



The Catalyst



Montgomery County Education Association

Member Newsletter

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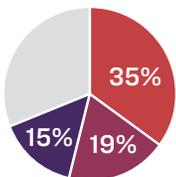
From the President



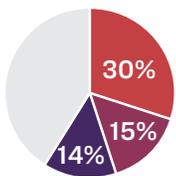
Chris Lloyd
President of MCEA

Every other year in North Carolina, teachers take a state survey on working conditions, with an analysis and publication of results that follows. The title of one such report is clear – “Teacher Working Conditions Are Student Learning Conditions.”

The survey is structured into six domains: time, facilities and resources, teacher empowerment, school leadership, professional development, and induction and mentoring. In 2018, 90% of all educators in the state completed the survey, with results disaggregated by school system, school, and employee type (teacher, principal, assistant principal, other education professional).



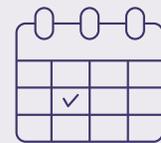
“Which aspect of your teaching conditions is most important to you promoting student learning?” Out of 93,000 educators, instructional practices and support (**35%**), managing student conduct (**19%**), and time during the workday (**15%**) were the three highest responses out of a possible eight.



“Which aspect of your teaching conditions most affects your willingness to keep teaching at your school?” The top three answers included school leadership (**30%**), time during the work day (**15%**), and instructional practices and support (**14%**), out of eight potential answers.

This data is likely not news to anyone working in a school but is useful for a larger conversation related to the working conditions of educators and the learning conditions of our young scholars. Perhaps it’s time we launched such a survey here. The results could help build a narrative of the lives of professionals in Montgomery County.

We know that the conditions of work can be improved, and that collectively we must do so for ourselves and for our students. **Wednesday, December 19, 2018 at 7pm, our Board of Directors meets with the MCPS Board of Education at MCPS Central Office at 850 Hungerford Drive in Rockville.** Come with your colleagues to hear from our elected officials and to show that our conditions of work matter to us and our precious children.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MCEA Board Meeting with MCPS School Board
Wednesday, December 19

MCPS Winter Break
Saturday, December 22–
Tuesday, January 1

January Rep Assembly
Wednesday, January 2

Legislative Reception
Friday, January 4

MCEA Leadership Conference
Friday, January 11–
Saturday, January 12

Save The Date: MSEA Statewide School Funding Rally
Monday, March 11



So Much More Than a T-Shirt...



Jaime Hayer Bohannon
First Grade Teacher of the Deaf
Rock Creek Valley ES

This past summer at New Educator Orientation (NEO), I had the honor and privilege to meet and chat with many new hires to MCPS. As you made your way through those few days, you were inundated with information from many different directions. Among all the people sharing forms and information, you met educators like me wearing a red t-shirt telling you the importance of joining the union, and the power we have when we unite together.

After you submitted your membership card, you received a packet of information – and a red t-shirt. Everyone knows how enticing a free t-shirt can be, but with it you have gained so much more. You have the support of over 13,000 other educators who share in the experiences unique to this district. You are now a member of a group of people who know what our students need and will advocate for those needs. You joined a group of people who want to protect the integrity of our profession and believe that teachers are stakeholders because we know what’s best for our students.

This time of growth within our union is refreshing and exciting. I look forward to working with, walking with, and growing with you within our union. My hope is that you will look at that red t-shirt, and think of it as your cape. In it, may you find encouragement, strength, and power to do what’s right and what’s best for our students. Let’s get to work.



MCEA Unit Members – Know Your Rights

Did you know that labor law regarding employees’ rights to address their salaries, wages, hours, and working conditions is clear and long-established? Maryland law through the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) affords public school employees the right to engage with a union. It also establishes that union representatives are legally permitted to talk with employees about salaries, wages, hours, and working conditions *without* surveillance, intimidation, or employer interference.

