

Welcome to MCEA

Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning—It's Union Work

MCEA—the Montgomery County Education Association—is the organization of education professionals in the Montgomery County Public Schools. There are more than 12,000 of us—classroom teachers, psychologists, resource teachers, special educators, pupil personnel workers, counselors, substitutes, speech & language pathologists, media specialists, and more.

By joining MCEA, you help make decisions affecting your work life, and help our profession grow stronger. The greater our numbers, the more effective we are at:

-  Working for real school improvement
-  Building productive relationships with parent and other citizen groups
-  Getting support from elected officials for public education
-  Negotiating salaries and working conditions
-  Helping resolve day-to-day problems on the job
-  Providing special services at group discount rates

For further assistance contact

helpdesk@mceanea.org

www.mceanea.org



12 Taft Court
Rockville, Maryland
20850-1150

301-294-6232
Fax 301-309-9563

Welcome to Your Professional Community

2014-2015 School Year

Dear Educator and Colleague,

On behalf of your 12,000+ new colleagues in the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA), welcome to the Montgomery County Public Schools. Congratulations on joining a community of educational professionals committed to the advancement of public education and success for all students. MCEA represents all teachers and other non-supervisory professionals in MCPS. We are the local affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) and the National Education Association (NEA).

MCEA is a unique kind of teachers' union. For us, improving the quality of teaching and learning is a central part of our mission. We believe that teaching is a complex art and science – and that enhancing the profession of teaching is essential to improving student achievement. We believe that the very best salaries and benefits are essential to attract and retain the very best educators. MCEA has negotiated the highest salaries and best benefit package in the region, as well as innovative programs to support teaching and teachers.

MCEA works to assure quality professional development for all teachers, right from the beginning and throughout their careers. We have championed a range of supports for new teachers, including:



Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program—a unique labor/management initiative that provides an unprecedented level of support for new educators in their first year of teaching;



Mentor Program—MCEA helped lower the mentor-to-new teacher ratio and improved the level of support you will receive if you have a mentor.

MCEA is committed to building a professional learning community in each school: a climate where teachers regularly work together and help one another; a culture which values the craft of teaching. We have negotiated improved professional development and support for educators that include:



A staff development teacher at each school to support educators in their professional growth and development;



Sixteen (16) hours of paid “flexible” professional time for team planning and other collaborative work by teachers beyond the regular duty day;



Per-diem rate of pay for all educators required to take training during the summer;



Increased time for grading and reporting to provide a full day at the end of each marking period and an additional half day in the first and third quarters; including the opportunity for teachers to telework from home on these three full day grading/planning days. New teachers can start tele-working on these days after the first semester.

These are just a few of the ways your Association works to provide you with the practical knowledge, support, and tools to be a great educator.

Economically, these are difficult times not only for MCEA members but for millions of Americans across the country. Despite the strains placed on county and state government, we have worked diligently to protect the interests of our members.

-  We have protected our health insurance plans to ensure that our members and their families have access to affordable health care
-  We prevented the furloughing of MCPS employees, at a time when county government employees, police and firefighters were being furloughed

Within MCPS and the Montgomery County community at large, MCEA protects and advances the interests of educators by:

-  **Serving as your strong advocate with the MCPS administration.** MCEA's elected leaders work with the administration day in and day out to improve teaching and learning conditions. For example, the MCEA Councils on Teaching and Learning provide an unprecedented level of involvement by educators in decisions affecting curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
-  **Providing timely support when you need it.** The staff at MCEA is always available to advocate on your behalf to ensure that you are treated fairly if you have problems with disciplinary actions or performance evaluations. The MCEA Help Desk can answer questions about the contract, pay, benefits, leaves, and school policies.
-  **Serving as your voice in the community and with elected officials.** MCEA involves teachers in a range of community outreach and lobbying efforts. We recently helped to win passage of important legislation protecting pension benefits, modernizing the collective bargaining law, and increasing state funding for public education. We work constantly to improve the portrayal of teachers and public schools in the local media and community.

In all that we do, MCEA articulates the perspective of educators clearly and forcefully. This can only be done with you, not for you. We need and want you as a member.

PLEASE FILL OUT THE ENCLOSED MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT CARD AND DROP IT IN THE MAIL.

By checking "payroll deduction" you can have your dues deducted automatically in twenty equal installments.

