

The Slate



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Director visits MNEA

Dr. Jesse Register, MNPS Director of Schools, visited the MNEA Representative Assembly on March 26, 2009. Dr. Register spoke briefly and then spent over 90 minutes answering very pointed questions of MNEA representatives and others in attendance at our monthly Representative Assembly. He appeared to have a fairly deep understanding of some of the challenges facing teachers in MNPS but was treated to a healthy dose of frustration resulting from the lack of collaboration at many schools. Issues discussed included:

1. specific concerns of PALS relating to the dissolution of their positions,
2. high school teachers being forced to teach an A/B block schedule,
3. itinerant personnel being moved out of their service centers,
4. the impact of inexperienced administrators on school climate, and
5. problems with special education.



Jesse Register at the MNEA Rep. Assembly March 26, 2009

Be a part of the first-ever

Lorax Project Student Earth Day

What is the Lorax Project Student Earth Day?

Long before saving the earth became a global concern, Dr. Seuss, speaking through his character the Lorax, warned against mindless progress and the danger it posed to the earth's natural beauty. Today, almost four decades later, his message is more important than ever.

With the goal of educating children early about doing their part to protect the environment, Dr. Seuss Enterprises, the National Education Association, and Random House Children's Books are proud to launch the first-ever Lorax Project Student Earth Day. This annual event encourages educators and students to set aside a special time to celebrate the Lorax's message and act on their own pledges to beautify and conserve their school environment and beyond.

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TEA delegates assemble in May

The 2009 Tennessee Education Association Representative Assembly is scheduled for May 1 and 2 at the Nashville Convention Center. Delegates to TEA will also approve the TEA 2009-2010 budget, take action on standing rule amendments, constitutional amendments, and other matters of business including a new business item on the TVAAS methodology to be submitted by MNEA members.

Of local interest, Stephen Henry (MNEA Vice President) is a candidate for the vacancy on the NEA board of Directors and Erick Huth (MNEA President) is running for reelection as the Middle Tennessee Teacher Representative on the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board of Trustees. Stephen will be running in a contested election and balloting will take place on May 2 between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM. If another candidate qualifies to run for TCRS, Erick's election will be conducted at the same time. Otherwise, he will be elected by acclamation during the first business session on the evening of May 1.

MNEA delegates are required to attend the TEA Delegate Briefing Session at MNEA Headquarters at 6:00 PM on April 16 in order to receive the MNEA allotment to defray expenses during the Assembly. Any delegate who does not attend that session will need to meet with the president or his designee prior to the TEA Representative Assembly (time and place yet to be determined).

Choose the next MNEA secretary

Candidate speeches for the MNEA secretary election were held at the March 26, 2009, Representative Assembly. Ballots for the election were mailed on March 27, 2009. Each member of MNEA should have received a ballot via school route delivery or US Mail. If you are a member and did not receive a ballot, contact Helen McMackin at 726-1499 immediately.



Ballots are due at the MNEA headquarters no later than 5:00 PM, April 13. To ensure your ballot reaches MNEA place it in school mail no later than April 8. Ballots may be delivered in person to MNEA Headquarters at any time before the deadline. Facsimiles will be rejected.

Know your contract

The contract provision cited below outlines the vehicular damage reimbursement program negotiated by MNEA. It is important to report the damage to your vehicle as soon as possible. Forms should be available in your school's office or by contacting the Employee Relations Division at the Central Office.



Article III, Section P: Vehicular Damage

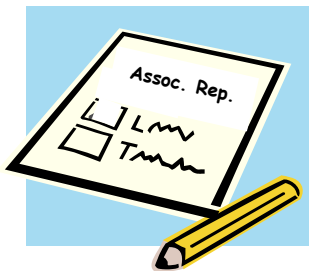
Each year, the Board agrees to contribute one dollar and fifty cents (\$1.50) per certificated employee to reimburse a teacher on assigned duty whose vehicle, parked at the site of his/her assigned responsibility, is damaged without fault of the teacher as a result of malicious acts related to professional responsibilities, provided the following stipulations are applicable:

1. No reimbursement shall be made for loss or damage resulting from collision, and no loss reimbursed for theft or damage resulting from theft, except that theft of such parts of a vehicle as are essential to its functioning may be considered.
2. Any uninsured loss which qualifies under the plan for reimbursement shall be covered up to an amount of \$250.00. On a funds available basis, losses above \$250.00 will be reimbursed. (1995)

Association representatives needed!

