



Montgomery County Education Association

Member Newsletter

Vol. 4

Fall 2019



The President's Report

Chris Lloyd, President of MCEA

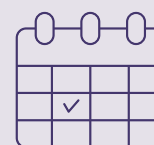
This summer, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon told an audience in Edinburgh, "You know, what we choose to measure as a country matters." She went on to explain the limitations of making the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the primary gauge of a country's success. And now Scotland, Iceland, and New Zealand have now formed a Wellbeing Economy Governments group, because "the objective of economic policy should be collective well-being: how happy and healthy a population is, not just how wealthy a population is."

Sturgeon said, "When we focus on well-being, we start a conversation that provokes profound and fundamental questions. What really matters to us in our lives? What do we value in the communities we live in? What kind of country, what kind of society, do we really want to be?"

Her thoughts apply not only to government but to public schooling, and the well-being of those who work and learn within the four walls of a schoolhouse. We've seen and heard first-hand the impact of an increasing stress level on our young scholars, emotionally, psychologically, and socially. The race to increase test scores, or stars on a state report card, or ratings on any number of measurements fail to take into account the humanity and well-being of those involved. Mind you, such ratings and scores are important – but they are not all that is important, just as GDP is not the only thing important to a country.

So as we begin the year, we stop and reflect upon the power of empathy, and care, and love in a world that sometimes seems to lack many of these qualities on any given day. We know the stress that so many of our children feel has been amplified by a national narrative. But as educators, we know poet and artist Cleo Wade was right. She said we can achieve the "triumph of radical empathy," by leading with both head and heart, and spreading peace.

It was Scottish economist Adam Smith who observed in "The Theory of Moral Sentiments," that the value of any government is judged in proportion to the extent that it makes its people happy. The same can and should be said for public school systems and public schools, who must make the well-being of children and those who care for children a priority. "We are all more than we were yesterday," says Cleo Wade. And by the end of this school year, we will be so much more than we are today.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MCPS Pre-Service Week

Monday, August 26 –
Friday, August 30

Labor Day Parade

Monday, September 2
Olde Town Gaithersburg

First Day of School

Tuesday, September 3

MCEA Rep Assembly

Wednesday, September 4
Julius West Middle School
Rockville

MCEA Rep Assembly

Wednesday, October 2
12 Taft Court
Rockville

MCEA Leadership Conference

Friday, October 4 –
Sunday, October 6
Holiday Inn Gaithersburg

The Parent-Teacher Relationship



Sunil Dasgupta,
MCPS parent

The parent-teacher relationship may not be the most visible, influential, or fought-over aspect of public education, but it is crucial for successful schools. As a parent of three MCPS students, I'm dismayed that the parent-teacher relationship is largely broken. I'm sure some schools are better than others, but generally I've found that teachers and parents are shockingly distrusting of each other.

Teachers are wary of parents trying to secure advantages for

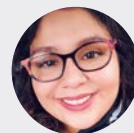
their own children or grinding some other axe. Parents think of teachers as apathetic to the best interests of their children.

While some teachers will succeed with some students in the absence of a robust parent-teacher relationship, it is important to keep in mind that the school as a whole—the school community—will succeed only if the parent-teacher relationship is strong, trusting, and aligned.

Rebuilding the home-school partnership has to start in the schools, in the local PTAs, in direct teacher-parent exchanges. Let's begin this conversation now. There is a plan afoot to organize parent-teacher monthly happy hours in different locations around the county. The first is scheduled for Friday, Aug 30, at 4 pm at Limerick Pub in Wheaton. Subsequent happy hours will be announced on the Parent Teacher Exchange Facebook group. Please join and RSVP there.

Sunil Dasgupta is a guest columnist. His views are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of MCEA.

NEAT Aims to Build a Stronger Union



Mercedes Barbosa,
Special Education
Dr. Ronald E. McNair Elementary

The New Educator Action Team (NEAT) supports our early career educators in years one through ten. We are committed to developing strong relationships with our early career educators through regular NEAT Up's. At these events we foster conversation and build relationships with our members across the county.

We also support strategic issue organizing for early-career educators as they relate to the larger MCEA campaign work. NEAT has also worked to provide professional development for our members.

Based on their interests, this year our early career educators will be asked to join one of our two subcommittees: the projects/advocacy subcommittee, or the outreach subcommittee. This will help in continuing to foster and grow educator leadership.

We would like to thank all of our fellow MCEA members who have supported NEAT by donating to our new teacher store at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The new teacher store will be open throughout pre-service week for our newest early career educators. This will be our second year running the store and we will definitely have much more to offer.

