

The Slate



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SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

How should I respond to a reprimand?



Every once in a while MNEA receives copies of reprimands issued by administrators who clearly lack sufficient knowledge and training to write such a document. Many letters will contain a line like "Under the grievance procedure, you have five days to respond to this reprimand in writing." There are two problems with such an assertion.

First, there is no time limit for responding to a reprimand in the contract (or elsewhere); and, second, responses to reprimands do not necessitate the filing of a grievance. Step One of the Grievance Procedure, grants teachers 40 school days to challenge a reprimand, but the limit for filing a grievance at the first step does not in any way limit the time for responding to a reprimand. Arbitrary time limits established by a misinformed administrator are of no consequence and are entirely unenforceable.

Another common mistake principals make is writing a reprimand in the heat of the moment. As a general rule, anyone who is angry should consider himself or herself to be in the wrong state of mind to write a reprimand. Anger is a very strong human emotion, which tends to cloud an individual's judgment. For the reasons stated above, teachers or other subordinates should also use caution when responding to a reprimand in the heat of the moment.



It's one thing to commit one's initial reaction to a reprimand or warning to paper during the heat of the moment. However, it is another thing entirely to transmit that reaction to your supervisor. Emotion is often best left out of official documents, especially reprimands, grievances, and responses to such. One should exercise extreme caution when responding to an official document. Make sure MNEA reviews the document before submitting it to an administrator. Taking back an emotional response can be a challenge. Reason should always take precedence over emotion in such case. Seek advice—not revenge!

Continued in next column.

Surveying the climate of your school

Periodically, the Association is contacted by a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), an MNEA member, or administrator seeking assistance on a relationship issue in a particular school or worksite. Often these individuals want to rush to conducting a climate survey. The first step generally involves a meeting with the FAC to discuss all concerns. MNEA discusses the possibility of carrying out a school climate survey and other interventions. MNEA prefers a vote of all certificated staff at a given worksite be held to determine whether a climate survey should be conducted.

A Central Office administrator may be present on the date the survey is actually administered. Responses are tabulated and later shared with the school's certificated staff. Everyone should see such surveys as an opportunity to address identified strengths and areas needing to be strengthened. A climate survey can be a useful tool for administrators to hear from their faculty. It can help to answer the question "Is the building too hot, too cold or just right". The instrument is not intended to be an evaluation of the principal although some issues identified in the survey may relate to the current leadership. We must remember that administrators who are experiencing levels of discontent may be making efforts to be a good **manager** instead of a **leader** in the building.

"MANAGERS are people who do things right, while LEADERS are people who do the right thing."

Continued from column one.

Important steps in responding to a reprimand:

1. **Ignore any arbitrary time limit stated in a reprimand.** (Stay calm. Do not respond quickly. Do not say or do anything you may regret at a later date.)
2. **Contact MNEA for advice and guidance.** (Some responses can actually hurt you more than they help. Have MNEA review all responses to reprimands and warnings.)
3. **Never respond to a reprimand, grievance, or warning by email.** (Emails have a tendencies to be forwarded and may live forever in cyberspace!)

Know your contract

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 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)

Article IV, Section A. Faculty Meetings

Principals shall use sound professional judgment in scheduling and conducting faculty meetings.

Reasonable notice and an agenda shall be provided except in urgent situations. No teacher shall be required to attend a vendor presentation not directly related to school matters. Any concerns about the frequency and length of meetings shall be discussed with the FAC and then directed to the appropriate Tier Director. (2006)

UPCOMING EVENTS

March

- 6** TEA/NEA Delegate Ballots Due
5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 12** MNEA Executive Board Meeting
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 26** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:00 PM at the Central Office
- 27** MNEA Officer Election Period Begins



April

- 6** MNEA Executive Board Meeting (*Date change*)
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 13** MNEA Officer Ballots Due
5:00 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 16** MNEA Representative Assembly
4:30 PM at MNEA Headquarters
- 27** 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

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
San Diego, CA

July

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

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Erick Huth, President and Editor in Chief
Stephen Henry, Vice President
Kenneth Martin, Treasurer
Carol Elmore, Secretary

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

Candidate running for association offices

President



Dr. **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, Bylaws 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.

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, TEA-FCPE Council, Committees-Negotiations, Credentials, Communications, Human Relations-Chair, 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, NEA-FCPE Council, SOGI Committee, Leadership Conferences-Southeast Regional, Challenge for Change, Human & Civil Rights-National Trainer, NCUEA, GLBTC-Co-Chair, Representative Assembly.

