

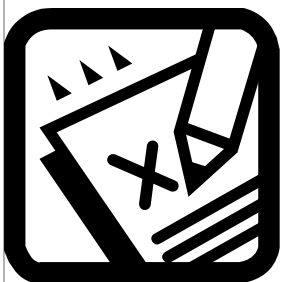


SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

February Representative Assembly

Special Guest. Interim Director of Schools Chris Henson brought greetings to the delegates present at the February 21 MNEA Representative Assembly and responded to questions from the audience. Mr. Henson, who stressed his support for teachers, came to MNPS almost six years ago to serve as Assistant Superintendent of Business and Facilities.

Elections. Nominations were taken from the floor for MNEA offices. Kenny Martin was nominated for finance officer. Stephen Henry (vice president) and Carol Elmore (secretary) previously qualified by petition. The presidency is a two-year term and was not open this year. A paper ballot must be distributed according to *MNEA Bylaws* even though only one candidate qualified in each office. See page 3 for additional information and biographical sketches of the candidates listed above.



The following were elected to the MNEA Executive Board at the Representative Assembly: Nancy Holland (Hillwood Cluster), Dolores Jones (Overton Cluster), and Claudia Davidson (Antioch Cluster). Barbara Gilliam, Tim Green, Carl Hester, Tom Cash, Jane Walling, and Frankie Holloway were elected to the MNEA Nomination and Elections Committee. Erick Huth was elected to retain the trusteeships he currently holds on the Metropolitan Professional Employee Insurance Trust and the Administrative Retirement Committee of the Metropolitan Teacher Pension Plan.

For additional information, see "MNEA ELECTIONS" on page 3.

READ ACROSS AMERICA

Theodore Seuss Geisel, who became famous under the *nom de plume* Dr. Seuss, was born 104 years ago March 2. Read Across America is a national celebration of reading in schools first envisioned by NEA members to create excitement about reading.



This year MNEA and TEA held the annual Read Across America kick-off at the Adventure Science Center. A follow-up story will run in the next *SLATE*. **MNEA is interested in receiving information about activities at individual schools.** If you have photos or stories, please forward them to mymnea@comcast.net.

TAKING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Recently, Erick Huth and Ralph Smith met with Chris Henson, Ralph Thompson, Lance Lott, and Alvin Jones to discuss concerns about the accurate recording of attendance in Chancery SMS[©], particularly at middle and high schools. The major concern the juvenile courts, the Mayor, and other community leaders have expressed to Mr. Henson and his staff is that some teachers are not recording attendance every period. The courts generally dismiss truancy cases if the student's attendance varies greatly from one period to the next.

A follow up discussion took place at Professional Council on February 26, 2008. MNEA and the administration agreed that Mr. Henson would start with a non-threatening communication to all teachers stressing the importance of accurate record keeping. The communication plan will last most of the current semester.

KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

Every grading period MNEA receives multiple complaints that some administrator has sent down an edict proclaiming a minimum grade at some school or grade level. In reality, MNPS does not have a minimum grade teachers must assign to students. Teachers are responsible for assigning grades based on student performance and professional judgment.



Any suggestion indicating a minimum grade that can be recorded is merely a personal preference by an administrator and really not enforceable. A refusal to record a minimum grade would not constitute insubordination under the Tennessee Tenure Act since principals do not have the authority to tell a teacher what grade to record. Principals may, however, change the grade using the established procedure. (See underlined text below.)

Article II: Association and Teacher Rights Section E. Grading Procedures *[emphasis added]*

Approved procedures for the evaluation of student progress and the reporting of such shall be made available to principals for distribution to teachers. If the approved procedures provide for optional reporting forms, the local school principal and faculty, working cooperatively with the administration, shall be allowed to select those they find most appropriate.

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.

Grades shall be recorded on official school records including report cards and permanent student records in the manner prescribed by the central administration. Teachers may use percentage and/or letter grades for individual record keeping in grade books. If the teacher's individual method of record keeping varies from the method prescribed for the official recording, an explanation or key shall be filed with the building principal before the first grading period and shall also be affixed to the front page of the grade book.

