



Solidarity!

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School Closures? MTI Advocating for Continued Employee Pay Should Schools Be Closed

On March 11, MTI submitted a request to the District to seek **modification of the MMSD Employee Handbook effective immediately to ensure that no MMSD employee loses compensation should schools be closed for any reason.** This is an issue MTI has been pursuing for some time, but the urgency has been escalated with the current risks associated with Coronavirus. Last school year, MMSD experienced multiple school days closed due to weather and this year we see a possibility for more extensive school closures due to Coronavirus. This has made the issue of guaranteeing continued compensation for school staff all the more pressing. Any loss of pay during school closures will encourage employee exodus and complicate an already acute staffing crisis in the District. MMSD has formed a work group to work on responding to Coronavirus. MTI leadership has now been invited to join the group. It is our hope and expectation that the District will be prepared to take whatever prudent action is suggested by public health officials to mitigate the impact of the virus on our students, staff, and community.

MTI Continuing to Advocate on Health Insurance Considerations

As previously advised, in order to address a shortfall in revenue, the Board of Education is building a budget for 2020-21 that includes no increases for employee benefits. In order to meet that budget goal, the District is considering numerous changes to employee health insurance plans. Over the past month, MTI leadership has been researching the various changes being considered by MMSD, collecting employee feedback, and sharing that feedback with District administration and the BOE (who will ultimately make the decision). The following feedback was shared by MTI in advance of the BOE Operations Work Group meeting held on **Monday, March 9:**

- **MTI strongly opposes forcing future MMSD retirees off of MMSD group insurance coverage at retirement and onto the unproven Local Annuitant Health Plan (LAHP)** option administered by the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF). Doing so would expose future retirees to potentially significant risks (escalating premiums and/or reduction in benefits). The LAHP has only been around in its current configuration since 2018 and has fewer than 250 participants across the state. This is an unproven insurance option, with low participation and a risk pool, i.e. higher-cost retirees, designed to drive premium increases and/or benefit reductions.
- **MTI strongly opposes dropping GHC in exchange for Quartz** and forcing over 8,000 employees and family members to switch health plans and primary care physicians. GHC has a forty (40) year relationship with MMSD and District employees, and forcing so many employees to change health plans and primary care physicians would create significant stress and disruption.
- **MTI recommends that if the District needs to increase employee premium contributions or make other, more minor, plan design changes to address the budget shortfalls, the District needs to provide sufficient wage and salary increases to minimize the financial impact on MMSD employees.** Any benefit savings should be reinvested

in employee compensation. The District will not be able to address its employee recruitment and retention issues by continuing to shift benefit costs to employees.

MTI arrived at this position after researching all options being considered, holding multiple informational meetings with MTI's elected leadership, communicating the options to thousands of MTI members, and receiving feedback from MTI members and elected leaders.

At its March 9 Board meeting, BOE members appeared to acknowledge the concerns expressed by MTI and directed District administration away from: 1) forcing future retirees into the LAHP; 2) dropping GHC in exchange for Quartz and disrupting the medical care received by thousands of employees. While that was tentative good news regarding MTI's advocacy, we still have much work to do before health insurance decisions are finalized at the March 23 regular BOE meeting.

In the **short term**, not only do we need to continue to advocate that the above considerations are truly "off the table," we also need to advocate that any changes in plan design and/or increases in employee premium contributions **are minimized and/or offset by wage and salary increases.** The District will not be able to address its employee recruitment and retention issues by continuing to shift benefit costs to employees.

In the **long term**, we need to continue to advocate that MMSD cannot address its employee recruitment and retention issues by continuing to consider shifting benefit costs onto employees. We need District leadership (starting with the new superintendent arriving this spring) that will advocate for the financial resources that our students and staff deserve. The MMSD referenda being considered for November, 2020 will be critical first steps in securing those resources.

