory Committee Training** (1st group)
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 30** **Faculty Advisory Committee Training** (2nd group)
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

October

- 9** **MNEA Executive Board Meeting**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** **MNEA Representative Assembly**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 20** **Professional Council**
4:00 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 21** **Know Your Rights**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

November

- 6** **Evaluation Workshop**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 13** **MNEA Executive Board Meeting**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 20** **MNEA Representative Assembly**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

The Slate is published during the school year by the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association, an affiliate of the Tennessee Education Association and the National Education Association.

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Teacher pay plan changes this year

MNEA has received dozens of phone calls the last few weeks about the placement of teachers on the salary schedule in light of the new pay plan. MNPS will now recognize all credit verified by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE). For prior experience credit to count toward pay in MNPS, it must be (1) experience in a public school (certificated position—not support), (2) experience (certificated) in a private school accredited by a RECOGNIZED regional accrediting authority, or (3) teaching experience in an accredited institution of higher learning (public or private). Also, note that teaching for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools will count since DODDS schools are accredited but teaching recruits as a military instructor will not.

MNPS is currently working to place all teachers at the correct work location in the EBS payroll system. If you came to Tennessee and know that some of your out-of-state experience was not verified by the TDOE, you will need to do so in order to be appropriately slotted on the salary schedule. No one will receive back pay for prior years but everyone will receive pay for verifiable credit back to the start of this school year. The change in service credit took effect July 1, 2008. Because of the huge number of manual entries required for the conversion, fixing everyone's pay will take some time. A target date for conversion has not yet been set.

Get some free life insurance

All eligible members can take advantage of the valuable, automatic term life insurance coverage provided by NEA Complimentary Life Insurance (formerly "Dues-Tab"). All you have to do is register your beneficiary and you're covered so don't wait, do it now! Your coverage is automatic but you must register your beneficiary at www.neamb.com/insurance/linall.jsp or by calling NEA Member Benefits at 1-800-637-4636.

- A guaranteed benefit
- Provided at no cost to Active, Staff, Reserve and Life members
- Up to \$1,000 of term life insurance
- Up to \$5,000 of accidental death and dismemberment coverage
- Up to \$50,000 of AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or serving as an Association Leader
- Up to \$150,000 of life insurance for unlawful homicide while on the job

New teachers welcomed to MNPS

On July 23 – 24, 2008, MNEA had an opportunity to welcome and communicate one-on-one with new teachers to MNPS. This year's New Teacher Induction was held at the Martin Professional Development Center. It was a very exciting time in a brand new training facility. We encourage all Association Representatives to make contact with our new colleagues and lend them support. Remember your first day and extend a helping hand by sharing with them the benefits of becoming active in the United Education Profession.

MNEA is working for members

Social Workers. Recently our Social Workers experienced what could have been a very rough start of the year. Due to the new climate of cooperation and collaboration, MNEA was able to maintain an open line of communication with central office to express the views of members. At issue, was a plan to force social workers to work on Saturdays.

MNEA knows all teachers and special population educators go above and beyond the call of duty. This allows them to accomplish their goals of educating and providing services to students throughout Metro from Monday through Friday. Our ability to work with central office was very productive and informative about the services provided by the Social Work Division.

Teachers on 12-Month Assignment. This year because of changes mandated by the Tennessee Department of Education and other interests several new 12-month teaching positions have been created. Most teachers voluntarily applied for these positions with the understanding that their daily rate of pay would simply be extended over 12 months rather than 10. Voluntary transfers were certainly preferable to the forced extension of guidance counselors' work year, which MNEA was able to forestall through discussions.

Surprisingly, MNPS Human Resources used a bizarre methodology for determining these teachers' pay that not only violates the letter and spirit of the *Educational Agreement* but logic. Unfortunately, resolution has not been quick and MNEA may have to exercise the grievance and arbitration options to enforce the contract. Stay tuned for more information.

Let's hear from Erick...

MNEA has negotiated some great benefits for teachers and other certificated employees over the years. Certificated employees once paid 40% of the cost of premiums for the medical package while other MNPS employees only paid 25%. Today, teachers pay 25% just like Metro Government employees and school support staff because of MNEA's efforts. The difference today is that our insurance package is much more cost effective largely due to the work of the Employee Benefits Office Staff, the members of the Metropolitan Professional Employees Insurance Trust, and MNEA.



One exciting change coming down the pike is the addition of what the Trust has named the MNPS Employee and Family Medical Centers. There will be five clinic locations on MNPS school property, including the Central Office complex on Bransford Avenue. The Centers are designed to provide routine and emergency care to teachers, other employees, and their family members. The Insurance Trust is funding the setup costs. All MNPS employees will be able to receive medical treatment at the clinics using their insurance cards.

A huge benefit to those employees and their families on the certificated insurance plan is that you will owe nothing after a visit to one of our clinics. **Nothing! No co-pays! No coinsurance! No charge!** This is an incentive to employees and their families to use the clinics, which will provide a more cost-effective method of delivering health care.

The Bransford Avenue location should be operational sometime in October and the rest shortly thereafter. MNPS Employee and Family Health Centers are planned for Brookmeade Elementary, Madison Special Education, Two Rivers Middle, and a yet-to-be-determined location in the vicinity of Antioch High.

All medical services at our clinics will be provided by family nurse practitioners under the direction of a physician. Lab work for your regular doctor can be performed at the clinic in advance of your regular office visit, so your doctor can review the results during your consultation. The FNPs will have the ability to consult with a physician as necessary in real time and make referrals to specialists as needed. The Trust is confident that the onsite medical clinics will provide increased access to medical services, improve the delivery of care for on the job injuries, save employees time, and save money.

Helping the falsely accused

Each year at least one teacher becomes the victim of false accusations of improper conduct by a student. In many of these instances a true investigation proves the student may have had an axe to grind and the allegation is proven to be false. While most instances end with the teacher being declared innocent the damage is already done. Such teachers then must recoup what remains of their character, professionalism, spirit, and fortitude. Then, return to the school with their heads held high. This is difficult to do in the face of such a personal attack by a child.

These teachers tend to feel "marked." When other students attempt to levy similar false allegations against previously accused teachers, there is the possibility of the district assuming guilt by declaring a "pattern of behavior" has been established. The truth of the matter is that "jumping on the band wagon" is what has occurred. How does one combat such false, heinous acts against educators? By taking no action until all the facts are in? Maybe, but we understand that it depends upon the nature of the allegation and the availability of reliable witnesses. The difficulty of the situation is further exacerbated when the alleged incident ends up in the press on a slow news day. Thus, the teacher's family, neighbors, friends and colleagues are all drawn into this saga.

Since a pattern of false student allegations has occurred so often, MNEA leaders have collaborated with the MNPS Student Services Office to revisit and revise the current language of the *Student Conduct Handbook*. New and more specific language has been added to Rule 9 – Anti-Bullying/Harassment/Sexual Harassment to include slander/libel of school employees.

MNEA was also adamant that some penalty for students making false allegations must be attached to these rules so that they are clear about the severity of their actions. Additionally, MNEA insisted on specific procedures to be followed when the accusations are made known. However, there is no point to any of this if the procedures are not followed. Students should

have already received the new *Student Code of Conduct Handbook* with the new language. If not, refer them to the principal for a copy or at www.mnps.org.



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