

The Slate



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November 24 is a problem

Teachers all over the district are concerned about the inflexibility of the administrative guidelines for "flexing" November 24 planning day. The date is becoming increasingly controversial. MNEA expressed concern about the day when the calendar was first created but the administration insisted on adding the day in order to avoid having a teacher work day after Memorial Day.



Unfortunately, the business of developing a school calendar for an urban school district the size of MNPS is not an easy task. There are countless competing interests, many of which change over time. Surveys frequently show results split 50-50 in favor of one idea or another, and ultimately someone is upset by it.

MNEA has received numerous complaints about the process involved in this year's flexing of November 24. The idea of everyone participating on the flexed times has created the tendency for some administrators to devise a plan and put it to a vote. If one person cannot work the day, the 100% vote fails and no one takes a flex day. Either way, someone feels hurt in the process.

The final version of the MNPS memo to principals on the subject of flexing November 24 says, in part, "Each school will need to meet and discuss options for a flexible/alternative schedule to make-up the time for the November 24th Planning/Assessment Day." There is no mention of principals designing the plan to be presented to the faculty for a vote! These directions allow for faculties to use a collaborative consensus process to resolve the issue.

Another concern about the issue is what implications the flex process may have for next year. Fortunately, those discussions were settled on the front end this time. In the 2009-2010 MNPS Calendar (see next column), October 19 and 20 are designated as "swap days." These days will be an opportunity for all teachers to earn staff development credits through ERO and other sources in exchange for taking the two days off and having a full week off for fall break. The trade off, however, is that the Thanksgiving break will go back to a three-day holiday.

MNPS calendar revised

The Board of Education approved the proposed changes to the 2009-2010 MNPS Calendar we discussed at the last Representative Assembly. The approved calendar is outlined below:

Approved District Calendar 2009-2010

Fall Semester begins on August 14, 2009

First nine weeks ends October 15, 2009
Fall Break is October 19-23, 2009
Fall Semester ends December 17, 2009
Fall Semester is 80 days
Winter Break is December 21, 2009 — January 1, 2010

Spring Semester begins on January 5, 2010

Third nine weeks ends March 11, 2010
Spring Break is March 12-19, 2010
Spring Semester ends/Last Day of School is May 27, 2010
Spring Semester is 94 days
Total: 174 school days

Inservice Days:

August 10-13, 2009
May 28, 2010

Planning/Record Days:

October 16, 2009
December 18, 2009
March 12, 2010

Professional Development Days:

October 19-20, 2009 (*These two days are designated swap days. Teachers can earn staff development credits in the summer and fall in order to take the days off!*)
January 4, 2010
February 15, 2010

Parent/Teacher Conference Days:

October 30, 2009 (½ day)
February 8, 2010 (½ day)
(These days are counted as instructional days since students are in session half a day.)

Holidays:

September 7, 2009 (Labor Day)
November 25, 2009 (Wednesday before Thanksgiving)
November 26-27, 2009 (Thanksgiving)
January 18, 2010 (Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday)
April 2, 2010 (Good Friday)



Know your contract

The *2008-2009 Educational Agreement* is currently at press. However, an electronic version of the document is available on the MNEA website www.mnea.com/agreements/contract.pdf.

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



Article IV, 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)

UPCOMING EVENTS



November

- 16-20 American Education Week**
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
20 Petitions Due in MNEA Special Election
 5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters

December

- 1-5 MNEA Special Election**
 Stratford and Whites Creek Clusters
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

January

- 8 MNEA Executive Board Meeting**
 5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
13 MNEA Nominations and Elections Committee
 5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
15 MNEA Representative Assembly
 4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
26 Professional Council
 4:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters

February

- 12 MNEA Executive Board Meeting**
 5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
13 MNEA Candidate Petitions Due
 5:00 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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Spring elections announced

At the October MNEA Representative Assembly, the Nominations and Elections Committee announced the timetable for MNEA officer elections, TEA and NEA delegate elections, and other MNEA positions. The process will begin with the announcement of vacancies at the Representative Assembly on January 15. Other important dates are listed below. A complete schedule can be viewed online at www.mnea.com/electiontimetable.htm.

February 13: MNEA candidate petitions due at MNEA Headquarters by 5:00 PM

February 19: Nominations accepted from the floor of the MNEA Representative Assembly; MNEA candidate campaigning begins; *TEA/NEA delegate nomination forms due in MNEA office by 5:00 PM

February 23: MNEA candidate profiles due by 5:00 PM

March 26: MNEA candidate speeches

March 6: TEA/NEA delegate ballots due at MNEA headquarters by 5:00 PM

March 27: MNEA spring elections begin

April 13: Ballots due at MNEA headquarters by 5:00 PM

April 17: Candidate expense reports due at MNEA headquarters by 5:00 PM

*TEA/NEA delegate forms will be printed in *The Slate* two times between January 16 and February 19. The form will also be available at www.mnea.com.

MNEA-PACE to elect in December

The MNEA Political Action Committee for Education will hold elections for MNEA-PACE Council members during the MNEA Representative Assembly on December 11. The MNEA-PACE Council is responsible for interviewing candidates for local political offices and recommending candidates to the MNEA membership. Additionally, Council members work with the TEA Fund Council on concurrence for candidates in state and federal offices representing the citizens of Nashville and Davidson County.



There will be two positions to fill in each MNEA-PACE Council district. To qualify for a district seat, one must live in Davidson county. MNEA-PACE Council districts have the same boundaries as the Metro School Board districts. Council districts are determined by one's residence—not one's work assignment. MNEA-PACE Council also has a vacancy for the Category 2 member who must be an NEA Life or administrative member. If you are interested in serving on the Council, please email Ralph Smith at rsmith@tea.nea.org or call him at 726-1499.