PACE in Action

The Political Action Community Engagement Committee is gearing up for a year of activism.



Nikki Woodard,
Early Intervention Special Educator,
PACE Committee

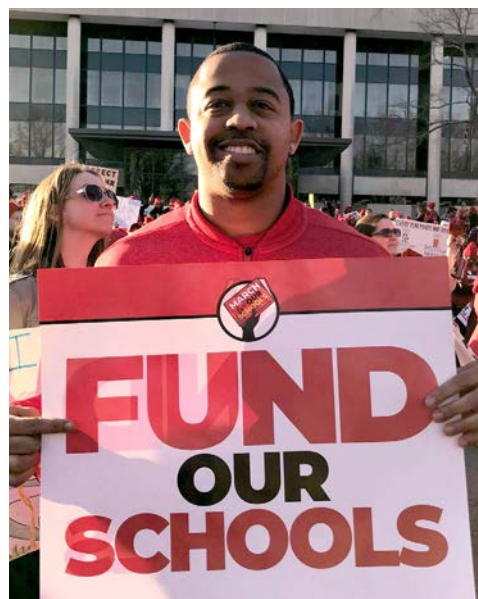
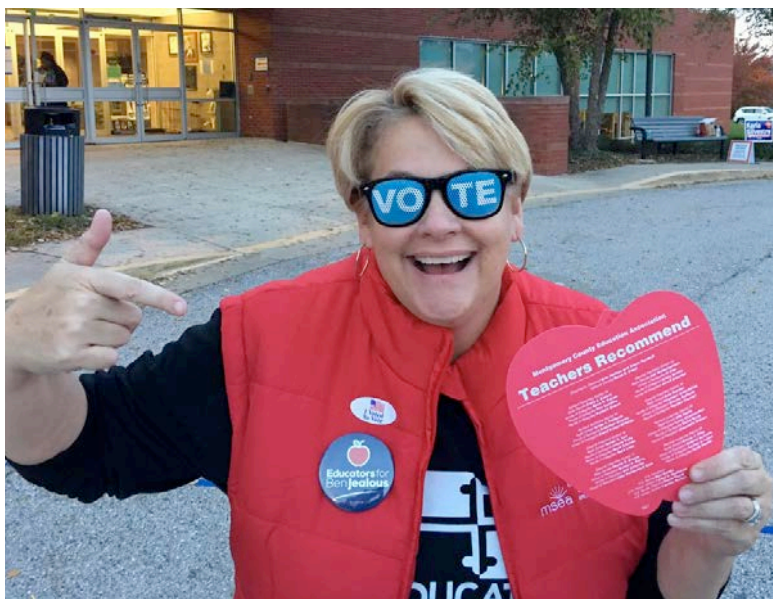
Educators' voice matters! As educators, we are on the frontline of public education as witnesses to the barrage of challenges and attacks that public education faces. Educators need an avenue to discuss, engage, and take action in both the greater community and political activities of Montgomery County and beyond. Our collective voice must lead the profession and be the narrative for public education. For MCEA members, the Political Action Community Engagement (PACE) Committee is our space.

Through the PACE committee, members work collaboratively to identify opportunities to give teacher perspectives on issues and inform the greater community about the needs of our schools. The PACE committee plans events to mobilize our membership. We participate in activities that range from community drives to lobbying elected officials at the county and state level, all on behalf of strong pro-public education policies and funding. Through PACE, we aim to form and maintain deep relationships with decision-makers and residents to make a positive change to create the schools

educators and students deserve across all of Montgomery County.

The PACE committee works to elevate respect and support for Montgomery County educators through community engagement and informing and educating the county's decision-makers. Our educators know what their students need to be successful and what we need for our profession. The PACE committee works to ensure we are provided the support to get to it done. Throughout the upcoming school year, a few events the PACE committee will participate in include the Gaithersburg Labor Day parade, Read Across America, the Apple Ballot Endorsement process, PAC drives, and the annual Montgomery County Legislative Reception. PACE will also develop MCEA's 2019 list of legislative priorities and will testify before the School Board and County Council.

Do you have an interest in working to ensure educators write the narrative heard and known throughout our community? Come out and join us at one of our monthly meetings.



Union Summer Heats Up Member Solidarity



Java Robinson,
Nationally Board Certified 2nd
grade teacher at Greenwood ES

Union Summer had its initial iteration three years ago. Our current model has been at work for the past two years. It is a program built in partnership with the National Education Association. Funding for this local organizing program comes from our national association.