Dues for the 2014/2015 school year are just \$34.47 per pay period (\$689.35/year) for full-time membership in MCEA, MSEA, and NEA. Dues are prorated for part-time teachers (.5 or less). **There is no better investment you can make as a teaching professional.**

NOTE: if you choose not to become a member of MCEA, you are required by contract to pay a Representation Fee for the services that MCEA is legally required to provide to you. This year, the amount of the representation fee is about 80% of dues. If you do not opt for membership, the Rep Fee will be automatically withheld via payroll deduction.

Once again, let me welcome you to Montgomery County and to your Association. Feel free to call us for assistance or if you have any questions, ideas, or if you just want to share your perspective on the work of the union. You are also welcome to join us at the monthly Representative Assembly, held the first Wednesday of each month at 4:15 pm. Our telephone number is (301) 294-6232. Our staff is accessible online at the MCPS Outlook or at www.mceanea.org. **Be sure to look for the MCEA Forum online on MCPS Outlook** (under "Employee Associations"). I look forward to meeting you and working with you as we continue to improve education and the teaching profession. Have a great year—and please return the membership card today!

Sincerely,



Doug Prouty, MCEA President

How Does MCEA Help?

MCEA members are making Montgomery County Schools better places to teach and to learn. MCEA makes sure your ideas for improving education are heard and helps you resolve problems at work. Here's how:

School Improvement—MCEA advocates for policy changes within MCPS and at the state level, monitors reform efforts nationally, and provides training and assistance to local schools.

Negotiating Contracts—MCEA bargains with the Board of Education over the terms of our contract, setting salaries, benefits and working conditions.

Training and Professional Development—MCEA provides a range of workshops for members at our own conference center. Classes range from creative problem solving to understanding your contract rights to timely instructional issues.

Solving Problems—MCEA's staff works with members to solve both individual and school-wide problems.

Political & Legislative Advocacy—MCEA monitors and lobbies elected officials to ensure their votes benefit educators and public education. The members of MCEA's Political Action Committee make initial candidate recommendations and organizes teachers to support pro-education candidates.

Connecting with your Association—online

MCEA and its parent organizations, the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) and the National Education Association (NEA), each have developed websites as well as other electronic forums. You can access your Association at the following locations:

MCEA Website www.mceanea.org.
Provides information about your local association.

MSEA Website—www.marylandeducators.org.
Describes activities and resources available from MCEA's state affiliate, the Maryland State Education Association.

NEA Website—www.nea.org. Provides professional education materials as well as information about the organization itself.

 **Facebook** Join us online.
facebook.com/montgomeryteachers

 **Twitter** @mceanea

MCEA School Notes MCEA's blog has news and views about public education today.
www.mceaschoolnotes.blogspot.com

MCEA Contacts

Usually it is best to start with your MCEA building representative. If s/he is unable to help, contact MCEA one of the following people can assist you.

Doug Prouty, *President*

Christopher Lloyd, *Vice President*

Tom Israel, *Executive Director*

Diana White-Pettis, *Dir. of Operations*

Barbara Hueter, *Political Director*

MCEA Field Staff

Elaine Crawford, *UniServ Director*

Jerome Fountain, *UniServ Director*

Jon Gerson, *UniServ Director*

Ellen Holmes, *UniServ Director*

Joia Jones, *UniServ Director*

Andrew Macluskie, *Uniserv Director*

Lisa Markussen, *Uniserv Director*

LaToya Ouhirra, *Uniserv Director*

Paul Pinsky, *UniServ Director*

Who At MCEA Can Answer Your Questions

Individual Assistance Team

helpdesk@mceanea.org

 **Human Resource Issues**
Insurance, payroll, leaves, certification, workers' comp, disability, retirement, Substitute and Home & Hospital Teachers
Jerome Fountain

 **School Based Issues**
Performance and evaluation problems, low-level discipline, conflicts with administrators, contract rights and responsibilities
Jon Gerson, Andrew Macluskie

 **Sick Leave Bank**
Mary S. Neal
Jackie Thompson

 **Dues & Membership Issues**
Jackie Thompson

 **National Board Certification Support**
Lesley Johnson (301-545-0300)

 **Long-Term Disability Insurance**
Diana White-Pettis

 **Tradewinds: Classified Ad Service**
Sonya Dove-Addison

 **Discount Movie Tickets, Amusement Park Tickets, UBS Auto Buying Service**
Sonya Dove-Addison

 **Conference Center Room Reservations**
Paulette Jackson

School Assistance Team

Leadership development. Support for Leadership Teams, Team Leaders and Resource Teachers. Assistance on improving school climate and culture, as well as member involvement in school-based decision-making on teaching and learning issues. Issue organizing.

