



Vote April 17-24 in the MTEA Leader Elections

Elections for MTEA officers and executive board will be held from noon on April 17 through noon on April 24. Elections will be held for the office of treasurer, primary teacher unit representative, and high school teacher unit representative. (All other candidates are running unopposed and therefore no election is held for those positions.)

Members from all four MTEA bargaining units (teachers, educational assistants, substitutes and bookkeepers) vote for the treasurer position. Only teacher unit members at the primary and high school level vote for executive board. (Special education teachers do not vote for the primary and high school reps.)

For the first time, our leader election will be conducted online and by phone. To participate, you will need a voting registration code, which will be sent to you via email by Vote-Now. (Members who do not have an email on file with MTEA will get a postcard at home with the voting registration code.)

When you vote online, you will find a link to information about the candidates. You will also receive candidate information via email, and it will be posted on the MTEA bulletin board at each school.

Watch your email for your voter registration code, voting instructions, and a link to the voting website! The election starts at noon on Fri. Apr. 17 and ends at noon on Fri. Apr. 24.

New school board to consider 2015-16 budget

On April 7, Wendell Harris beat four-term incumbent Jeff Spence to become the newest member of the MPS School Board. Three additional MTEA-endorsed candidates ran unopposed: Mark Sain and Terry Falk were re-elected and Carol Voss was elected to replace Meagan Holman, who did not run this time. Thanks to all members who voted and volunteered!

Harris's strong support for public schools and opposition to privatization were key issues in his campaign. Harris also pledged to support a raise for MPS employees, especially the lowest-paid employees, including MTEA paraprofessionals, safety assistants, and other educational assistants. MTEA has been campaigning for a pay increase for all units, especially the educational assistant unit, which has not had a base-building pay increase in over three years.

The new school board directors take office on April 28. Having two more progressive members on the school board will be essential as the board considers the MPS budget for 2015-16. MTEA members will be called upon to testify at budget hearings at the MPS school board in April and May.



Wendell Harris (center top) with MTEA and community volunteers

Applying at a new school? View the principal survey!

School-based interviews continue this month. MTEA members who are considering applying at a different school can learn more by viewing the MTEA principal survey results, available at the MTEA office from 8am to 5:30pm Monday through Thursday, and 8am to 5pm on Fridays.

Cycle A (teacher unit)

March 30–April 2: Vacancies posted and applications accepted

April 13–18: Interviews

April 20–22: MPS notifies chosen candidates via MPS email

Cycle B (teacher unit)

April 27–May 1: Vacancies posted and applications accepted

May 2–9: Interviews

May 11–13: MPS notifies chosen candidates via MPS email

Cycle C (Classified staff, including paras, safeties, interpreters, parent coordinators, general assistants)

April 27–May 1: Vacancies posted and applications accepted

May 2–13: Interviews

May 14–18: MPS notifies chosen candidates via MPS email

Standardized tests and opting out: what teachers need to know

MTEA leaders and staff have received a number of questions from members regarding standardized tests. Below are a few answers to some frequently asked questions.

What is the MTEA's position on standardized tests?

The MTEA has long voiced serious concerns about the inordinate amount of standardized tests in MPS. This over testing robs students of valuable learning time and teachers of teaching time.

Such testing distorts the craft of teaching, shuts down libraries and computer labs, wastes valuable resources, and refocuses entire schools toward a narrow definition of learning. These problems plague our entire school system but are particularly harmful to students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, English language learners and students with special needs.

Finally, such test scores are used inap-

propriately in evaluating educators and schools, and have been used to label and close public schools, turning them over to privately-run charter operators.

Do parents have a legal right to opt out of the test?

Wisconsin law, c.118.30(2)(b)3, gives a parent or guardian the right to request their child be excused from participating in the state approved assessments for grades 4, 8, 9-11. A parent may submit a request to the principal at any time during the testing window.

What if parents ask me about opting their child out of standardized tests?

MTEA members have reported that parents have asked whether their children must take certain standardized tests. If a parent asks you about whether students have to take standardized tests, you may want to inform them of their rights under Wisconsin law (see previous question).

May teachers speak with colleagues at work about concerns regarding standardized testing?

During non-work time at school, teachers have the right to discuss with colleagues concerns about standardized testing.

What does it mean to be a "conscientious objector" to testing?

Some MTEA members have requested reassignment during the testing window so that they are relieved of the duty to administer tests. Requesting reassignment should not be considered insubordination. However, if the school board denies reassignment, any refusal to perform assigned duties could result in discipline.

MTEA leaders discussed the testing craze and what we can do about it at our Executive Board and Representative Assembly meetings in April. Watch for updates via email and social media.

Building committees build educator power

Schools with strong MTEA building committees have great success because they work collaboratively with administrators to solve problems and improve school conditions for educators and students.

If your building committee is meeting regularly with administrators, that's great! Remember to take minutes at the meetings and send the minutes in to your MTEA regional staff person. (Your minutes also serve as a record if MTEA staff need to intervene on an issue that persists.)

It's never too late to start meeting regularly. All schools hold elections for building leaders in May.

By scheduling monthly meetings, you have a predictable, set time to discuss

concerns, and won't have to ask for a meeting with administrators only when there's a problem.

Building committees have solved many issues in monthly meetings:

- Stopping principals from imposing their own dress codes.
- Creating lunch and duty schedules that work for both students and educators.
- Protecting teacher planning time by making sure the correct number of days are set aside for planning time.

Building committees work! Do you have a success story to share with us? Email salaskd@mtea.weac.org.

Upcoming events

All events held at MTEA unless noted. For more information and to register, visit mtea.weac.org and go to *events*.

Rally for public schools, Sat. Apr. 18 at 4:15pm, 310 W. Wisconsin.

Opt Out Milwaukee parent meeting, Mon. Apr. 20 at 5pm at MPL East Library, 2320 N. Cramer St.

National Board Certification informational session, Wed. Apr. 22, 4:30pm.

PDP drop-in support session, Wed. Apr. 22, 4:30-6pm.

Meet and greet for all educational assistants, Tue. May 5, 4:30-5:30pm.

Rethinking Mathematics workshop, Sat. May 16, 9:30am-12:30pm.

Save the date! MTEA tailgate & game at Miller Park, May 29 at 4pm.

mtea

Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association
5130 West Vliet Street | Milwaukee, WI | 53208
414-259-1990 | FAX: 414-259-7801 | mtea.weac.org