UPCOMING EVENTS



March

- 13** MNEA Executive Board
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 17-21** Spring Break
- 24** Planning Day
(7.5 hours, one-hour lunch may be taken off-campus)
- 27** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 28-29** TEA Johnella Martin Minority Affairs Conference
Embassy Suites Hotel, Cool Springs

April

- 4-5** TEA Spring Symposium
Park Vista Hotel, Gatlinburg, TN
- 10** MNEA Executive Board
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 15** Praxis II Workshop
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 17** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

May

- 6** National Teacher Day Banquet
Celebrating Retirees and MNEA Awardees
7:00 p.m. location to be determined
- 8** MNEA Executive Board
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 9-10** TEA Representative Assembly
Nashville Convention Center
- 15** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters

June

- 12-13** TEA Summer Leadership Academy
Embassy Suites Hotel, Cool Springs
- 16-19** TEA Political Academy
Paris Landing State Park
- 26-29** NCUEA Summer Conference

July

- 1-6** NEA Representative Assembly
Washington Convention Center

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Erick Huth, President
Stephen Henry, Vice President
Kenneth Martin, Finance Officer
Diane Jarrell, Secretary

UniServ Coordinators: Forestine Cole, Ralph Smith, Gloria Towner
MNEA Staff: Kristen Case, Teresa Hayes and Helen Conlee McMackin

MNEA Candidate Profiles



Vice President

Stephen Henry: MNEA: Vice-President, Finance Officer, District 2 & 3 Director, Parliamentarian, Executive Committee, Professional Council, Chief Negotiator, Committee Chair-Budget & Finance, Public Relations, Bylaws, Special Projects, Human Relations, Negotiations, PACE Council, Ted Martin Human Relations Award, Kathy Woodall Outstanding Association Service Award, **TEA:** Board of Directors, T-PACE Council, Committees-Negotiations, Credentials, Human Relations, Communications, ION-Chair, Coalition for Tennessee's Future, District 15 & 17 UniServ Councils, TUEAC, E. Harper Johnson Human Relations Award, **NEA:** Executive Committee & Board of Directors-Official Observer, Fund for Children and Public Education Official, Leadership Conferences-Southeast Regional, Challenge for Change, Human & Civil Rights-National Trainer, NCUEA, GLBTC-Co-Chair, Representative Assembly.

Finance Officer



Kenneth Fludd Martin has been an active member of the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association for many years. He has served as Association Representative, Negotiations Team Member, Minority Affairs Chairperson, Budget Committee Chairperson, Special Education Committee Chair, and Finance Officer. He has served as a delegate to the TEA Representative Assembly; attended the TEA Spring Symposium, Minority Leadership Training, Johnella H. Martin Minority Affairs Conference, and participated in the MNEA Target of Opportunities Campaign. Kenny is the son of educators. His late uncle Theodore "Ted" Martin holds the distinction of being the first and only African American Male President of MNEA.

Secretary

Carol Elmore currently teaches 2nd grade at Park Avenue. A 20-year MNPS veteran, Carol has taught grades 1-4 (Stratton, Union Hill and Ross). She has served as Association Representative for six years. Carol has a B.S. in Psychology (UT), certification in Early Childhood Elementary Education (University of Central Florida), and M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction (Trevecca). Carol is married with three children, Ashley, Sarah and Matthew. Sarah is following her mother's footsteps and plans to teach. Her hobbies include golf, reading and collecting Longaberger Baskets. "I look forward to serving and working with MNEA during this exciting time of transition."



District 2 Director (Hillwood Cluster)

Dr. Nancy Holland is the Executive Board representative for District 2. Nancy has been involved with MNEA since she began teaching in Metro. She has served as association secretary as well as on numerous committees, including Membership, MNEA-PACE, and Special Education. Nancy serves as chairperson of the Instruction-Professional Development and has served as Membership chair. In 2004, Dr. Holland received the Kathy Woodall Human Relations Award for service to MNEA. Nancy has also served on TEA committees, including membership and resolutions. In 2005-06, she chaired the TEA Special Education Ad Hoc Committee. Dr. Holland believes a strong association is vital to public education.