 High Schools
Paul Pinsky

 Middle Schools
Joia Jones

 Elementary Schools

 Elementary schools in the Damascus, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Rockville, Sherwood and Northeast Consortium clusters
Lisa Markussen

 Elementary schools in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Walter Johnson, Richard Montgomery, and Downcounty Consortium clusters
LaToya Ouhirra

 Elementary schools in the Churchill, Clarksburg, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley, Watkins Mill, Whitman, Wootton and Northwest Consortium clusters
Elaine Crawford



The Contract

What Is A Contract?

Every one to three years, MCEA members sit down with representatives of the Board of Education to discuss the many conditions that impact teaching and learning, including salary, benefits, planning time, leave, classroom discipline, professional development opportunities, student achievement, materials, and much more.

Agreements reached as part of these discussions become the contract between MCPS and MCEA members. The contract governs wages, benefits, and working conditions.

The language we are able to negotiate depends on a number of variables, including:

-  What percentage of professionals are MCEA members. *Last year, 97 percent of new-hires joined MCEA.*
-  Whether MCPS believes educators are willing to take action to back up their negotiating team.
-  The level of community support for educators and their interests.
-  The level of funding for education from the county, and the state.
-  The political climate in the county.

How Does A Contract Work?

In most cases, administrators try to follow the contract. When they do not, or when teachers and administrators interpret contract language differently, we use the grievance procedure.

The grievance procedure is part of the contract. It has several steps, beginning with informal discussion between the grievant and the immediate supervisor, usually a principal. The grievant has the right to have an MCEA representative present.

Arbitration, the final step in the grievance process, gives the system an incentive to settle at a lower level. An arbitrator is a neutral, outside party, whose decision is binding on both the school system and the union.

The other catalyst for settling grievances is member concern. When administrators know that unjust practices and contract violations will be the subject of actions by MCEA and its members, a reasonable settlement is much more likely.

You may hear that the grievance procedures protect “bad” teachers; this is not the case. We have a responsibility to preserve the due process rights which protect all of us from favoritism, discrimination, and everyday conflicts of style and personality. However, we believe that MCEA members have no interest in keeping under-performing teachers in the classroom. In fact, MCEA has led the way in implementing an innovative Peer Assistance and Review process that provides collegial support for teachers and a more objective teacher evaluation process.

Your Contract

The negotiated agreement (Contract) between MCEA and the Board of Education can be found online at www.mceanea.org. Copies of the new contract will be distributed through the MCEA Reps at all worksites during pre-service week.

The contract continues to ensure that our members have access to affordable health care. The contract also provides for individual planning time,

empowers teams and departments to exercise control over their own meeting schedules, and provides a framework for greater faculty input into Leadership Team decision making. The new contract restores cost-of-living increases and step increases for the next three years. For more information about the contract, contact your MCEA Building Rep.

Financial Security

Protecting Your Income

Sick Leave Bank

The MCEA Sick Leave Bank is designed to assure that those members in most need during a period of sustained disability have paid leave available after their own sick leave has expired. The bank use is for extended personal illness or disability (i.e., pregnancy, surgery, or injury) suffered by the Sick Leave Bank member only.

Sick Leave Bank members are eligible for up to 180 days of fully paid leave to cover qualifying personal illness that is incapacitating to the point that you cannot perform your job. Bank leave is available if/when you exhaust your own individual sick leave. A full copy of the MCEA Sick Leave Bank Rules of Procedure can be found on the MCEA website at www.mceanea.org/members/sick_leave_bank.php.

All new employees in the MCEA bargaining unit shall be automatically enrolled in the Sick Leave Bank. If you wish to not be a member of the Sick Leave Bank, you may opt-out by submitting the MCEA Sick Leave Bank Opt-out form within thirty (30) days of your date of hire, in order to have the initial SLB contribution credited back to your individual sick leave balance. If you miss the 30-day period, you may end your SLB membership at any time, however it becomes effective at the start of the next school year.

10-month employees make an initial contribution of two sick leave days to the Bank (2.5 days for 12 month unit members).

Following the initial contribution, Sick Leave Bank participants automatically donate one sick leave day per year to the Bank.

Requests for use of the Sick Leave Bank days by members must be made no later than 30 days after the expiration of their own sick leave.

All new professional employees are encouraged to join MCEA and the Sick Leave Bank.

Long Term Disability

The MCEA/MCPS Sick Leave Bank provides excellent short-term disability income protection. However, our members have asked for long term protection in case of a disabling illness or injury which could halt work—and a paycheck. As a result, a long term disability plan offered by **American Fidelity Assurance Company** is available to MCEA members.

