

# The Slate



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## How planning time disappears

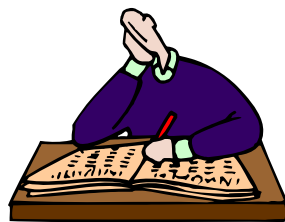
Teachers all across MNPS are complaining their planning time is being infringed upon. Usually, what happens is someone or some group at the school decides they know best how to help a teacher plan. True enough, collaborative planning can be very fruitful and save teachers time in the long run, but many mandated "collaborative planning," "team meetings," and "department meetings" are unproductive.

Teachers need to remember to look at the collective bargaining agreement to see the exact agreement on planning time. Go to [www.mnea.com](http://www.mnea.com) and click on the "Master Contract." The planning time provision is Article IV, Section A and can be found on page 19. Section A.1 reads as follows:

*All teachers shall have a daily planning period which shall be free of student responsibilities except for emergencies. This duty free period shall be used for the purpose of collaboration, preparation, grading papers, contacting parents, or other items connected with professional duties as determined by the teacher. No more than one planning period per week shall be required for activities other than those listed above.*

*An elementary planning shall be a minimum of 60 minutes. (2009)*  
[Emphasis added.]

Some teachers report they must attend forced meetings where someone is required to take notes and report to a higher authority. Other teachers report having to attend meetings that are merely meetings for the sake of documenting a meeting. Such meetings rarely become collaborative or productive. Remember, no more than one planning period per week shall be required for activities other than those listed in Article IV, Section A.1.



## FAC helps spend supply funds

The FAC and the principal are to jointly determine how to spend pooled BEP money and 2316 supply funds. See Article VI Section G of the collective bargaining agreement. *The Educational Agreement* is available now on the MNEA website [www.mnea.com](http://www.mnea.com) by following the "Master Contract" link in the sidebar.

## FAC trainings packed



Linda Allen presenting at MNEA FAC Training 9.22.09

MNEA has successfully completed the 2009 Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) Training Workshops. We are pleased to report that over 150 teachers have been trained on provisions of the collective bargaining agreement (*The Educational Agreement*) dealing with FACs. The new language regarding establishing nomination committees, election procedures, processing concerns, scheduling meetings, setting agendas and collaborating with administrators was discussed in detail.

Participants were actively involved in the decision making process in simulated FAC meetings where real issues and real concerns were addressed. It was gratifying to note the high number of committee members elected who are new or relatively new to the district. This bodes well for emerging leadership within the association.

Every concern was formulated to include recommended resolution for consideration by administrators. Questions surrounding the roles of building level administrators, MNEA, and Central Office staff were addressed, and presenters cleared the air on various misconceptions. Great emphasis was placed on the need for transparency and open lines of communication within the building.



MNEA FAC Training 9.29.09

If your FAC was unable to attend either session, onsite training is available by contacting MNEA at 726-1499 or [mymnea@comcast.net](mailto:mymnea@comcast.net). The most current version of the collective bargaining agreement is posted at [www.mnea.com](http://www.mnea.com). Just click the "Master Contract" link in the sidebar.

## Know *your* contract!

MNEA frequently receives 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)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### October 2009



- 23** New Teacher Supply Funds Check Issued
- 26** Professional Council  
4:00 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 31** Sick Leave Bank Enrollment Deadline

### November 2009

- 5** MNEA Executive Board Meeting  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 15-21** American Education Week  
(National Celebration)
- 19** MNEA Representative Assembly  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 23** Professional Council  
4:00 p.m. at Central Office

### December 2009

- 14** Professional Council  
4:00 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

### January 2010

- 14** MNEA Executive Board Meeting  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 21** MNEA Representative Assembly  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 25** Professional Council  
4:00 p.m. at Central Office

### February 2010

- 11** MNEA Executive Board Meeting  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 18** MNEA Representative Assembly  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 22** Professional Council  
4:00 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

## AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

Great public schools: a basic right and our responsibility.

### NOVEMBER 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
Open House Day Open "Open House" sessions at your school for neighbors, families, and community leaders.	Parents Day How parents are the school for a finished look at their children's school day.	Education Support Professionals Day Schedules who provide invaluable services to schools are recognized for their outstanding work.	Educator for a Day Encourage community leaders to spend an "educator for a day" for a hands-on school experience.	Substitute Educators Day Honor the educators who are called to act as substitutes in the temporary absence of regular classroom teachers.		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

For more information, visit [www.nea.org/aww](http://www.nea.org/aww)

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## MNEA makes a difference

Join The Metropolitan Nashville Education Association ...  
The voice of Nashville's teachers!

MNEA has worked for years to build relationships with central office staff and School Board members. MNEA efforts not only increase the salaries and benefits of all MNPS employees, but also protect teachers from arbitrary decisions.

Every year we receive phone calls from non-members saying that they would have joined MNEA if they "had only known." The lure of cheap dues is tempting until you discover that "you get what you pay for."

### What does MNEA do?

MNEA negotiates salaries, benefits, and working conditions with the Board of Education. This year MNEA was successful at improving language on Faculty Advisory Committees, planning time, faculty meetings and many other areas of interest to our members.

MNEA compiles member concerns and presents them to the Director of Schools and his top staff members at Professional Council once a month and at other times.