MTI Faculty Reps/ESEA Building Reps Organizing For Educators

Unions support members by advocating for “bread and butter” issues like wages, benefits, and working conditions. These are important to all of us, but we know that other issues also significantly impact our work and our satisfaction with our jobs. Faculty/Building Reps help organize members around issues by listening and looking for areas where members see a need for change. They connect individuals with others and with existing work being done by MTI. This can result in advocacy on Handbook issues, committee work, and organizing with members of the community and other organizations. MTI members are proud of what we’ve accomplished as a Union and hopeful for the future. Bringing educators together around issues that are widely and deeply felt involves communication and organizing skills. If you think that you would be interested in learning more about how you can get involved in this work, contact one of the Representatives at your work location/school, President Andy Waity awaity@madisonteachers.org or ESEA-MTI President Judy Ferwerda: hkyhouse@tds.net.

MTI-CENTRS Saturdays for Racial Justice Series— The Final Three

MTI-CENTRS is partnering with NEA's Human and Civil Rights Department and Wicht Consulting Teaching Tolerance group to offer a series of Saturday racial justice-focused sessions. Our next session is **March 21 -Facilitating Critical Conversations**. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Future Saturday topics include: **April 18 - Social Justice Teaching 101** (at the Goodman Center) and **May 16 - Racial Equity Tools and Activism**. These sessions, led by national trainers, are **free to members**. Professional advancement credit is available. MTI Members attending 3 or more qualify for a \$150 stipend. MTI-CENTRS is an NEA GPS-funded grant. Questions? Contact Kerry Motoviloff at: kmotoviloff@madisonteachers.org.
Signup at: <http://www.madisonteachers.org/mti-centrs/>.

Final Weeks to Apply for MTI CENTRS Supported Spring Book Study!

MTI CENTRS is now accepting applications for SPRING site-based supported book study groups using **The Little Books for Restorative Justice and Racial Healing**. Applications will close before spring break on March 27. If you have a group of six participants at your site consider applying for grant support funds. Questions? Contact Kerry Motoviloff at: kmotoviloff@madisonteachers.org.
Signup at: <http://www.madisonteachers.org/mti-centrs/>

Wear Your MTI Red

Wear your MTI red at school and in the community to make a positive statement about public education and educators. Show **SOLIDARITY!** Wear **MTI RED** on **MONDAYS** and **MTI lanyards** every day!

MTI Cares Bowl-A-thon

Sunday, April 19
12:00 noon—3:00 p.m.
Village Lanes—Monona
(208 Owen Road)
Sign up on the MTI website



MTI Membership Opportunities

The following meetings, seminars, and workshops are available to all MTI members.

MTI & WEA Member Benefits: Financial Services for all MTI Members

MTI and WEA Member Benefits will be providing more opportunities to enhance the financial well-being of all *MTI members and non-members*. Check the MTI website (www.madisonteachers.org) to sign-up for seminars.

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In addition, *for members only*, **Steve Pike** (retired teacher and current WEA Member Benefits Consultant) is available for a **free 60-minute financial consultation**. This is ideal if you are just getting started, have specific questions, or would like a quick check-in. It's a convenient way to meet with someone face-to-face to get some general help or guidance. Consultations are held at MTI Headquarters.

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MTI National Board Certification Training Workshops for Teachers. MTI members pursuing National Board Certification are invited to participate in monthly NBC support workshops. The next session is **April 15**, at 5:30 p.m., at MTI.

MTI members in need of assistance: See your MTI Faculty Representative or contact MTI staff (608-257-0491 or mti@madisonteachers.org) should you have a question or need assistance with **any work-related matter**.

Calendar of Events

MTI Cabinet on Personnel

March 16, 4:30 p.m., MTI

MTI Faculty Representative Council

March 17, 4:45 p.m., MTI

ESEA-MTI General Membership

Note: this meeting is canceled

MTI/MMSD Handbook Planning Time

March 18, 4:30 p.m., MTI

MTI/MMSD Handbook - ESEA

March 19, 4:00 p.m., MTI

MTI Equity/Diversity Committee

March 19, 4:30 p.m., MTI

Staff Only Day—School Closed

March 20

Spring Break March 30 - April 3

Our Union Makes Us Strong!

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MTI's web page - www.madisonteachers.org

MTI's email - MTI@madisonteachers.org