This income protection plan will provide up to 66.7% of your monthly salary and will continue until age 65. Complete details and options of the plan may be obtained by calling MCEA at 301-294-6232 (301-294-MCEA).

Evaluations and Professional Development

MCPS and MCEA have collaboratively re-designed the teacher evaluation system and created a more comprehensive professional growth system.

The Professional Growth System includes:

-  Extensive training for evaluators and teachers in common language of how to talk about the quality of instruction;
-  Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) for all first year Montgomery County teachers who are new to teaching. This support, offered by experienced teachers (Consulting Teachers/CTs) provides substantial help during the critical first year in Montgomery County Public Schools;
-  A multi-year professional growth cycle—including evaluation—for tenured teachers intended to offer resources and support for professional improvement;
-  Substitute time to support professional growth;
-  A Staff Development Teacher (SDT) position in every school;
-  New, more focused performance standards aligned with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), used for national teacher certification; and
-  Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) for any teacher who is performing below MCPS standards of proficiency.

Observations and Evaluations

Observations and evaluations become part of your permanent school file and are used to assess your performance as required by state law. However, MCEA believes, more importantly, that assessments should be used for growth and professional development. They should be documents that encourage personal reflection and stimulate dialogue around what practices promote effective teaching.

With that in mind, MCEA believes that...

-  **You will get more out of an evaluation if you see yourself as a partner in the process.** Share your perceptions, ideas, and concerns with evaluators in addition to hearing theirs. Then, work to reach conclusions and recommendations that are mutually agreeable.
-  At every step of the observation and evaluation process, you have certain rights and protections. These are outlined in the *Professional Growth System Handbook*. If appropriate procedures are not followed, it may be grounds for contesting the evaluation.

Observations

Formal observations are an essential component of assessing teacher quality.

-  Each observation must last at least 30 minutes in duration;
-  Each observation must be followed by a post-observation conference within three working days of the observation, unless delayed by mutual agreement; and
-  Each announced observation must be preceded by a pre-observation conference.
-  The observer will provide you with a post-observation conference report within 10 working days of the post-observation conference, unless delayed by mutual agreement. This report documents the strengths of the observed lesson as well as any areas of concern. It also reflects the discussion that occurred in the conference.

Frequency

 **First year teachers (new to MCPS and teaching) with PAR support** will receive at least four formal observations. Two observations (at least one each semester) will be by your Consulting Teacher, with at least one being an announced observation. You will also receive at least two observations from the administration, with at least one being an announced observation.

 **First Year teachers (new to MCPS-experienced and not new to teaching)** will receive at least two formal observations (at least one a semester) from the administration. At least one must be announced.

Evaluations

Your evaluation should contain no surprises. It should be a cumulative reflection on your documented work and progress made during the school year or the full evaluation period. By the end of the year, you should meet with your principal or supervisor to receive and discuss your evaluation.

If you feel the process surrounding your evaluation has not been fair, you can call MCEA for assistance at 301-294-6232.

Colleagues To Provide You With Support

Consulting Teachers (CTs) are outstanding teachers, on leave from the classroom, who assist teachers in the Peer Assistance and Review program. Consulting teachers work full time with a limited caseload providing instructional support and review to teachers new to the profession as well as experienced teachers needing assistance.

Staff Development Teachers (SDTs) are assigned to each school to provide instructional support to classroom teachers.

Mentor Teachers are school-based teachers assigned to assist and offer guidance to new teachers who have prior experience. Mentor teachers take special courses preparing them for serving in that role.

How Is MCEA Governed?

MCEA works best when you and your colleagues get involved.

Our democratic structure increases in effectiveness as member ideas, direction, and involvement increase. The **Representative Assembly (RA)** is our monthly meeting where delegates from each school and building across the school system discuss issues, make policy, and adopt programs. The members at every worksite elect the MCEA **Building Representatives** who both assist members in the building and represent them at the monthly RAs. Each school or office can have one Building Rep for every 15 MCEA members.

Each school should also have an **Elected Faculty Representative on the School Leadership Team (EFR)**. The EFR works with the leadership team and the administration, serves as a communicator and liaison with the faculty, and helps facilitate and solve problems through the leadership team and administration.

MCEA's **Board of Directors** is made up of 13 directors and four officers. Ten of the directors are elected to designated seats (i.e., elementary, middle, high, retired, etc.) and three are elected at-large. Directors and officers may serve a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms. They meet monthly.