MCPS management cannot interfere with MCEA official representatives’ right to talk with unit members about salaries, wages, hours, and working conditions. Additionally, unit members have the right to discuss these topics among themselves as needed and necessary. Any violations by MCPS management are unacceptable and could potentially lead to formal action including a potential unfair labor practice with the State of Maryland.

MCEA believes it is incumbent upon MCPS administration to educate and inform administrators and supervisors about the educational and labor law in this area, provide administrators with any necessary trainings, and make a good faith effort to enforce the law.

Now you know!

NEO Union Strong!



Jill McCowan
Art Teacher, Lakewood ES and Brookhaven ES
CTL ES Art Representative

This year at NEO, we welcomed new educators with a one-hour presentation of the benefits of MCEA – with over 13,000 strong, we are the largest chapter in our state! The year before, many new teachers slipped through the cracks because they were overwhelmed by the vast amount of information also presented at NEO. This year, we changed that.

A small group of educators worked with experienced organizers at MCEA to create a presentation highlighting the benefits of belonging to MCEA. Amazingly, when we presented our polished presentation at NEO, it was new educators who were our best voices encouraging others to join MCEA.

One teacher in my group taught as a paraeducator in our county for many years, and now has advanced to teacher educator. She shared with everyone in the room about the benefits of belonging to the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and she wanted to make sure that she was now going to belong to MCEA because she knew the strength of

belonging to a large group instead of trying to make changes as one lonely person.

Another teacher in my room came to Montgomery County from North Carolina, having taught there for five years. She told us that North Carolina was not a Union Strong state – in fact, they were told to never join the union. She was excited to see printed in our contract that teachers were guaranteed a thirty minute duty free lunch. Back in North Carolina, she never got a bite to eat during school. Other teachers got excited about the New Educator Action Team (NEAT) and their ability to meet with other new teachers to help navigate what they decided was the Alphabet Soup of MCPS.

All in all, it was an exciting hour, and when I walked away, I felt proud once again to belong to this group of highly educated, learned professionals working every day to help guide all of our students to a successful future.

Marigolds Grow in Montgomery County



Sarah Neubold
Fine Arts Content Specialist

I love going back to school – each new year brings new creativity and artwork to life! This will be year 17 for me, but it seems like just yesterday that I was unlocking my art room door for the first time. As the MCPS fine arts content specialist, I had the pleasure of welcoming more than 30 new arts educators in August at New Educator Orientation (NEO). After facilitating NEO for several years now, I discovered nothing gets me more prepared for the start of school than teaching others how to get ready for the start of school. In the end, however, I think I might learn as much from our new teachers as they learn from me. That's why NEO is among my favorite events each year.

I share a lot of tips, tricks, and resources during NEO, but there's one that I think is most important. It's an article by Jennifer Gonzalez from the *Cult of Pedagogy* titled "Find Your Marigold: The One Essential Rule for New Teachers." I'm not a gardener, but apparently there's this thing called companion planting. I don't really know the details behind the science, but basically, there are certain species of plants that cause really good things to happen when planted in the garden. The other plants will grow bigger and stronger because they are better protected and nourished. Marigolds are great companion plants.

The article continues by illustrating how some teachers are like marigolds – encouraging and supporting novice teachers as they grow into seasoned veterans. As I prepare for NEO, I can't just plant seeds for curriculum, assessment, classroom management, and differentiation. If I really want our new teachers to succeed, then I need to plant some marigolds too. This year I was lucky enough to have Jill McCowan, Patricia Touchette, Jennifer Espinoza, Jennifer Bruck, Lisa Ryan, and Connie Zammett serve that purpose.

But let's be real, being a teacher is an extremely hard job. Marigolds aren't just for new teachers. Each of us needs a few marigolds in our garden to help us stay strong and continue growing. This makes me think about who my own marigolds are. As a teacher and instructional leader, MCEA is often where I find them. I've been a member for my whole career, but it wasn't until I became actively involved in the association that I truly began to reap the benefits. The members of MCEA are amazing. They inspire me, and teach me, and push me to be a better educator than I thought I could ever be. I was really excited to share my personal story as an MCEA member and encourage the new teachers to join us. I was even more excited when all of them did!

