



READ ACROSS AMERICA

Dr. Seuss' 104th birthday will fall on a Sunday this year. *Read Across America* is set for March 3, 2008. This year, as in years past, MNEA will be working with TEA on a *Read Across America* Kick-off at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Every year the children who are invited to attend have a great time. In years past, TEA has provided students in attendance with their own Cat-in-the-Hat hat, and an educational packet, including a Dr. Seuss book.



The Whitsitt Elementary Honors Choir at the 2006 MNEA/TEA Read Across America Kick-off

The National Education Association, which started the event with the assistance of several state affiliates, has a website dedicated to resources for *Read Across America* (www.nea.org/readacross). Students all across the district can share in the celebration at their respective schools. Check it out and have fun with reading!



TEA President, Earl Wiman performing at the 2007 Read Across America Kick-off at the Country Music Hall of Fame.

The MNEA Communications Committee is having a Planning Session for *Read Across America* at the MNEA Headquarters at 4:30 P.M. on January 7, 2008. All interested MNEA members are welcome to attend.

KATHY WOODALL ASSOCIATION SERVICE AWARD

At the December meeting of the MNEA Representative Assembly, the winner of the 2007 Kathy Woodall Award was announced. This year the award went to MNEA Vice President Steven Henry for his long-time service to MNEA, TEA and NEA. Congratulations Stephen!



MNEA President Erick Huth presenting the 2007 Kathy Woodall Award for Outstanding Association Service to Stephen Henry.

NO NAME CALLING WEEK

No Name-Calling Week is scheduled for the week of January 21 through 25, 2008. The event is an annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying. This year MNEA has developed a handy reference card to help teachers put an end to name-calling.

The cards were first distributed to Metro School Board members during the December meeting as MNEA President Erick Huth addressed the Board on the verbally abusive management style that permeates MNPS. Specifically, Erick asked that the Board direct Dr. Garcia to put an end to the use of the phrase "on-board terrorists."

TEA UniServ ADVISORY COUNCIL

The National Education Association created its field services program, known as “UniServ,” in the early 1970s. “UniServ” stands for “united service” because funding and coordination of the program involves all three levels of the organization (local, state, and national). Under the NEA UniServ Guidelines periodic reviews of the program are required of state affiliates. As a result, TEA created the district UniServ Advisory Councils across the state and other measures to gain input from and communicate with local leaders.

The fall UniServ Advisory Council meeting was held recently at MNEA. At the event, MNEA leaders received updates and new information about member benefits, legislative information, special programs, membership, research along with other state and national programs. Another UniServ Advisory Council meeting will be held in the spring of 2008.

Presenters included:

- Stephen Henry, MNEA Vice President and TEA Board Member – reviewed local, state and national upcoming meeting dates and events
- Mike Carroll, Field Marketing Manager - NEA Member Benefits – national endorsed programs
- Sue Ogg, TEA Research – resources available for locals
- Antoinette Lee, TEA Government Relations – TEA Legislative Report and legislative proposals for 2007-2008



Trevor Holt (District 1 Director, the MNEA Executive Board), Pamela Sexton (MNEA-PACE Chair), and Diane Jarrell (MNEA Secretary) review materials at the Fall UniServ Advisory Council Meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS



January

- 7** **Assessment Day** (no students)
(7.5 hours, one-hour lunch may be taken off-campus)
- 7** **Read Across America Planning Session**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 8** **First Day of Second Semester**
- 10** **MNEA Executive Board**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 17** **MNEA Representative Assembly**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 21** **Martin Luther King Paid Holiday**
- 21-25** **No Name Calling Week**
- 25** **Deadline for Nominations for The Ted Martin Award**
5:00 p.m. MNEA Headquarters
- 29** **Diversity is a REC Workshop**
4:30 p.m. MNEA Headquarters

February

- 16** **MNEA Executive Board**
9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 18** **Planning Day** (no students)
(7.5 hours, one-hour lunch may be taken off-campus)
- 21** **MNEA Representative Assembly**
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 23** **TEA New Teacher Conference**
All day at TEA Headquarters

March

- 3** **Read Across America**
- 13** **MNEA Executive Board**
All day at MNEA Headquarters
- 27** **MNEA Representative Assembly**

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KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

Every year, teachers in Metro are faced with challenges related to assigning grades to students. The Board of Education, central office administrators, and principals talk about setting high standards for students, yet at the same time some administrators announce to their faculties that, "You are not allowed to give any student a grade less than 50."



In response to such statements, many question the viability of high standards for student learning in Metro Schools. Are high standards a myth? What about the principal who announces the lowest possible grade is 60% or 65%? Additionally, some teachers are faced with administrative requests to meet certain quotas for the numbers of Ds and Fs that are assigned. Are these high expectations for student learning?

Assigning grades is ultimately the responsibility of the teacher even though principals have the discretion to change a grade.

**Article II, Section E
"Grading Procedures"**
states in part:

Teachers shall have the right and responsibility to determine grades and student promotions. An administrative change in a teacher's decision on grade or promotion shall not be made without prior consultation with the teacher. A teacher may request that the decision of the principal or the results of the consultation be reviewed by the appropriate assistant superintendent or designee.

Generally, teachers would be on solid legal ground to assign the grade that he or she believes best reflects a student's work in the class so long as the grade can be justified. If principals insist that any grade should be higher, they may follow the procedure outlined above to change the grade. Thus, no teachers should have to change grades if they can justify the averages they have assigned. One note of caution, however, the principal's authority to change a grade should not be viewed as a delegable authority.

