Who Speaks for You?
Recently, an Association Rep engaged in a struggle for the good of the whole faculty. The principal prevailed upon several non-members to verbally harangue the AR with the statement, “You don’t speak for me!” Time prevented the AR from engaging in the following imaginary dialogue:
--“Who does speak for you?”
--“No one, I speak for myself!”
--“When was the last time you spoke to anyone about your salary? Do you ever speak to politicians about poverty of your students? The Living Wage for their parents? What civic officials have you told about the overcrowded classes in our seventh and eighth grade? Who will you speak to if the gains of the past are taken away?”
--“I don’t care about the past, if things get bad enough I’ll just quit.”
--“Would you quit if the salary schedule were changed? How about duty free lunch taken away? How about elimination of most all leave provisions? How big will the classes have to be before you leave? Which working condition will have to change to make you quit? It is so much better to solve small problems through group activity than to have each person living a life of quiet desperation.”

READ ACROSS AMERICA
Mayor Bill Purcell pauses briefly with the Cat-in-the-Hat (Harriett Corder), and McKissack principal Cathy Ball before reading his favorite book, “Yertle the Turtle” to four classes of Pre-K students. He then read three poems to the older students and set off on a whirlwind day of reading to students at Cockrill, Amqui, Chadwell and Percy Priest schools. The mayor’s friendship to MNEA and its causes has been appreciated through the years.

Vice-Mayor Howard Gentry shared the program at our Green Eggs and Ham Breakfast with the Future STARS of McKissack Professional Development School. He is shown here as he thanks the children for their inspirational choral readings, and urges them to believe the words that they passed on to those in the audience. He says he heard the message of setting goals, dreaming dreams and working to achieve them when he was in Nashville’s public schools as a child. We’re proud of a native son who has achieved greatness.

(See more pictures from Read Across America at our website.)

Non-Members in Trouble
Two non-members were in highly publicized cases which could have led to demotion or dismissal from the school system. Ann Zimmerman reportedly said, “Yes, I am insubordinate,” and then she gave good reasons why. We are interested in her case for two reasons: First, academic freedom is more than a theory. We do not want our teachers to be simple robots. We pay for actual professional judgment and if such talent is valued then non-conformity should not be punished. Second, the entire reading curriculum was imposed on the teachers without following the methods of the Educational Agreement. If the right process had been followed, this confrontational approach of Zimmerman might well have been unnecessary. As is observed in other cases, her words rather than the real issue may be the source of most of the trouble. Countless times MNEA advisors have smoothed such struggles of others.

As of press time, the decision appears to be admonition and opportunity for corrective action. The theory advanced in the previous Slate appears to hold true: if insubordination is the only issue, then the case will develop over time—not all in one week.

In the case of Ron Harris, Principal of Joelton, a series of charges related to dismissal of school on January 16, were considered. He did not go looking for trouble; trouble came looking for him. He has not asked for our help, but we are interested because newspaper reports suggested that he would have been dismissed without a chance to correct any alleged misbehavior. Orderly processes of government, when they are followed, mean that he would be told what not to do. Only if he repeats the behavior would he then be given a more severe punishment. The suddenness of extreme punishment for one incident of debatable gravity is offensive to reasonable people.

The news media reported late last week that he will be returned to Joelton. Apparently, Dr. Garcia could not find any agreement with his investigator(s) who developed a list of charges against Harris. Community outcry helped speed the process along in this case. On the surface, it appears that he did fine without MNEA assistance. But we do not know the amount of money he spent for legal assistance. Also, in the big city most professionals are not able to marshal community support on the scale needed to correct somewhat obscure injustices. For the average professional, MNEA is the best helper day in and day out.
Publicity Critical of Teachers

In a small number of schools the principals have been publishing documents for all of the faculty to see the TCAP scores of their colleagues. This violation of the law can be stopped if evidence is brought to MNEA. Several other aspects of the “fine print” are important to teachers who deal with highly mobile populations. Section (a) printed below gives the details about the students and data; section (b) indicates what should not be done with the reports.

Tennessee Code 49-1-606. Sanders’ model — Annual estimates of teacher effects on student progress in grades three (3) through eight (8). — (a) On or before July 1, 1996, and annually thereafter, data from the TCAP tests, or their future replacements, will be used to provide an estimate of the statistical distribution of teacher effects on the educational progress of students within school districts for grades three (3) through eight (8). A specific teacher’s effect on the educational progress of students may not be used as a part of formal personnel evaluation until data from three (3) complete academic years are obtained. Teacher effect data shall not be retained for use in evaluation for more than the most recent five (5) years. A student must have been present for one hundred fifty (150) days of classroom instruction per year or seventy-five (75) days of classroom instruction per semester before that student’s record is attributable to a specific teacher. Records from any student who is eligible for special education services under federal law will not be used as part of the value added assessment. (b) The estimates of specific teacher effects on the educational progress of students will not be a public record, and will be made available only to the specific teacher, the teacher’s appropriate administrators as designated by the local board of education, and school board members. [Acts 1992, ch. 535, § 4; 1995, ch. 427, § 1.]

Delta Dental

A few teachers have been confused by the provision for two teeth cleanings in a twelve-month period. It does not say “calendar year!” This will not be a problem unless a person goes for cleaning more often than once per six months. For good health, dentists recommend once per six months. Cosmetically, this frequency is damaging after about thirty or forty years. Ask your dentist about cosmetic implications of frequent cleanings.

Television Replacement

The small Channel One TV sets are being removed, apparently for spite. Clearly, these old sets have no market value worth the labor cost of removal. However, the school system is trying to replace them with newer larger models as quickly as possible. The dilemma is that the larger mounts which are necessary cost more than the television sets themselves. The alternative is rolling carts which involve safety issues for students, security issues for the schools, and floor space issues for teachers. In this case, everything is a trade-off. To replace the sets quickly, the job must be done cheaply. If it is done right—which everyone wants—many teachers will not have a new TV until well into next year.

2003 Teachers Night Out a Success!

Did you miss it? Teachers throughout Metro Nashville converged at the National Guard Armory for the annual Teachers Night Out celebration. Upon entering the Drill Hall, each member received a hand massager compliments of Tennessee Teachers Credit Union. They had an opportunity to visit booths, eat food, dance to the music of the “The Beat” NSA’s Bob Wilson’s band and visit with new and old colleagues. Door prizes were drawn 3 times during the evening as members anxiously awaited to hear their names called. Prizes included a Digital Camera, a TV/VCR combination, DVD/VCR, CD Boombox, dinners at several local restaurants, mail gift certificates, and other outstanding gifts. Special thanks to everyone involved in coordinating this extravaganza. See ya next year!

Be sure to support the companies listed below... because they supported you.

Extended Professional Development Leave

Options exist for licensed educators to receive one year of paid leave at either a 50 percent rate or a 75 percent rate. Full details regarding programs of study and years of teaching with Metro can be found in the Educational Agreement. Applications are available at the Randalls Learning Center. The completed form must be returned to that same office by March 28, 2003 before 3:30 PM. Take this opportunity to further your career goals.

PACE Election

Congratulations to Helen McMackin and Tom Cash who have been re-elected to serve as MNEA-PACE representatives from the Belmont-Green Hills area, District 8, for a two-year term.

NEA Member Benefits

Outback Steakhouse
Pastime Creations
Pepsi Bottling Group
SAM’s Club–Riverrgate
Sara Lee Bakery Group
TEA Member Benefits
Tennessee Teachers Credit Union
ValUteachers
Wendy’s