We Did It! Election Day Victory



Nikki Woodard
Early Intervention Special Educator, Montgomery County Infant and Toddler Program-Down County
Political Action and Community Engagement (PACE) Committee

And the winner is ... MCEA.

2018 was a remarkable election year in many ways, which brought new trials for our Apple Endorsement process. That included the need to assemble an unprecedented number of volunteers to cover the hundreds of polls for early voting and Election Day. To take on this task, the Political Action and Community Engagement (PACE) Committee decided to revamp our process this year. The call was made, and many of your colleagues rose to the challenge.

In addition to our usual recruitment practices, we launched the Adopt-a-

School campaign. This campaign asked educators to distribute Apple Ballots at their work location. As educators, we know the commitment and care we have for our schools, work sites, and the communities they serve. Therefore, distributing Apple Ballots was a natural pairing. Because of the amazing efforts put forward by our membership, 100% of the locally selected candidates on the Apple Ballot were elected to office! Just AMAZING!!! We had over 290 individuals volunteer for poll shifts. This amounted to 175 volunteers distributing Apple Ballots at their school or work site. MCEA volunteers covered an astounding 348 shifts across 148 poll sites (126 schools and 22 non-schools) on Election Day.

This success was won through the efforts of members, building representatives, elected faculty representatives, regional organizers, board of directors, MCEA staff, and a host of community volunteers standing with MCEA to support pro-public education candidates. There is still work to be done. Please be on the lookout for upcoming events and campaigns this year.



Union Summer Newsletter



Carissa Barnes Harper, M.Ed
PEP Parent Educator/Coordinator
Jackson Road Elementary School

“You want me to knock on strangers’ doors?”

The short answer: Yes they did. And it was one of the best experiences of my life!

This summer I spent three weeks having conversations with teachers all over Montgomery County whom I had never met. Some of these conversations were in their houses or on their front porch swing or as they washed their cars.

During July and August I was a field organizer for MCEA’s Union Summer program, a project to bring union members together to have critical conversations about the state of our schools and the future of our union. I admit that when I first heard that I

would be going to unfamiliar addresses to ask unfamiliar people to let me into their homes so we could talk about their school year and our union, I thought, “This will never work.” However, I was willing to try.

Here’s what I found after three weeks (and after many failed GPS adventures): Our members had A LOT to say about A LOT of important topics. I heard about issues with ESOL structures as I sat on the front stoop of a member’s house while her husband mowed the lawn. I heard about the hopes and fears of a first-year school psychologist as she prepared for NEO. I heard about the impact of recent political decisions on a high school history classroom while swinging on a porch swing as it rained.

I heard about ideas to improve the onboarding experience for new educators from a second-year teacher while we sat at his dining room table. Overall, I heard that we are ready for change!

Teachers all over this county were excited to talk to a stranger who rang their doorbell on a summer evening because they want to be a part of the change to move our profession and our schools forward in Montgomery County. So yes, they did ask me to knock on strangers’ doors; and yes, it was one of the most rewarding professional experiences of my career! And if you were one of the teachers who answered my knock or ring – thank you! Thank you for engaging and thank you for being a part of the change.



ABOUT MCEA

MCEA is one of the largest local affiliates of the National Education Association (NEA). MCEA is a leader in efforts to build a new kind of teachers union that responds to the needs of today’s educators. We are more than 14,000 classroom teachers, guidance counselors, speech pathologists, media specialists, and other non-supervisory certified educators in the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools system. We work in a rapidly urbanizing suburban district with a growing divide between haves and have-nots.

For more information, please email helpdesk@mceanea.org.

mceanea.org

@mceanea

/montgomeryteachers