A portion of each members dues funds MNEA-PACE. In 2008-2009, the amount is approximately \$3.79. Members are welcome to make additional contributions in any amount up to \$5,000. MNEA-PACE funds are used for contributions and/or other assistance to recommended candidates in local elections, increasing membership involvement in political activities, MNEA-PACE Council meetings, interviews and recommendation meetings, training of members for lobbying/other political activities, administrative costs, and other miscellaneous expenses. Members, who object to such uses of their money may opt-out by having their money directed to the MNEF Scholarship Fund. In order to do so for 2007-2008, complete the form below and return it to MNEA before May 31, 2009.



www.neamb.com

1-800-637-4636

Helping Make Members' Lives Better

7:00 AM to 7:00 PM CST, Monday – Friday
8:00 AM to 12:00 PM CST, Saturday

The Member Services Center is the first point of contact for members calling in for information, with questions about materials they have received, requests for printed information or for assistance in completing forms for programs.

The Center is constantly being upgraded to provide the best one-on-one over-the-phone contact possible. This year telephone and computer systems were im-

Redirection of MNEA-PACE Dues

Name: _____

School/Work Site: _____

TEA Membership Number: _____

Date: _____

By signing this form I am requesting that my 2008-2009 MNEA-PACE Dues be redirected to the MNEF Scholarship Fund.

Signature

Let's hear from Erick...

Recently, Mayor Karl Dean has received a great deal of press for his education reform initiatives Teach for America. Teach for America is non-profit educational entity organized under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In other words, TFA is a foundation similar to the Nashville Alliance for Public Education or the Broad Foundation.

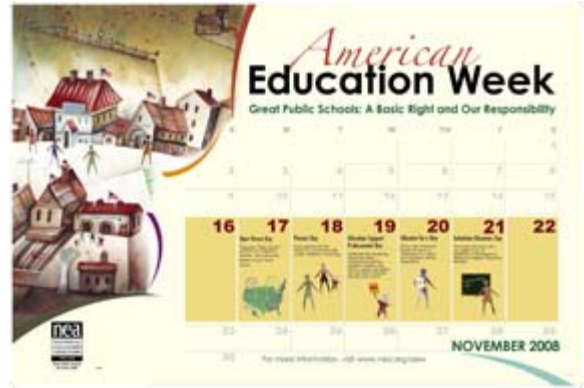


A review of TFA's federal tax return for the most recent year I could locate tells an interesting story. For the 2005 tax year, Teach for America received \$102.4 million from various sources: direct and indirect public contributions, interest income, and government grants.

A cursory review of TFA's website reveals the organization has about 6000 "core members" currently working as teachers in public schools in the United States. One might think then come to the conclusion the huge income (roughly one-fifth of the MNPS budget) was needed to pay those 6,000 teachers. However, one would be seriously mistaken! Of the income noted above, nearly half \$46.2 million was leftover at the end of 2005! That's 45% of TFA's income. That's huge! Another way of looking at the surplus TFA amassed through 2005 is to calculate the percentage of operating expenses the organization's cumulative surplus represents. Let me put this in perspective. Public school districts in Tennessee are required by law to maintain a 3% fund balance—or reserve. Many school business managers prefer a 9 to 10% reserve. TFA's fund balance at the end of 2005 was approximately \$100 million or 179% of income! An absolute fortune!

Now, let's look at the teachers recruited by TFA to work in MNPS next year. The 50 or so "core members" TFA will hire for MNPS next year will be regular teachers who are employees of the district just like the faculty of your local school. The district will pay them the same salaries and benefits as their non-TFA colleagues, and those teachers will be evaluated just like every other MNPS teacher and be members of our bargaining unit. The only difference presumably is TFA core members will receive TFA training before they receive their alternative license and other support from TFA relative to completing their licensure programs. In reality, MNPS hires hundreds of provisionally licensed teachers in middle and high schools each year.

TFA seems to have a good reputation for preparing individuals from non-traditional programs to teach. For example, there is no comparison between the preparation TFA core members receive and the preparation Teach Tennessee candidates receive. TFA has also a much better retention rate since many teachers staying beyond the two-year commitment they make to participating school district.



American Education Week -- **November 16-22, 2008** -- is co-sponsored by NEA, one of the creators and original sponsors. NEA and the American Legion created this event in 1919 to generate public support for education because 25 of every 100 American World War I draftees were illiterate. Even more were physically unfit.

The conventions of both organizations subsequently adopted resolutions of support for a national effort to raise public awareness of the importance of education. In 1921, the NEA Representative Assembly in Des Moines, Iowa, called for designation of one week each year to spotlight education.

In its resolution, NEA called for: "An educational week . . . observed in all communities annually for the purpose of informing the public of the accomplishments and needs of the public schools and to secure the cooperation and support of the public in meeting those needs."

More details on how you can participate go to: www.nea.org/aew.

Retirement workshop planned

The University of MNEA is planning a retirement workshop entitled "**Ready to Retire?**" for December 2, 2008, from 4:30 PM to 7:30PM at the MNEA Headquarters.

If you are planning to retire at the end of December or just planning ahead, don't miss this session! Our expert presenters can help you make sure all is in order—before AND after your retirement date. The workshop will cover many topics including retirement planning and how to go about finding out if you can afford to retire. All MNEA members are welcome regardless of their retirement plans. If you are interested in signing up go to www.mnea.com/uofmnea.



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