According to the *MNEA Bylaws*, elections for Association Representatives for the following year should be conducted during the month of April. Association Representatives play an important role in communicating with MNEA leaders and with members of their faculty.

MNEA has many long-time, dedicated Association Representatives who do an excellent job of communicating teacher concerns to MNEA and bringing information back to their schools. All MNEA members need this vital link. If you are interested in becoming more involved, feel free to run as Association Representative for your school.



Article VII, Representative Assembly, Section 5.

During the month of April, prior to the April Representative Assembly, each faculty shall elect by secret ballot the number of association representatives and alternates to which it is entitled. Nominations for these positions shall be open.

UPCOMING EVENTS



April

- 10** Spring Holiday (Good Friday)
Teachers do not report
- 13** Ballots Due for MNEA Secretary Election
5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** TEA Delegate Briefing
6:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** Association Representative Election Deadline
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 20** Professional Council
4:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters

MAY

- 1-2** TEA Representative Assembly
Nashville Convention Center
- 5** MNEA National Teacher Day Banquet
6:00 PM at Martin Center
- 7** MNEA Executive Board Meeting
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 14** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 19-21** Exams (half-day for grade 9-12)
- 21** Last Day for Students (half-day)
- 22** Last Day for Teachers
- 31** Last Day to Drop MNEA Membership for 2009-2010

June

- 1** NEA Delegate Briefing
2:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 8-11** TEA Political Academy
Paris Landing State Park
- 18-20** TEA Summer Leadership Academy
Embassy Suites Hotel, Cool Springs
- 26-29** NCUEA Summer Conference
San Diego, CA

July

- 1-6** NEA Representative Assembly
San Diego, CA

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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New special education restraint law introduces safety measures

State Board of Education seeks input from teachers on new rules.

The *Special Education Isolation and Restraint Modernization and Behavioral Supports Act*, passed by the Tennessee General Assembly became effective January 1, 2009. The law's intent is to keep students safe from unreasonable, unsafe or unwarranted discipline. On January 30, the State Board of Education approved the rule on first reading to implement this new law.

The role of the State Board—in consultation with the State Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Children's Services—is to create guidelines concerning the use of isolation or restraint to comply with the law. The State Board will vote on the final reading of these guidelines at their next meeting on April 17, 2009.

With the passage of this law, the legislature intends to ensure that every student receiving special education services is free from the unreasonable, unsafe or unwarranted use of isolation and restraint practices; to encourage the use of positive behavioral interventions and support methods in schools; to develop properly trained staff in order to promote positive behavioral supports that reduce dependence on isolation and restraint practices; and to ensure that teachers of students receiving special education services are properly trained to protect the student, teacher and others from physical harm if isolation or restraint is necessary.

While the law allows restraint in certain specific situations, many types of restraint or isolation are prohibited. Among those prohibitions are the use of mechanical restraints such as tie-down straps, any form of restraint that restricts air, locked or barricaded rooms, release of noxious substances including mace and other defense sprays and any physical holding restraint as a means of coercion, punishment, convenience or retaliation.

The law states that special education students may be restrained in emergency situations or if the student's IEP allows. The school principal, or a designated administrator, must be notified if restraint or isolation methods are used, even if they comply with the new law. For more information on how your district plans to implement this law, TEA urges you to contact your principal and district special education coordinator.

