

# The Slate



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## Is my pension safe?

With the uncertainty of the stock market and numerous press reports around the state, teachers and state employees have been concerned about the long-term viability of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). There are several points to remember:

- Pension assets are a long-term investment whose performance is best viewed over time. Volatility in the marketplace may cause assets to decrease in the short-term, but the TCRS fund has excellent long-term results.
- TCRS is exceptionally well-funded. The fund has 95% of the money needed to meet all current obligations. Few public pension plans are as well funded. Recently, Dale Simms, Treasurer of the State of Tennessee, told MNEA President and TCRS Executive Committee Member Erick Huth there are no more than 12 public pension plans in the country that are funded as well as TCRS.
- TCRS has a conservative investment policy which is designed to protect principal. For example, between June 30 and September 26, 2008, the S&P 500 fell about 7.4% while TCRS declined about 4.4%.
- TCRS is well diversified in multiple asset classes and the internal money managers who oversee investments make sure that risk is minimized. TCRS earnings do not rely solely upon domestic stocks.
- Michael Brakebill, TCRS Chief Investment Officer, told the TCRS Board of Trustees on September 26 that TCRS has a lower risk "than nearly any fund in the country."
- TCRS continues to maintain positive cash flow. This means that contributions (from employees and employers) plus earnings exceed pension payments.

## See what the University of MNEA has to offer

The Metropolitan Nashville Education Association is pleased to offer the following professional development opportunities to Nashville's teachers. The University of MNEA is made possible by the hard-working, dedicated members of MNEA/TEA/NEA. All training sessions except I Can Do It! are to be held at the MNEA Headquarters. To register go online to: [www.mnea.com/uofmnea](http://www.mnea.com/uofmnea).



### Know Your Rights

Presenters: MNEA and TEA Staff  
Tuesday, **October 21**  
4:30 PM to 8:00 PM  
(Cost: \$0 for members, \$35 for others)

**Know Your Rights** will help participants to understand the rights they are guaranteed under Tennessee Law and the master contract, *The Educational Agreement*. Individuals will have an opportunity to ask questions and interact.

### Sundae Monday

Presenters: MNEA Leaders and Staff  
Monday, **October 27**  
4:30 PM to 8:00 PM  
(Cost: \$0 for MNPS employees)

**Sundae Monday** is a combination of several activities. It will involve an overview of the Framework for Evaluation and a "Make It and Take It" classroom materials session. Ice-cream ☺, internet resources, and other pertinent information will be distributed.

### Framework for Evaluation

Presenter: Susan Dalton, TEA Staff  
Thursday, **November 6**  
4:30 PM to 8:30 PM  
(Cost: \$0 for members, \$35 for others)

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## Know your contract

Every month MNEA receives numerous telephone calls about the lack of discipline in Metro Schools. Unfortunately, the issue is truly one of enforcement. Our contract outlines several important factors related to discipline (Article II, Section I on pages 6-8). For example, some principals insist that teachers call parents before sending students to the office. In the excerpt below, one can see that serious or repeated infractions will allow a teacher to send a child to the office without intermediate steps!



### Article II, "Association and Teacher Rights," Section I, Subdivision 6. [Emphasis added.]

The general purpose of this provision shall be to provide concise information for both teacher and principal to assist them in cooperatively maintaining the best possible learning environment. Maintenance of proper student behavior, generally, is the concern of the entire professional staff. **Maintenance of proper student behavior in the classroom is primarily the responsibility of the teacher. However, a teacher will direct a pupil to the Principal or a designee when the seriousness of the behavior, the persistence of the misbehavior, or the disruptive effect of the violation makes the continued presence of the student unacceptable.** (2003)

In such cases, the teacher will immediately furnish the Principal or his/her designee with knowledge of the referral and as soon as possible, but no later than the conclusion of that school day, the full details of the incident leading to the dismissal and a concise written statement describing the disciplinary steps taken by the teacher before referral to the Principal or his/her designee. The teacher shall readmit the pupil upon the written authorization of the Principal or his/her designee. A concise written communication of the action taken by the Principal or his/her designee to assist the teacher and/or pupil shall be provided. (2003)

## Year-for-year credit revisited

While the last *Slate* was at press, MNEA received an update on the year-for-year salary credit issue. Teachers should send credit verification forms to Diane Burden in MNPS Human Resources Department. MNEA regrets the error. HR would prefer teachers wait for the communication from HR on salary credit rather than calling Ms. Burden or anyone else at the central office. Apparently, there are too many impacted individuals for HR to handle every incoming call on the salary credit issue.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### October

