

Pension Victory!

With your support of MST A's efforts, the state legislature passed legislation to increase pensions for Maryland's educators and state employees! This major victory provides \$120 million a year to raise retirement income for public school teachers and ESPs.

The current multiplier goes from 1.4% to 1.8% of an employee's average final salary after retirement, retroactive to 1998. The employee contribution will increase from 2% to 5% (phased in over the next three years).

MST A President Pat Foerster said, "We are ecstatic that the legislators have responded to our member's request for a better pension in Maryland." The pension enhancement will be effective July 2006, providing a boost for the many educators who are expected to retire this year.

"This will go a long way in helping us to attract new educators," she said. The bill means larger increases for those beginning or in the middle of their careers, since they will be in the improved system longer.

In a bipartisan effort, the legislators reached agreement after months of phone calls, letters, e-mails, and visits from educators pushing for a better pension. Learn more at www.mstanea.org.

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Survey Points to Success

The HCEA Human and Civil Rights Committee has identified nine questions on the HCEA 2006 Job Satisfaction Survey which best reflect positive school climate. They address school success, morale, communication, trust, fear of repercussions, working conditions, support for the negotiated agreement, and student discipline.

Schools with 45% or more response rate and the most positive responses on these school climate measures are:

Lisbon ES, Bellows Spring ES, Thunder Hill ES, Hollifield Station ES, Ilchester ES, Burleigh Manor MS, River Hill HS, West Friendship ES, Marriott's Ridge HS, Fulton ES, Waverly ES, Murray Hill MS, Worthington ES, Wilde Lake MS, Mayfield Woods MS, Oakland Mills HS, Stevens Forest ES, Guilford ES, Rockburn ES and Clemens Crossing ES.

Schools with very positive responses but less than a 45% response rate (in abc order) are: Atholton HS, Centennial Lane ES, Centennial HS, Clarksville MS, Dunloggin MS, Elkridge ES, Elkridge Landing MS, Gorman Crossing ES, Harper's Choice MS, Hammond ES and Wilde Lake HS. *(More on page 4)*

Broad Welcome - Superintendent Sydney Cousin (center) joined HCEA officers and Board members, County Councilman Ken Ulmann and School Board Member Diane Mikulis (at right) in welcoming the NEA president to Howard County.

Reg Weaver Visits HCEA



Push for Pensions - In his remarks to the HCEA Rep Council, NEA President Reg Weaver emphasized the need to hold legislators accountable in the fight to improve pensions for Maryland educators.



Membership - Building Reps, School Board candidate Frank Aquino and MST A President Pat Foerster heard Reg stress the importance of strong membership in winning Association goals.

More pictures at www.hceanea.org



The View from Here

by Ann De Lacy,
HCEA
President

“Our major focus at this time is climate.”

Your responses on HCEA’s 2006 Job Satisfaction Survey are making a difference! We distributed surveys to all our members and non-members. 3, 289 were returned. This is a 50% increase over last year’s returns. Data were collected, entered, disaggregated, printed, analyzed, and disseminated with HCEA members’ dues money. Superintendent Dr. Cousin was the only non-member to receive survey results in February. Principals received courtesy copies in March. I will be presenting the general results to the School Board at the end of April.

The school climate change that results from our collecting and sharing this data will benefit the entire school community. Staff at schools with exceptionally low morale and trust often ‘vote with their feet’ and transfer. We made data available early so that members could use it in that process. Remember: a change in leadership can make a significant difference in building climate, and administrator assignments are made in the spring. The deadline for voluntary transfer request withdrawals (which must be in writing) is June 1, 2006.

We have read the comments you took the time to share on the surveys and appreciate your honesty. We will continue to address pay and a reduction in workload. (Those are best handled in contract negotiations, which occur next year.) Our major focus at this time is climate. HCEA staff is here to help members deal with individual problems, but we have to work as a group to address school-wide problems. That is one of our top priorities for the rest of the school year. Ask you colleagues to join HCEA in this effort.



Read Across America at Phelps Luck ES

“The Nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. ...If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative. ... If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.”

“Improving Relationships Within the School House,” Roland S. Barth, founding director of the Principals’ Center at Harvard University, Education Leadership, March 2006, vol. 63, no.6.

Read to Scoot – Jessica Zubroff’s Bonnie Branch MS student Michael Ross won a Razor scooter in this year’s Read to Scoot contest in conjunction with Read Across America activities. President Ann De Lacy presented the gift at a party hosted by MST.A.