The State Board of Education will be holding a rule-making hearing at 10 a.m. on April 30, 2009. Educators with concerns or input are encouraged to attend this open hearing at the State Board Office in the Andrew Johnson Tower, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville. Whether or not you attend the meeting, comments received by 4:30 p.m. CST on Friday, May 1, 2009, will

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Reallocating your MNEA-PACE dues

A portion (\$3,875 in 2008-2009) of MNEA dues funds the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association Political Action Committee for Education (MNEA-PACE). 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 2008-2009, complete the form below and return it to MNEA before May 31, 2009.

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

National Teacher Day is coming

Tuesday, May 5, 2009

"Great Teachers Make Great Public Schools"

MNEA is working on plans for this year's National Teacher Day Banquet to pay tribute to our retirees, scholarship recipients, and award winners. Please send the names and schools of members who have retired this year or are planning to retire to MNEA, Route 3. You may also fax (726-2501), email (kristen_case@comcast.net), or call MNEA (726-1499) with the information.

The Internal Relations Committee is preparing for a great night of fun, food and fellowship to honor our teachers who have contributed so much to the future of Nashville's children and present special awards. The festivities are planned for May 5, 2009, at Martin Professional Development Center.

Let's hear from Erick...

Critics of public schools, politicians, and some practitioners proclaim the benefits of one program over another as the next best cure for lackluster school performance. Unfortunately, there is no one-size fits all cure to the challenges facing public education.



Just look at our school district. We see poverty in MNPS approaching levels faced in Memphis City Schools and far above Hamilton County and every other urban school district. Our percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency is higher than any other Tennessee district, and I've heard repeated assertions from political leaders including board members and the former mayor that our LEP population represents one fourth of our state's English Language Learners.

With over 130 schools in MNPS student populations will vary greatly from school to school. After all, our county includes densely populated areas in the central city, suburban areas, and even sparsely populated rural expanses. The real beauty of our school district is the diversity of cultures, ethnicities, and geography.

We are a society of quick fixes and schools are no different. Clearly, the one-size-fits-all, silver bullet approach of the former school administration failed us horribly. We as educators often find ourselves doing something of questionable value because some administrator thought the strategy was a great idea and told us all to implement it. Real school improvement is much more art than science.

Yes, statistics can help us to understand where we've been and where we are, but they can't really show us where we're going. Ultimately, it is up to all stakeholders to achieve school improvement. No person or program can improve a school's performance alone. The best school administrator is one who leads. The worst is one who manages, directs, or orders people around. Research has shown such an approach to be counterproductive to school improvement, yet a few administrators continue to gravitate toward old-style management.

A group of people working collaboratively can accomplish far more than a collection of individuals could ever hope. Collaboration is a synergistic force capable of derailing predictive statistical models. Let's return to collaboration and resist the urge to buy another program to throw at our challenges!

Correcting an error

In the March 27 edition of *The SLATE*, the URL for the Tennessee Department of Education Electronic Learning Center was incorrect. The correct web address is: www.tnelc.org! The editor regrets the error.



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

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When is the Lorax Project Student Earth Day?



Mark your school calendar for WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009! The Lorax Project Student Earth Day events beautifully complement Earth Day celebrations in your school and community.

Who will participate?

It's up to forward-thinking educators like you to make history and get your colleagues, students, and their parents involved in this inaugural event.

Where will celebrations take place?

Celebrations will take place inside and outside schools across the nation—in classrooms, playgrounds, parks, and beyond.

How do I get involved?



Start planning as early as possible so that your classrooms and schools can fulfill their environmental pledges by April 22.

Log on to WWW.THELORAX.COM for a free classroom tool kit, including:

- A printer-friendly environmental pledge poster for you and all your students to sign
- Beautification and conservation challenge ideas
- A pledge tree how-to
- A photo gallery and educator idea exchange

For additional resources and information, visit:

WWW.NEA.ORG and
WWW.THELORAXPROJECT.COM



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be considered prior to the Board taking final action on the rule.

More information about the final status of the guidelines will be distributed after the final reading. To view the law, as passed go to <http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/2009Januarypdfs/>.

If you need additional information or wish to submit comments, please use the following contact information:

*e-mail to rich.haglund@state.tn.us.
Phone: 615-741-2966
Fax: 615-741-0371*

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