- 16 MNEA Representative Assembly**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 20 Professional Council**  
4:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 21 Know Your Rights**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 25 Educators Housing Seminar**  
9:00 a.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 27 Sundae Monday**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters

### November

- 6 Evaluation Workshop**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 8 I Can Do It! Classroom Management Workshop**  
8:30 AM at TEA Headquarters
- 13 MNEA Executive Board Meeting**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 17 Professional Council**  
4:00 PM at Central Office
- 17 Introduction to Financial Peace University**  
4:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters (*first session*)  
5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters (*second session*)
- 19 Taking a Stand:  
Creating Safe Schools for All Students**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 20 MNEA Representative Assembly**  
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters

### December

- 8 Professional Council**  
4:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 8 MNEA Executive Board Meeting**  
5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 11 MNEA Representative Assembly**  
4:30 PM 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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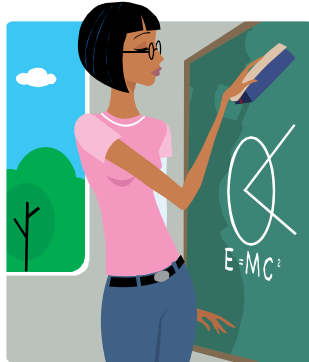
UniServ Coordinators: Forestine Cole, Ralph Smith, Gloria Towner  
MNEA Staff: Kristen Case, Teresa Hayes and Helen Conlee McMackin

## Non-tenured teachers join MNEA!

*Many non-tenured teachers have indicated someone told them not to join MNEA. The following is a testimonial from a non-tenured teacher who MNEA assisted in keeping her job and getting tenure.*

### Reasons Why Every Non-tenured Teacher in MNPS Should Join MNEA

I have always had the desire to teach elementary children! I can say just to remain an educator has been a hard struggle! I have spent endless hours on post graduate education work. I now have an EDS in Curriculum and Instruction. I have done years of student teaching, survived through three years of non-tenured teacher observations (3 done a year), and I am now in my fourth year with MNPS.



However, I almost did not make it to my fourth year in MNPS. Halfway through my third year of teaching, I was shocked to find out that my principal was not going to renew my teaching contract with MNPS. It was devastating to discover my teaching career was going to end so suddenly! In my third year, I was already preparing to come back to teach my fourth year. I was so excited about finally reaching the status of a tenured teacher!

After all this work, I deserved to have a good explanation about why I would not receive tenure my fourth year, not to mention, a teaching career with MNPS. I did not know where to turn, except the thought crossed my mind that maybe MNEA could help. I happened to be an active member of MNEA. I got in contact with my MNEA UniServ Coordinator, and discussed my situation. He gave me counsel on the steps I could take to deal with the situation. He not only supported me through my crisis, but also represented me well at the MNPS Board of Education!! MNEA is the only reason I can say that I have a job today with MNPS! Thanks MNEA!

This is why I strongly suggest that every non-tenured teacher needs to consider becoming an MNEA member. I am so glad I did! MNEA will be there to support you if there is a serious issue that affects your well being as a teacher. It is definitely an organization in which, every non-tenured educator needs to belong !!

Amy Miller, MNEA Member

## MNEA seeks web resources for teachers

The MNEA IPD committee is in the process of gathering websites useful to teachers. If you have a favorite you would like the committee to consider, email it to Nancy Ivancic at [ivan-cicn@comcast.net](mailto:ivan-cicn@comcast.net). Nancy would like you to note the subject and grade level for which the site is intended.



## MNEA makes teachers whole

In an earlier *Slate*, MNEA reported on a potential grievance related to the pay of certain teachers assigned as 12-month employees. MNEA later filed the grievance on their behalf. On September 19, MNEA received a response from our level 1 grievance in favor of MNEA's position that impacted employees should receive their daily rate of pay for all paid days throughout the calendar year.

## Homework Hotline needs teachers

Homework Hotline needs additional certified teachers with middle school



615 298-6636  
888 868-5777



experience. This is a great after school opportunity. Ideal candidates are friendly and kind teachers who would love to tutor students by phone.