Harassment Responses Raise Concern

Are HCPSS staff being harassed by colleagues, supervisors and parents? In a full one third of our schools, at least half of the staff reporting on the HCEA Job Satisfaction survey said they had experienced or witnessed harassment by adults. In all but two schools, at least a quarter of staff has been affected.

The HCEA Human and Civil Rights Committee asked to have a question on harassment included in this year's Job Satisfaction Survey. Based on the troubling results, the committee is planning more research on the issue. The committee hopes that more information will help HCEA work with school system leaders to address the problem.



Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to improve our pensions!

Stay informed about the latest news affecting you and your job. Sign up for MSTA's e-mail newsletter FrontLine on the MSTA web site. Do it now and you'll be entered to win a Nikon Coolpix 5.1-megapixel digital camera!



Membership Activity - Staff from schools in the western part of the county enjoyed an after-school get-together in March sponsored by the HCEA Membership Committee.



ESP Professional Development



ParaPro Professional Development - With HCPSS support, HCEA staff Cheryl McLeod prepped Instructional Assistants for the ParaPro Assessment this winter. Members of the HCEA Instructional and Professional Development Committee are meeting regularly with HCPSS administration to plan broader training for IAs in 2006-2007.



Arbitration Provides a Neutral Third Party

There are at least two sides to every story. HCEA is here to advocate for your side. While advocating, we use logic, past practice and your rights under the negotiated agreement. However, there are times that an acceptable solution cannot be reached. Fortunately our contract states that the conflict may proceed to a neutral third party to arbitrate. This is important because the arbitrator can balance any power issues between the parties, which helps create a fairer view of the process, a binding decision and can also help maintain a positive relationship between everyone involved.

Whether or not you ever file a grievance, the presence of the contract and the rights that have been agreed to by both parties can help maintain clear and equitable working conditions for you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact HCEA so we can attempt to settle them fairly and collaboratively.

Dates to Remember:

Call HCEA for information.

HCEA GR Committee Interviews for County and State Legislator Candidates

April 13 – 26

National Administrative Professionals Week

April 24 – April 28

School Psychology Week

April 30 – May 6

Membership Committee "Thank You" Pizzas in Schools

Weeks of May 1 – 5
and May 15 – 19

School Food and Nutrition Service Personnel Week

May 1 – May 5

Teacher Appreciation Week

May 8 – May 12

Reps Vote on County, State Recommendations

May 9

School Health Services Day

May 10

HCEA GR Committee Interviews for School Board Candidates

May 15 – 18

Reps Vote on School Board Recommendations

June 9

New This Fall HCEA Crab Feast

October 6

Contact HCEA about committee meetings and training opportunities.

Membership News

Get Involved

The HCEA Instruction and Professional Development Committee is forming several sub-committees. If you would like to advocate for more mentoring of newly hired teachers or to address problems in special education, call HCEA.

Pre-Retirees Can Save \$100

HCEA members 49 years or older can enroll in NEA Pre-Retired Lifetime Membership for \$100. This rate will increase to \$200 on September 1, 2006. Members who opt to take advantage of this rate must, at the same time, enroll in MSTA Pre-Retired Lifetime Membership for \$245. MSTA/NEA-Retired offers special programs with excellent benefits and opportunities to retired educators. See the HCEA web site for details.

\$25 Stipend for Spring Enrollment

HCEA members who sign up a colleague who's never been an NEA member before will receive a \$25 stipend. The new member has the advantage of HCEA membership, NEA liability insurance and member benefits and MSTA Access card discounts – and pays no dues until September 2006. Sign up a friend now!



***NBC Teachers** - Almost a hundred teachers learned about National Board Certification at meetings sponsored by HCEA and HCPSS in January, February and March. HCEA is working to provide more support to NBC candidates.*

Survey Points to Problem Schools

HCEA met with the Superintendent and his cabinet in March to raise concerns about 20 schools identified as having school climate problems. HCEA highlighted six sites where 70-90% of the staff report that morale is a serious problem. HCEA also noted that there are numerous schools where at least one third to half of staff reported low morale.

“These issues directly affect student learning,” said HCEA President Ann De Lacy. “We expect the superintendent to respond.”

In May, Ann will meet with representatives from identified schools to develop effective strategies to combat these problems. Ann will present Part One of a two-part report on the survey to the Board of Education on Thursday, April 27th, where she will first highlight schools with a positive work environment. Part Two, addressing problem schools, will be given in June. Members are invited to attend both meetings to show support.



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