During Union Summer we work to emphasize and develop our union capacity, so instead of a summer dormant season we use the time to build relationships with members and showcase the Union work we do all year. This mobilization of member-to-member contact helps people connect to the concept that “the union” isn’t some central office - instead, we see that the union is us.

This summer we talked to members to get them mobilized to support our work to improve working conditions in bargaining for a new contract this coming school year. The work involves going to educators’ homes during the hours of 3-8 pm. We talked to members about their previous school year and what they would like to see changed. After sharing stories, MCEA members identified specific actions they committed to participating in during our contract campaign.

These actions include:

- actively participating with MCEA social media.
- hosting an MCEA event at their school or in their neighborhood.
- contacting or meeting with elected officials.
- showing up and speaking out at MCEA actions.
- signing a petition and/or hand out flyers.
- standing together with educators in public demonstrations.
- being an active member on the Contract Action Team.

Members greeted us warmly, and many signed the pledge card to assist in this significant work. They see the importance of union solidarity and are willing to be engaged. They also understand the benefit in building our membership capacity to mobilize around a common cause.

I started my involvement in union work when I had an issue with my working conditions and I had to reach out to MCEA for help. By going through that process it gave me insight into how to take

charge in order to improve my working conditions. Since then I have been involved with everything from handing out Apple Ballots during election campaigns to going to Annapolis and lobbying elected officials to enact needed change.

I am also the chair of MCEA’s Professional Development and Learning Committee. Our goal is to provide meaningful professional development to all members. Working with the Union Summer program helps me continue to grow in my association capacity and to help build that capacity in others. Knowing that this work started with just 30 members a few years ago to having over 200 applicants who want to be a part of this outreach is a powerful reminder of what we are capable of when we purposefully work together.

**“I support the union
because they help
me help my kids.
ESOL Matters!”**

– Brenna Matthews,
Blair HS



Mobilizing to Win

Activists are joining forces to make schools more equitable for students and educators.



Liz Bell Jones,
English teacher
Blake High School

There are a lot of big battles coming this school year, especially as MCEA fights for the schools the students and educators of Montgomery County deserve. As educators, we know one of our greatest resources is our time. Between teaching, planning, grading, and trying to balance work with our personal lives, it seems we never have enough free time. But when we use this valuable asset to join our union brothers and sisters in collective actions, our power is undeniable.



Whether we show up to flood the Board of Education in a sea of red, show our support for the much needed school funding formula, send letters to the county council, or go to public locations for a grade-in, our power is in our ability to show up in mass. Unfortunately, we won't get the contract our schools deserve after one collective action. Being an activists means we are active in the fight. We're going to have to show up again and again. And we're going to need to grow our numbers at events to show our power.

Our union has approximately 13,000 members. Here are a few tips to help build our numbers when we are called to action.

Invite a friend to come with you to a collective action, such as attending a Board of Education meeting. Union work is more powerful, and more fun, with friends.

Better yet, **walk your building and invite colleagues** in person. This will allow you to make personal connections with other activists in your building and help you find new activists who are ready to join us.

If you brought one person to an event, **try bringing two** to the next event.

Post photos on social media of yourself at collective actions. Use the hash tag (#MCEAUnited and #RedForEd). More people with like minds will be drawn to subsequent collective actions if they know just how powerful you feel afterwards.

Do you have a **neighbor who is passionate** about public education? Bring them! When we combine the voices of educators with those in our community, our narratives are even more compelling and convincing.

We are a part of the Red for Ed movement sweeping our country. Just like our union brothers and sisters in Los Angeles, Arizona, and West Virginia, our demands will be heard and we will win. Join us in this fight for what is right. And bring a friend.



Summer RISE Pupils Make an Impact

High School students from across the county spent three weeks with MCEA. Here's their story.

The Summer RISE Student Voice Society

As rising juniors and seniors in Montgomery County Public Schools, our experience in the Summer RISE program with the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) was productive, educational, and gave us the opportunity to enact change in the MCPS school system. Over the course of three weeks beginning on July 8, we were able to understand and experience the determination and hard work that goes behind changes in the MCPS school system that begin with the educators' union.

During our time at MCEA, we formed an organization called the Student Voice Society and organized two campaigns to improve the MCPS school system: the ESOL Integration Initiative and Improved School Lunches.