MNPS teachers work 133 hours per year, usually a 3.5-hour shift, one night per week. Teachers are paid the approved summer school rate of \$17.61. Homework Hotline is located in the Cohn Adult Learning Center in West Nashville. All books, materials, and motivated students are provided. For details call Wendy Kurland at 298-6636 or email her at [homeworkhotline@earthlink.net](mailto:homeworkhotline@earthlink.net).

### MNEA Address Change Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home email address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

School/Work Site \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form to: MNEA, Route 3

## Let's hear from Erick...

What do word walls, fear, leopards, and professional development have in common? They're at the crux of a clash of cultures in Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. Here's how it works.



You're in your classroom one morning and in walks a stranger to observe you. Quickly, you find out she is from the Central Office. Maybe you heard, maybe you imagine the ominous words, "I'm from the Central Office, and I'm here to help." Automatically, the little hairs on the back of your neck go up. This is a spontaneous chemical signal from your brain to your body that you're in trouble and have to watch out.

As you continue to work with your students, individually and in small groups, your visitor begins to explain to you the problems she has found in your class. She shows you a clipboard, which among other things notes that your word wall does not meet the letter of the educational theory behind word walls! Before you know it you've been bombarded with deficiencies but have not heard a single positive comment. What went wrong?

First, lots of people are visiting classrooms all over the district including instructional coaches, state agents known as "exemplary educators," and central office administrators. This could be a good thing but two glaring problems exist: (1) a few individuals with little training on how to coach have been walking into classrooms with checklists and most teachers know learning cannot be reduced to checking boxes on a sheet of paper, and (2) teachers all over Metro still remember with great clarity the ominous words of a recent superintendent who proudly proclaimed, "When you become a principal, you're not doing your job if your teachers are happy."

Some of the clipboard junkies are the same ones who dutifully followed the instructions of the aforementioned director of schools. Unfortunately, they are often perceived as leopards who can't change their spots! The district is in the process of restructuring professional development to transform the district into a caring organization. However, our institutional climate still needs some work because those spots are hard to change!

## Schools can spend supply funds

The FAC and the principal are to jointly determine how to spend pooled BEP money and 2316 supply funds. The pooled BEP money and the new teacher supply funds (\$200 for certain teachers new to MNPS) will not be available until some time in October. However, schools are authorized to spend up to 75% of last year's allocation of 2316 supply funds. Ultimately, 2316 supply funds will be allocated at the rate of \$50 per pupil.



More details and up-to-date information at [www.mnea.com](http://www.mnea.com)

(Continued from page 1)

**Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth** examines the Tennessee Framework for Teacher Evaluation and helps individuals with the fine points of the requirements of the Comprehensive Assessment. Participants will examine the indicators and performance standards, develop instructional strategies that match the indicators, and increase awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

### Introduction to Financial Peace University

Presenter: Gloria Towner, TEA Staff

Monday, **November 17**

Two Sessions: 4:00 PM or 5:00 PM

(Cost: \$0 for members, \$35 for others)

**Financial Peace University** ([www.daveramsey.com/fpu/home](http://www.daveramsey.com/fpu/home)) is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money. You'll be empowered with the practical skills and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace! Pick the time you prefer on November 17 and find out what Financial Peace is all about.

### Taking a Stand:

#### Creating Safe Schools for All Students

Presenter: **Stephen Henry, MNEA Vice President**

Monday, **November 17**

4:30 PM to 6:30 PM

**Taking a Stand** is part of NEA's National Training Program on Safety, Bias, and GLBT Issues. The advanced session will be offered in the spring semester. This introductory workshop uses video clips and hands-on activities to examine the obvious and subtle ways that bias plays out in schools, and offers resources for creating schools that are safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. This workshop is especially designed for people who are not gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and who are interested in addressing bias regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

## DePriest meets with MNEA

About 30 teachers came to MNEA Headquarters to talk with Linda DePriest, MNPS Executive Director of Special Education, and Beth O'Shea, MNPS Executive Director of Gifted Programs, on September 25. Unfortunately, Connie Smith, Assistant Commissioner of Education, who had been scheduled to attend, was not present due to a pressing matter elsewhere.

Dr. DePriest did an excellent job of answering questions and taking suggestions from teachers. She and Ms. O'Shea committed to responding to numerous other issues that could not be addressed due to time constraints or other factors. Over all, Nancy Holland, MNEA Special Education Committee Chair, declared the event "a great success." MNEA plans to invited Dr. Smith to meet with teachers later in the year.