MNEA meets with School Board members on a continuing basis to make them aware of member concerns.

MNEA works with the Mayor and Metro Council on member concerns such as school funding and building improvements.

MNEA assists individual members with concerns or complaints about transfers, leaves, salary, evaluations, etc.

MNEA helps improve instruction through a wide variety of free workshops and publications.

MNEA represents professional personnel by participation on school system committees affecting retirement, insurance programs, curriculum, professional development, grading standards, report cards, textbooks, sick leave bank, etc.

MNEA is an affiliate of the Tennessee Education Association (TEA) and the Na-



tional Education Association (NEA). Under MNEA, TEA, and NEA governance documents one must belong to all three organizations. We work on your behalf at the local, state, and national levels.

## Career ladder paid in spring

If you are a Career Ladder I, II, or III teacher your Career Ladder Supplement is scheduled to be paid out in 10 equal installments starting on the first pay check in January. Such payments are made only to teachers who qualified before the Tennessee Career Ladder Program was frozen on June 13, 1997 by act of the Tennessee General Assembly.

For several years now, MNPS has been paying Career Ladder Supplements in the spring semester because of an overpayment issue identified by the Tennessee Department of Education. Previously, the supplements were paid starting with the first check of the year and ending on the 20th check. However, MNPS is not authorized to pay supplements to anyone who does not work for 100 days. Thus, the overpayment problem related to teachers resigning or retiring before their 101st day of work. This same issue has been faced by other teachers across the state of Tennessee.



## 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!

There are two basic types of retirement plans in vogue in the United States today. One is referred to as a "defined benefit plan." These plans include traditional retirement systems like the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) and Social Security because they provide a benefit according to a defined formula. The other type is a defined contribution plan like a 401(k), 457, or 403(b). All of these plans provide payments based on the contributions made over time.



The benefit of a defined benefit plan over a defined contribution plan is that a participant can make a decision about retiring based on a known income level as opposed to a presumed benefit. We have all heard horror stories about retirees who have had to return to work because their 401(k) lost too much money in the stock market last year.

Defined benefit plans shift the risk of investment from the individual to the plan itself. TCRS is one of the soundest public pension plans in the country for three primary reasons: (1) the plan is well diversified, (2) the Tennessee Constitution requires the legislature to fully-fund the first year of any appropriation upon adoption, and (3) current law requires the State of Tennessee to pay interest to TCRS when borrowing money.

As a result of diversification of assets and the conservative nature of its investment policy, TCRS has a tendency to fluctuate less than plans in its peer group. The Constitutional restriction on appropriations prohibits the State of Tennessee from increasing pension benefits with a promise to pay at sometime in the future. While it's true most pensioners would prefer higher pension checks, this safeguard keeps TCRS from falling into the quagmire that has devastated other public pension plans in the United States. The requirement to pay interest to TCRS prevents the State from reducing income to the plan.

Unfortunately, one aspect of TCRS is still in the dark ages. The system uses poorly-integrated computer applications and benefit calculations are done by hand. Yes, that's right. Some one looks at a computer screen tied to a 1970s era computer database application and takes your years of service and income from the database to calculate your benefit! Thus, there is an increased potential for error. In most cases, calculations are made correctly but mistakes do happen.

As a result, if you plan to retire and had higher income earlier in your career it is best to bring that to the attention of your TCRS counselor. The counselors are supposed to "look at all months of service" when making your final calculation of benefit, but the natural tendency is to look at the last 60 months of pay when determining "average final compensation" (AFC). Remember, all TCRS benefits are driven by "average final compensation," which is defined as the highest consecutive 60 months of pay. AFC is not necessarily your last five years of service and is not tied to the fiscal or calendar year. Fortunately, TCRS is in the process of replacing its antiquated systems over the next three years.



## Network with members online

One of the benefits of being an MNEA member is the opportunity to participate in a full-featured online community through Groupsite.com. Highlights of this networking site include group discussion forums, a group calendar, file and photo sharing, link sharing, and the opportunity to connect with colleagues you may not otherwise meet. Another benefit to joining the groupsite is the opportunity to ask questions in the discussion forums and have many of them answered directly by MNEA President Erick Huth or other officers of the Association.



Members who do not already belong to the site will begin receiving email invitations to join the community within the next week so read subject lines carefully. If you do not receive an invitation, you can join by going directly to <http://mnea.groupsite.com>. Hope to see you all there!

## Enrollment in SLB ends soon

**The deadline to enroll in the Sick Leave Bank is October 31 of each year or within the first 30 days of employment for new hires.**

In accordance with state law, MNEA and the Board established a Sick Leave Bank to aid participants "who have suffered an unplanned personal illness, injury, disability or quarantine and whose personal leave is exhausted." To join, employees must agree to donate three (3) days to the bank.



Each year MNEA receives inquiries about joining the bank from teachers who are on long-term sick leave and are about to run out of days. Joining early is the key because it's too late after a debilitating condition strikes. Remember, the Bank will not provide days for a preexisting condition. The Sick Leave Bank is a great benefit to teachers negotiated by MNEA.

Sick Leave Bank rules and a copy of the enrollment forms are available at [www.mnea.com/SLB.htm](http://www.mnea.com/SLB.htm).

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