The ESOL Integration Initiative aims to improve the assimilation of ESOL students into the whole school environment and introduce them to the more complex inner workings of a well-rounded education. We proposed modifying the existing ambassador programs in many high schools so that some ambassadors could provide ESOL students with information about the school, including how to obtain SSL hours, how to join clubs and sports teams, how to sign up and prepare for the SAT or ACT, and other activities that generally challenge ESOL students.

Our second campaign, concerning the betterment of school lunches, aims to enhance the marketing and nutritional value of the food in question. During our research of school lunches across the county we found that the food offerings are not equally balanced from school to school.

In addition, many MCPS schools still have soda machines and their meals mainly consist of junk-based food products such as pizza, mozzarella sticks, and hamburgers, among others. We would like to have a wider range of fresh fruits and vegetables throughout the year to all schools across the county and more meals that are compatible with students who have dietary restrictions.

We plan to continue our two campaigns through surveys, petitions, proposals, and meetings with the Board of Education. We also hope to expand the Student Voice Society to include more students and more campaigns over the next school year. We are grateful for the opportunity the MCEA has provided us to work in a professional environment and learn about the educators' union in Montgomery County.





"I genuinely learned quite a bit at MCEA, from patience to teamwork. I love that our hosts gave us the guidance we needed."

– Francine G. Salazar, Northwest High School, 11th grade



"I learned a lot here at MCEA, such as new work skills and about our local government."

– Julianna Morano, Quince Orchard High School, 12th grade



"My teamwork and people skills are much improved, and I really enjoyed my experience with MCEA."

– Corinne Mervilus, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, 11th grade



"I really enjoyed trying to make a change in the Montgomery County school system."

– Justin Tang, Richard Montgomery High School, 12th grade



"I feel I have gained the experience of learning the importance of working as a team with co-workers."

– Hernan Alvarado, Sherwood High School, 12th grade



"The Summer RISE experience gave me a new outlook on the work done by the people in our county who change our schools every day."

– Jacob Wang, Churchill High School, 12th grade



"Summer RISE gave me the opportunity to appreciate different points of view when solving problems."

– Ojas Malghan, Northwest High School, 11th grade



"Summer RISE helped me learn a lot about MCEA and the school services they provide."

– Eli Jean, Walter Johnson High School 11th grade



"Summer RISE gave me an opportunity to attempt to affect certain aspects of county school policy."

– Elliot Wang, Wootton High School, 11th grade



"I feel very fortunate to have discovered how a union functions, and to begin enacting real change in the MCPS school system."

– Angelina Sachar, Poolesville High School, 11th grade

Innovative School Year at Arcola and Roscoe Nix

Elementary educators fight for economic improvements as pilot program launches.



Kember Kane,
Teacher at Roscoe
Nix ES



Karen McKiernan,
5th grade teacher,
Arcola ES

Educators at Arcola and Roscoe Nix Elementary Schools are profoundly grateful for the strong vibration of support that was felt from co-workers, union members, parents, board members, and MCPS staff during negotiations over the Innovative School Year (a two-summer pilot project). When we stand shoulder-to-shoulder, we build great foundations for students.

As the 2018-2019 school year came to an end on June 14th, MCEA and MCPS were still negotiating the ISY stipend, and an increase in the number of personal days the extended school year warranted. On June 25, that changed.

We are happy to report that MCEA, SEIU Local 500, and MCPS reached an agreement that provides a stipend of \$3,000 to be paid to 10-month and 12-month bargaining unit members who work in schools with Innovative School Year calendars.

Additionally, MCEA asked that the total stipend be paid to those employees in July. MCPS agreed, and the stipend was disbursed on July 19, 2019.

MCEA and SEIU Local 500 bargaining unit members at Arcola and Roscoe Nix were also granted a total of two (2) additional days of personal leave in recognition of their increased summer commitment.

The two bargaining units and MCPS also agreed to establish a joint labor/management committee (JLMCC). This committee will be composed of SEIU Local 500 and MCEA members from Arcola and Roscoe Nix Elementary Schools, and appropriate MCPS representatives, to further address remaining issues.

All parties agreed that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be viewed as an incremental step, representative of a shared commitment toward addressing larger systemic concerns that were raised by the unions, the community, and the school system. The impact of success in these programs has the potential to significantly elevate the future of our children.

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

**2019 MCEA
Leadership Conference**

and

Back-to-School Ball

Save the date for the 2019 Montgomery County Education Association Leadership Conference and Back-to-School Ball. It's about time we join together to lay the foundation for a successful contract and to celebrate our victories.

October 4-6 | Holiday Inn | Gaithersburg, MD

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