The Board of Directors prepare the budget, formulate priorities and goals, propose political recommendations, develop programs and activities, and recommend policy to the RA.

MCEA's president receives a leave of absence from the school system allowing him or her to direct the organization full-time.

MCEA is affiliated with the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) and the National Education Association (NEA). Their structures are similar to ours except that Representative Assemblies are held annually—in the fall for MSEA and July for NEA. More than 200 MCEA members are elected by their colleagues each year to participate in these decision-making conventions.

Councils on Teaching and Learning

The **Councils on Teaching and Learning (CTLs)** are the means by which teachers have input in the design, revision and continuous improvement of curriculum, assessment and instruction.

There are currently three Councils (high school, middle school, and elementary school). Each Council is composed of approximately 30 classroom teachers and other educators. The Councils have designated seats by subject areas in high school and middle school, and grade level at the elementary level.

The Councils meet monthly with MCPS administration, a partner in the creation of the Councils.

Besides providing feedback to MCPS on curriculum changes and issues of instruction and assessment, council members are also responsible for regular communication with the colleagues they represent. Council members serve as representatives, not simply as individual participants.

Teacher representatives are elected by their colleagues. For example, all fourth grade teachers vote for the fourth grade representatives to the Council. Elections of council members are scheduled for this fall.

To identify your CTL representatives, check out the MCEA website at www.mceanea.org.

Political Action

Why should I get involved in politics?

Because educators are public employees, much of what we negotiate at the bargaining table can be taken away by the county council or state legislature. Virtually every decision made in education affecting you, i.e., salary, curriculum, class size, health benefits, certification requirements, books, supplies, retirement benefits, etc., are made by elected officials. To protect our interests, we need to elect those politicians who have a “sense of fair play” and an understanding of educators and education.

Isn't involving ourselves in politics “unprofessional?”

Every profession involves itself in politics to protect its interests. Doctors have the American Medical Association to lobby for their interests. Lawyers have the American Bar Association which serves a similar function. Businesses have Chamber of Commerce organizations which promote candidates who support their business interests. And, since the interests of many so-called “advocates” run counter to those of us in public education, it is imperative that we fully participate in that process for the sake of our students as well as our personal interests as educators.

Does recommending and supporting candidates for political office assure us of their support on all educational matters?

No. Politicians are generally not “puppets” of any organization or group. What it does ensure, however, is that the recommended candidate will be accessible to us and will give us every opportunity to present our side of the issues. Additionally, the recommendation process is designed to identify candidates who are already supportive of public education and educators. Thus, it is much more likely that they will vote in support of education as a matter of personal ideology. And, if they are not knowledgeable on a certain issue, we will have the accessibility to educate them before the vote.

As an MCEA member, what say do I have in the candidates who are recommended?

Recommendations are made by the MCEA Representative Assembly after consideration by the MCEA Political Action and Legislative Support (PALS) Committee and the MCEA Board of Directors. The Representative Assembly consists of over 300 educators who are elected at each school. These reps solicit input from their staff before making this decision.

Please Note: Dues money is not used to print or distribute the Apple ballot or for other campaign advertising. Our efforts rely on voluntary contributions from members. If you wish to do so, you can contribute through payroll deduction to MCEA's Fund for Children and Public Education. How much or whether you contribute is up to you. Your participation in no way affects your membership or status in the Association. Contributions are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Get Involved in Your Union

If you would like to get involved in any of the many programs MCEA is working on, check below. We will be in touch with you.

- Teaching and Learning.** Increasing the involvement of frontline educators in shaping the development and implementation of district policies and practices on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Professional Development.** Developing and implementing professional development opportunities to meet the needs of MCEA members; from workshops and CPD opportunities to graduate coursework and National Board candidate support.
- Politics.** Screening candidates and promoting member involvement in electoral campaigns of pro-education candidates; as well as advocacy with our elected representatives in the state capitol on pro-education legislation.
 - Poll coverage.** Assisting in advocating for pro-education candidates by helping distribute MCEA's "Apple Ballot" at your neighborhood polling place – or school – on Election Day.
- Equity.** Supporting community efforts aimed at closing the achievement gap among low-income and minority students, with a special emphasis on drop-out prevention; as well as promoting greater involvement by minority educators in the Association.
- Membership Services.** Organizing events, informational programs, and social activities for members; as well as developing group discount programs.

Our union is only as strong as its participating members.

Do your part. Get involved.

Your name

Your worksite

Phone (home or cell)

Personal email