

14-A UniServ Newsletter
452 W. Baldwin
989-356-4551
800-587-5545
dlarson@mea.org
hpoch@mea.org

Eastsider

Deb Larson, UniServ Director
Harriet Poch, UniServ Field Assistant

September 14, 2010

Where's Deb?

Sept. 16 - NMEA (BJ's Gaylord)

- 22 - Workforce Development Board (Elk Ridge – Atlanta)
Staff Meeting (Treetops – Gaylord)
- 23 - Staff Meeting (Treetops – Gaylord)
- 24 - Northern Zone Committee Meetings (Soo)

Oct. 5 - Mandatory Staff Meeting (Lansing)

- 7 - **BFCL – Dollars & Sense Academy (Lansing)**
- 12 - **14A Coordinating Council Meeting (MEA Office – Alpena)**
- 13 - Hillman EA Bargaining (Hillman)
Region 14 Council Meeting (BJ's – Gaylord)



Initiation--

This marks the fifth month since I started as the 14A UniServ Director. What an initiation period it has been! After the thrill of receiving the fact finder's recommendation, in favor of Alpena EA's position, in May, I've suffered with the Alpena EA's team through a contract imposition, eventually achieving a less harmful settlement through mediation. I traveled to the "end of the world", also known as Copper Harbor, for the Northern Zone staff meeting in June, and joined my sisters and mother in Dallas, Texas for five days in August for a mini family reunion. MEA started its staff reorganization process on August 3, and I read my daily emails with apprehension, fearing someone will decide that the Alpena office would be a great place to work. I feel the anticipation for the new school year through the increase in phone calls to the 14A office, and look forward to working side by side with each unit we represent to make this a successful academic year for everyone.

I'm still learning the line-up (personnel) in each district, though ten open contracts and thirty-one bargaining sessions and/or team meetings have made some of you more familiar than others. The good news: contracts were settled for Alpena EA, Mio EA, Mio ESP, and Posen ESP, and Atlanta ESP received a one year extension. The bad news: the standard line at the table is a \$1200 a month or less insurance premium cap and a pay freeze, both unacceptable. Creativity in bargaining is a must, and the Knowledge Has Value message continues to be the driving force. Continue to work to elect school board members that will listen to and appreciate what school employees contribute, and keep communicating with your school boards all year long, not just at election time or during contract negotiations. It's surprising what Board members don't know unless you tell them.



Dollars and Sense Academy – Are you mystified by your district's revenues and expenditures? Is a pay increase and retention of your district paid health benefits a reality? Learn how to read, report, and understand your district's finances and what they mean to your bargaining power at MEA's Dollars and Sense Academy. The academy will be held on October 7, November 9, and December 7 at MEA Headquarters in Lansing from 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Space is limited to 60 participants and preference will be given to local leaders who register with their UniServ Director.

I'm in; are you? Call Harriet at the Alpena office to register for this training.

Transparency Law Takes Effect--

Over the summer, a new Transparency Reporting symbol began appearing on school district website homepages throughout the state. This symbol links to district financial and personnel information

as a required in the State School Aid Act and outlined by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) in February, 2010.

The information required under the statute includes: Annual Operating Budget and Subsequent Revisions; Summary of Expenditures (in two pie charts); Current Bargaining Agreements; Employer Sponsored Health Care Plans (current coverage or a link to the provider's website); the District's Audit (or a link to the MDE Office of Audits website); Salary and Benefits of Superintendent and Employees whose salary exceeds \$100,000; District paid Association Dues (each association listed individually); and Lobbying Costs (listed similar to Association Dues, above).



If you feel your district is not complying with the statute, contact the 14A office about registering a complaint with the Michigan Department of Education.

And Then There Was...Money?!!!

The first surprise of the summer was when the Michigan Legislature actually passed the School Aid budget on July 1. Highlights: added \$11 per student for the 2009-2010 school year and reduced the \$165 proration to \$154, adding an additional \$11 per student for the upcoming year. Suddenly, Michigan school districts had \$22 more per student than they anticipated when adopting their 2010-2011 school year budgets.



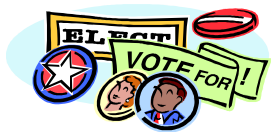
Then on August 10, the U.S. Congress passed the Education Jobs Fund Act. The Michigan Legislature will distribute the funds through the state foundation allowance, erasing the remaining \$154 proration from the 2010-2011 school year and adding \$17 to \$34 per student above the base foundation allowance. Schools at the lowest foundation level receive \$34 per student; no school will receive less than \$17 per student. With the money previously allocated through School Aid, schools will gain at least \$182 more per pupil than they received in the 2009-2010 school year.

The federal funds come with strings attached. They are to be used for people, on compensation and benefits to retain current employees, recall or rehire former employees, or hire new employees. The money may be used for "teachers and other employees who provide school-level educational and related services", including principals, support staff, and athletic coaches. The money may not be used for Superintendent's office, Board of Education, or support service expenses such as fiscal services or human resources.

Teacher Evaluation and Merit Pay

There is still not a clear understanding of how the new requirements, including annual evaluation of all teachers, are to occur. The Michigan constitution, which allows for merit pay for local governments, may actually exclude teachers according to MEA Legal: "...other than teachers under contract or tenure (Section 6)."

What is clear is that teacher evaluation and merit pay are issues which must be bargained. The best solution at this stage is to create a teacher evaluation/merit pay committee, composed of an equal number of Association and Board representatives, to study these issues until more information becomes available. Until your current contract expires, a letter of agreement is written, or the committee completes its review of the process, your district should use your current evaluation language to perform the annual evaluation for each teacher.



Screening and Recommendations – Vote November 2!

The 14A Coordinating Council convened a Screening and Recommendation Committee for the 106th House and 36th Senate seats on June 25. The committee recommended Casey Viegelahn for the 106th and Andy Neumann for the 36th seat. There were also 14A representatives at the Screening and Recommendation meeting on June 14 for the U.S. House District 1 seat where Gary McDowell was recommended. The recommendations from the Statewide Screening and Recommendation Committee meeting on August 31 have also been released and will be distributed to Coordinating Council representatives at our September 14 meeting. MEA should be sending cards with the recommended candidates listed to your homes prior to the November 2 election as well. **We have Viegelahn and Neumann signs and literature available at the 14A office. We encourage members to stop by and pick them up!**