District 5 Director (Overton Cluster)

Dolores Jones teaches physical education at Tusculum Elementary. She has served as an Association Representative for many years.

District 8 Director (Antioch Cluster)

Claudia Davidson is a social studies teacher at Antioch High School who has served as an Association Representative for many years.



Insurance Trust and Administrative Retirement Committee

Erick Huth is president of MNEA and served as chief bargaining spokesperson for more than ten years. He is Central Regional Director of the National Council of Urban Education Associations. Erick serves as trustee to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System, the Administrative Retirement Committee of the Metropolitan Teacher Retirement Plan, the Metropolitan Professional Employee Insurance Trust, and the Metropolitan Sick Leave Bank. Former offices include president of Tennessee Urban Education Associations Council, MNEA parliamentarian, by-laws chair, public relations co-chair, and TEA Board Member. Erick's efforts as building chair were instrumental in the financing, construction, and design of the MNEA Headquarters.

The MNEA officer election will be conducted March 28 through April 11. A paper ballot must be conducted in accordance with the

MNEA Bylaws.

FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Under Tennessee Law, the Board of Education has the responsibility to employ the Director of Schools but initial attempts at establishing a direction have seemed confused, ill-timed, and, at times, out of touch. There are many political forces in the city suggesting that the Board should select one or another “local” candidate or even a “business friendly,” “non-traditional” director.



Recently, school board member Karen Johnson reached out to teachers and met to discuss what characteristics they would like to see in the next superintendent. At the gathering, teachers talked about the hatred and fear permeating MNPS and encouraged her to look toward candidates who not only respect teachers but are willing to lead without fear. Teachers also discussed issues impacting student achievement including the pressure to inflate grades. Those present insisted it was difficult to maintain high expectations in MNPS because some administrators demand the appearance of student success at the expense of real learning.

MNPS has difficulty retaining teachers because the previous superintendent and many of his underlings have established a culture devoid of humanity. We need a director of schools who can cut through the layers of window dressing put in place by the former administration and ask teachers to do what they do best:—*teach*. Pointing fingers at teachers, transferring employees at will, allowing students to literally run amuck, inflating grades, and promoting incompetence have done little to increase student success or improve employee morale.

In the ultimate analysis, the background of the next superintendent is far less important than the individual’s personal style. At this point, it’s clear the Board must concentrate on finding a leader who can motivate people with respect—not terror!

RETIREMENT NOTIFICATION

According to Article VIII, Section D, Subdivision 3 of the *Educational Agreement*, “teachers who notify the Human Resources Department no later than **March 15** of their plans to retire upon the completion of their current fiscal year assignment shall receive a five-hundred-dollar (\$500) early notification incentive.” [Emphasis added.]



MNPS 403(b) PLANS

Several teachers have called MNEA about concerns their 403(b) representatives have posed related to the impending conversion of the MNPS 403(b) plans. Currently the Metropolitan Professional Employee Insurance Trust is analyzing bids for 403(b) products. The process is not concluded, therefore, there is no information that can be shared about the bids. However, here are a few guiding principles that are important to remember:

- Changes in federal 403(b) guidelines have necessitated the redesign of MNPS options.
- Since no bid has been awarded, there are no fees to report. If a 403(b) representative is telling you that your fees will be higher than under any current plan, the representative is stretching the truth at best.
- Under the competitive bidding process, one can anticipate that fees to individual investors will go down significantly-not increase.
- No one will be forced to withdraw any money from any current investment. Money that teachers have invested is their own money and MNPS cannot force you to move it.
- The vendor arrangement is being streamlined in order to achieve the fiduciary mandates the new federal guidelines imposed on MNPS and all other school districts.

BEP/CTE DEADLINE

MNPS will reclaim any BEP/CTE supply money that has not been documented with receipts. Each teacher must provide clean original receipts or invoices for all purchases using BEP/CTE money to the school secretary/bookkeeper by April 1 of each year. Any earlier date is not authorized by administrative procedure and is a unilateral action of someone at your school. Bookkeepers are not empowered to force any current employee to turn in receipts earlier than April 1. If you are having a problem with the deadline being moved up, call MNEA for assistance.



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