Treasurer



Kenneth Fludd Martin is MNEA's current treasurer and has been an active MNEA member for many years. He has served as Association Representative, Negotiations Team Member, Minority Affairs Chairperson, Budget Committee Chairperson, Special Education Committee Chair, and Fi-

nance 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



Dr. **Nancy Holland** has been involved with MNEA since she began teaching in Metro. She served as association secretary from 2005-2007. She has served on the Executive Board since 2001. Nancy has served on numerous committees, including Membership, MNEA-PACE, TEA Resolutions Committee, and TEA Special Education Committee. Currently, she is chairperson of MNEA's Instruction-Professional Development and Special Education committees and serves on TEA Human Relations Committee. In 2004, Dr. Holland received the Kathy Woodall Award for association service. Nancy has represented MNEA at the TEA and NEA representative assemblies. Dr. Holland believes a strong association is vital to public education.

Paula Pendergrass is a fourth grade teacher at Glendale Elementary School

The election for MNEA Secretary will be conducted March 27 through April 13. All others were elected at the February 19, 2009, MNEA Representative Assembly.

MNEA Executive Board

District 1 Director (Hunters Lane Cluster)

Trevor Holt is the library media specialist at Brick Church Middle School.

District 4 Director (Glenclyff Cluster)

Vernon Porter is a special education teacher at Johnson School.

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Let's hear from Erick...

I received several calls and emails about the district's response to the traumatic events that transpired at Overton High School recently. As a result, MNEA expressed concern to Dr. Register regarding the lack of communication to members of the Overton faculty during the lockdown. Teachers and students were confined to classrooms for a period of about two hours with no communication from anyone in the administration even though police cars were visible outside the school and screams of "A gun!...A gun!" were audible in certain parts of the building. Robocalls were made to parents, but faculty and staff received no information, instructions, or reassurances from anyone in the administration.



MNEA has received assurances our concerns will be addressed in future emergencies. Apparently, the Metro Police Department will work with principals and MNPS security staff when making contact with teacher in a crisis. The decision to communicate with faculties will be driven by the specifics of each case.

Some have suggested metal detectors need to be placed in all our schools. MNEA has resisted making such calls for a few reasons. First, take McGavock High School as an example. There are nearly 40 entrances into that one building. Placing metal detectors there would cost hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars. There is no practical way of securing McGavock completely with such equipment. Second, there is plenty of research to show metal detectors give schools a false sense of security. One propped door in the back of the building can let anyone in a school. If someone is determined to get a weapon in a school, metal detectors will not deter them.

The real key to discipline is addressing student misbehavior. If all teachers, staff, and administrators work together at a school to impress upon students the importance of appropriate comportment, students will respond. However, MNPS has a long history of not supporting the instructional program through uniform enforcement of school disciplinary rules. If students are held accountable by all adults and by their peers, they will behave.

According to our contract, teachers should have a voice in student disciplinary procedures in their schools through the school discipline committee. Administrators are not the only ones with a say so in how to address discipline in your school. Form a discipline committee and work collaboratively to establish policies and procedures to fix what's not working in your school. In this new era, I believe student discipline is one area in which teachers and the school administration should begin collaboration.

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District 7 Director (Hillsboro Cluster)

Christian Sawyer is a social studies teacher at Hillsboro High School and a teacher in residence at Vanderbilt University.

District 10 Director (Stratford Cluster)

Sarah Shepherd is a mathematics teacher at East Literature Magnet.

District 12 Director (Cane Ridge Cluster)

Pamela Sexton teaches science at Cane Ridge.

MNEA Nominations and Elections Committee

District 2

Pam Arnold teaches fifth grade at H. G. Hill.

District 4

Vernon Porter teaches special education at Johnson.

District 6

Tish Bassel teaches in the MNPS Hospital Homebound program.

District 8

Claudia Davidson teaches social studies at Antioch High.

District 10

Jenny Schnell teaches art at Inglewood Elementary.

District 12

Pamela Sexton teaches science at Cane Ridge.

Other Positions

Administrative Retirement Committee

Addie Massey is an English teacher at Hillwood High School.

Metropolitan Professional Employees Insurance Trust

Bill Moody is the principal of Two Rivers Middle School.

TEA Board Member, District 9

Erick Huth is the president of the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association. (See bio on page 3.)

TEA Fund Council Member, District 9

Stephen Henry is the vice president of the Metropolitan Nashville Education Association. (See bio on page 3.)



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