TO REFER OR NOT? THAT IS THE QUESTION!

"The Board and the Association recognize that effective classroom teaching and learning is dependent upon teacher management of the classroom and the absence of disruptive behavior on the part of the students. The Board hereby recognizes its responsibility to support teachers with respect to maintenance of control and discipline in the school within the framework of Board Policy." The preceding is powerful language, but, all too often, it is ignored by principals.

MNEA is frequently contacted because students who have violated the Student Code of Conduct have been returned to the classroom without any disciplinary intervention on the part of administrators. Even when teachers file an office referral detailing the incident and the disciplinary steps taken to correct the misbehavior, they should have an expectation that

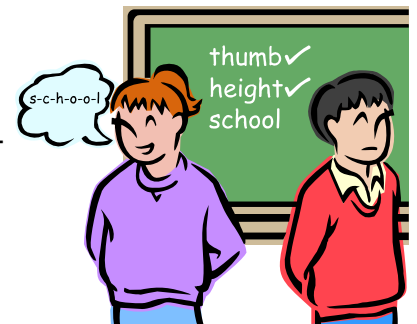
the principal shall "support teachers with respect to maintenance of control and discipline in the school." Once the form is submitted to the appropriate administrator the expectation is there will be some action taken.

Of note....

MNEA member **Suzanne Hayes** has achieved National Board Certification. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards is dedicated to advancing quality teaching and learning across the country.

Readmitting the student to the classroom is only by written authorization from the principal or designee. The process also calls for the administrator to provide a concise and written response to the sending teacher. This response should advise the teacher of the action taken. All too frequently this is not happening and the lack of written response may be grieved as a lack of support for discipline in the school.

Problems in the classroom are further impacted when the child violates rules of the classroom, school or district policy and is basically "slapped on the wrist" and returned to class.



FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Recently, I participated in a panel discussion on teaching and learning. Most of the participants were local business leaders; and, predictably, one question was on tenure while other questions centered on issues of teacher quality. It is safe to say that misunderstanding, prejudice and ignorance are still alive and well in the Nashville community. I have had several opportunities in my career as a teacher and union leader to discuss the relative merits of tenure. I continue to believe that tenure is not only a good thing for teachers but a necessity.



Let's go back a few years and investigate why tenure was enacted in this state. In 1951 the Tennessee Tenure law was enacted to address the rampant political favoritism that existed in the selection and retention of Tennessee's public school teachers. Some opponents argue tenure keeps bad teachers in the classroom. Others argue tenure places unnecessary steps in the way of well-meaning administrators who want to dismiss employees. Tenure is nothing more than a guarantee of due process, which I would argue is a fundamental tenet of our democracy. If a suspected murderer must be afforded due process, then why shouldn't teachers have the right to the same?

Now, let's look at rural Tennessee. Today there are teachers in our state who will work in one school district for three years and are not granted tenure. They then transfer to another district for three years, do get tenure, and the process is repeated every three years.

Why does this happen? It happens for the same reasons that existed for all teachers prior to 1951. Superintendents do not want to commit to the continued employment of every teacher on the off chance that some relative of theirs, a board member or some other politically connected individual may need a teaching job. I have actually heard some anti-tenure types claim that such could not be the case; but, trust me, politics are alive and well in Tennessee.

Now, let's ask ourselves how long an outspoken union leader would last in the classroom in our own district if every teacher were an at-will employee of the director of schools. Not long. Tenure is not evil. Tenure does not create, cultivate, or even retain incompetent teachers. **Tenure is a safeguard against the arbitrary and capricious behavior of administrators.**

The greatest challenge facing MNPS is not whether tenure hampers student learning. The greatest challenge is: When will the board and the community come to the realization that the administration fosters discontent? Threats of reprisals seem to be the most-widely used management strategy in the MNPS administrative toolbox.

TED MARTIN HUMAN RELATIONS AWARD

Each year the MNEA Human Relations Committee grants an award to an individual or group for outstanding work in the field of human relations. The award is named in honor of Theodore "Ted" R. Martin, the first and only African-American male to serve as President of MNEA (1970-1971). Ted always maintained a special interest in improving the relationship among all educators and improving working conditions for Nashville's teachers. MNEA's annual human relations award was created to honor the principles embodied by Ted Martin.

The Human Relations Committee is accepting nominees for the 23rd Annual Ted Martin Human Relations Award through January 25, 2008. For more information and to download the nomination form, go to www.mnea.com/tedmartin.



MNEA-PACE VACANCIES

Elections for vacancies on the MNEA-PACE Council have been postponed until January. Nominations will be accepted from the floor of the Representative Assembly on Thursday, January 17, 2008. Individuals may also qualify by petition using the form available at www.mnea.com/petition.pdf. Vacancies to be filled are for the following positions:

DISTRICT 1 (George Thompson's School Board District*), **DISTRICT 3** (Mark North's School Board District*—two vacancies), **DISTRICT 4** (Steve Glover's School Board District*) **DISTRICT 8** (David Fox' School Board District*), and **NEA CATEGORY 2 MEMBER** (NEA life member or administrator member).

Petitions are due in the MNEA Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 16, 2008. Original signatures must be delivered to MNEA—*No facsimiles please!*



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