

LEA VIEW

LAPEER TEACHERS WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE LAPEER SCHOOLS BETTER!

WELCOME BACK!

The Executive Council of the Lapeer Education Association would like to welcome everyone back to what we know will be an exciting and successful year. There have been many changes in staffing at all of our buildings, so it is especially important to help out colleagues new to our buildings this year. LEA President Kristen Wilcox recently sent an email August 25th referencing our salary schedule and MESSA healthcare benefits as well as a copy of our 2012-2015 Master Agreement. Building elections for LEA representatives will be held within the next week. If you would like to become more involved with the LEA, please contact any of your Executive Board members. We would be happy to answer any questions.

President Kristen Wilcox

Vice-President Duanne Cook

Secretary Rejean Wolski

Treasurer Dave Chaffin

MEA/NEA Reps – Patrick Lothrop and Kathy Hayes

Executive Board (K-5) – Marie Tripp and Michele Nowak

Executive Board (6-12) – Russ Reitz and Nancy Roberts

Chief Negotiator Sally Wolfer

Negotiating Team (K-5) – Aneta Lawrence and Shannon Nichols

Negotiating Team (6-12) – Cory Gutenschwager and Russ Reitz

Internal Review Board (K-5) – Greg Piontkowski and Marie Tripp

Internal Review Board (6-12) – Aaron Romoslawski and Patrick Lothrop



Lapeer Education Association
Supporting the Teaching Professionals
of Lapeer Community Schools



"The Mission of the MEA/LEA is to ensure that the education of our students and the working environments of our members are of the highest quality"

FALL 2014 EDITION

In this issue:

Welcome Back	1
MESSA	1
MEA not Mackinac	2



Changes to our insurance brought a new option:

The MESSA ABC Plan. Unfortunately, the quick response necessary to change for the open enrollment

period that went into effect July 1 had many members uncertain about which choice was best. The next open enrollment is scheduled for November. Changes will be effective January 2015.

Our MESSA representative will be available in September and October (dates and times TBD) to answer questions about our insurance options. If you have not yet had the chance to check into the ABCs program, a plan comparison tool is available on the MESSA website:

www.messa.org/messaabcs



We are on the Web! Check
our updated site
lea.lapeer.org

Find us on Facebook 

follow us on
twitter  @LapeerEA

MEA Mission statement: "The mission of the MEA is to ensure that the education of our students and the working environments of our members are of the highest quality."

Benefits of Membership:

- Employment liability insurance for both civil and criminal cases, with \$1million coverage for civil damages
- NEA Life Term Insurance
- Legal services for: unemployment cases, certification issues, retirement issues, discrimination cases
- Access to MEA—Financial Services programs
- Advice on employment-related statutory rights.
- Free online professional development
- MEA discounts on daily items
- Representation on matters pertaining to our agreement
- Benefits found in our collective bargaining agreement including:
 - Limits to pupil ratios
 - Limits to preps
 - Paid snow days
 - MESSA insurance
 - Retirement Allowance
 - Longevity Allowance

Teachers Lose Our "Window of Opportunity" ?!?

A recent editorial in the Lapeer County Press (8/17/14) explained that it is the Mackinac Center and not the MEA who teachers need to contact to opt out of paying union dues. The editorial suggested that teachers receive "freedom" only once per year (in August) when we can choose whether or not to continue our association with the Michigan Education Association.

In a MEA press release, President Steve Cook explained that, just like in many other organizations, membership with the MEA comes with a dues obligation. This obligation is an on-going yearly commitment which renews in August. This process is governed by the bylaws of the Association and should explain why August is the month for opting out. Membership renewal of dues and subscriptions is done for many organizations on a yearly basis; it is not unusual for organizations to ask members to reaffirm their commitment during a specific month of the year.

The editorial continued to focus on the financial aspects of membership before turning to politics as a reason for teachers to leave the union. Unfortunately, the editorial falsely compared political parties and ideologies with a reference to an NEA survey that found many members identifying themselves as "conservative" while the organization supports "Democrats." As educators, we should realize this is not a logical argument: teachers can be liberal Republicans or conservative Democrats or anywhere in between. The "liberal" and "conservative" labels are not exclusive to party platforms.

The points raised in the piece only grew weaker with statistics even an English teacher could pick apart. For example, if almost a third of one group surveyed reports one finding, doesn't that mean that more than two-thirds disagree with the finding? So, the results of the 2013 Education Next survey found that more than two-thirds of public school teachers believe that unions DO NOT have a negative effect on schools.

Further, high-performing teachers are hindered by politicians that have put teacher evaluations before student academic growth. The MEA is an organization focused on treating teachers as professionals with unique strengths in a unique field. They offer professional development opportunities for educators at every career level – from the first-year teacher, to the experienced, to the retired.

The question we as educators need to ask ourselves – who is the Mackinac Center and why are they worried about my MEA dues? The Mackinac Center for Public Policy uses the term "free market" to describe themselves as they focus on "economic policy." They assist politicians and business people by promoting a free market perspective. This brings us to the business of education. Education is, after all, the last non-profit that business people would love to grasp onto in order to turn a profit. Tear apart the organization that protects the educators- it won't take long for the process of education to lose out to the profits of education.

Mackinac Center is Not Your Friend!

By now, many of you have may have received an email from an individual named Peter Boyd, who is affiliated with the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. The email provides information about how you can drop your membership in the union. This email went out to school employees statewide. I have talked with other local presidents whose members received the same email. Let me remind you of who the Mackinac Center really is. Over the past four years, since Snyder has been our Governor, they have been the group that has been successful in getting several pieces of legislation passed that have directly attacked teachers. These include:

1. 80/20 or hard cap on health insurance
2. Taking away the seniority rights of members when it comes to staffing decisions.
3. They were successful in making sure that if we settle a contract after a school year starts, there is no retroactive bargaining for pay and insurance.

And the list of their attacks on school employees goes on. The main message here is that the **Mackinac Center is Not Your Friend!!** The Mackinac Center's main purpose is to make sure there is no more MEA, NEA or any local association.

Now more than ever, it is important for us to stay united as a union to win in November! Together as a group, we are stronger and we can fight these attacks and be successful.

Frank Burger
Biology and Physical Science Teacher
Carman-Ainsworth High School
CAEA President