



821 Williamson Street * Madison, Wisconsin 53703-4503 * Phone (608) 257-0491 * Fax (608) 257-1168

Solidarity!

Race to the Top

Given the potential negative impact on teachers by the conditions for a school district to receive federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds, the MTI Board of Directors has not authorized the Union to sign-off on the Madison Metropolitan School District's expression of interest in applying for funding. Among MTI's concerns are limitations on teacher transfer, the ability of the government to force transfer of individuals or an entire school's staff, and the imposition of merit pay. Both MTI Executive Director John Matthews and Superintendent Daniel Nerad have said that they are not aware of any merit pay scheme that has been successful, and Matthews says that merit pay has a chilling effect on necessary collaboration among teachers.

While federal guidelines request a Union to endorse a school district's petition for RTTT funding, such an endorsement is not required for a petition to be granted.

On January 4, the Union Executive Directors from Madison, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Racine, Kenosha and Beloit met with State Superintendent Tony Evers and his Deputy, Mike Thompson, about the State's plans to apply for RTTT funding. **The conclusion of the Union staff, following that meeting, was that there were too many questions for which there were no answers or inadequate answers.** The lack of information appears to be the result of DPI staff being left in the dark by the Governor's staff.

MTI Executive Director **John Matthews** summarized his concerns by stating that there are simply too many negatives to enable MTI's support, at this time. He added that while it sounds like a substantial amount of money, **it is about 1% additional funds and it is only available for a year or so, so any programs begun with the funds cannot be continued for future years.** This is the case, he said, because of the State's revenue controls on school boards. Boards cannot raise the necessary funds from taxation to continue programs begun with RTTT funds. Thus, the only option to continue the programs would be to cut other programs.

In this regard, UW Dean of Education **Julie Underwood** recently said, *"In recent years, however, the real struggle in Wisconsin has been in maintaining the quality public school system created by previous generations. Our public schools operate under a financial system that chokes reform and chips away at quality."*

Professor Underwood further stated, as regards RTTT, that: *"First, if Wisconsin is successful in its bid - and some reports have us on the list of least likely states to succeed - we would only be eligible for a portion of these funds. Moreover, because these are one-time dollars, they would not be enough to fill the large gap between what is needed to maintain our schools and what is provided by the state....Also, just as Race to the Top is not a silver bullet for financial support, neither is it educational reform. True educational reform is comprehensive and has a long-term impact on the quality of education, requiring sustained effort and years of work."*

Madison Board of Education Votes to Support WASB Contract Rollbacks; Seeks to Destroy Health Insurance Benefits

At the January 11 Madison Board of Education meeting, the **Board voted unanimously to support certain Wisconsin Association of School Boards' (WASB) resolutions** scheduled to be taken up at its annual meeting. Among the gems the Board is supporting is a *re-institution of QEO-like bargaining, a requirement for all employees to contribute a percentage of their earnings toward WRS investments, and a requirement that all employees contribute a legislatively defined portion of their health insurance premium costs.*

Despite the offensive contract rollbacks listed above, there is **one which trumps all.** The Board also voted unanimously to support the following resolution: *"make the selection of health insurance providers a prohibited subject of bargaining and grant school boards the unilateral authority to determine the health insurance provider(s) for their employees."* **MTI has fought for many years, including prevailing before the Supreme Court to maintain the health benefits MTI members enjoy.** The Supreme Court found that the carrier of health insurance is a mandatory subject of bargaining because of its impact on one's wages.

No Peer Review/Evaluation

On occasion, some principals surreptitiously ask favored staff members to critique or "review" the work of their colleagues. **This amounts to nothing more than asking one worker to "rat" on another.** It is a bad practice for a worker to comment on the performance of another worker. It poisons the entire notion of collegiality and workers' solidarity, and it violates the terms and conditions of the MTI/MMSD Collective Bargaining Agreement. **Superintendent Nerad observed earlier this month that peer review is forbidden by the Contract.**

Moreover, under Wisconsin law, when one worker evaluates or "effectively recommends" as regards hiring, firing or evaluation, they lose their eligibility to remain in a bargaining unit. Peer review/evaluation also has a chilling effect on all staff who work together. Principals who ask staff members to evaluate their fellow workers are not asking out of a general sense of curiosity or the well-being of any employee; they are looking to build a case against somebody. If one is approached by their principal to engage in this kind of "dirty work", just say no.



MTI Endorses the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) Campaign "Pennies for Kids"

MTI has a long history of advocacy for school funding reform. The Union has worked for many years with the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES). **Executive Director John Matthews** and Assistant Directors **Doug Keillor** and **Ken Volante** have participated in WAES meetings around the State for more than a decade, **in attempt to bring about progressive changes in school funding legislation.**

WAES' new campaign is an increase in the sales tax of 1%. The new campaign arose as an emergency response to the drastic cuts resulting from the current state budget. **Madison schools were particularly hard hit with a 15% cut in state aid.** This outrageous cut came on the heels of a decade and a half of continued revenue limits imposed by the State, which continue to starve our public schools.

Wisconsin has a relatively low sales tax in comparison to regional rates. Illinois' rate is 6.25% (plus all those tolls!), Iowa is 6%, Minnesota is 6.875% and Michigan is 6.0%. Wisconsin's sales tax rate is 5%, with an additional .5% that can be added by Dane county. The WAES proposal of an additional one cent on the dollar would serve to generate \$800-\$900 million in additional revenue limits for schools. While advocacy for an increase of sales tax is generally avoided by progressive groups because of its "regressive" (impacts lower and middle income families harder than higher income) the WAES proposal has measures in place to increase monies to the Homestead Tax credit which benefits low income home owners and renters. The proposal also includes closing loopholes (no sales tax) on some professional services including advertising, public relations, salons, etc.

The situation in school funding is dire but the WAES proposal comes at just the right time to stabilize funding for our public schools. For more information on the campaign watch for updates in **MTI Solidarity!** or contact Ken Volante (volantek@madisonteachers.org) at MTI Headquarters.

Important February Deadlines:

Many dates of importance occur in February. **Salary Advancement Credit for passage over a salary barrier or for salary track advancement, effective with the beginning of the second semester, are due in the office of Human Resources by 5:00 p.m., February 1.**

Sabbatical Leave applications for either the first semester of the 2010-11 school year or for the entire school year are due in the MTI Office by 5:00 p.m., **February 1.**

Teacher Retirement and Teacher Emeritus Retirement Program enrollment applications are due in the office of Human Resources by 5:00 p.m., **February 15.**

Teacher Contract Draft on MTI's Webpage

A draft of the 2009-11 MTI/MMSD Teacher Collective Bargaining Agreement is now on MTI's webpage (www.madisonteachers.org). The draft is now being proofed before it is published.

Enjoy an Outing to Wollersheim Winery



MTI's Social Events Committee has scheduled a trip to the Prairie du Sac area to **Wollersheim Winery for Sunday, February 7.** The cost per person of \$20.18 (payable to MTI) will cover transportation, admission and refreshments during the tour. Van Galder/Coach USA will supply transportation. The bus will depart from the Madison Labor Temple (1602 S. Park Street) by 12:45 p.m. and return about 4:00 p.m. Space is limited to the first 50 people who reserve by emailing or calling MTI (www.MTI@madisonteachers.org or 257-0491). The reservation deadline is January 21, at 4:00 p.m.

Note: No one under the age of 21 can participate in the wine tasting.

Harassment Inservices

Among the few MTI/MMSD mutually agreed upon obligatory inservices in which all District employees must participate is a one hour inservice on harassment. One need only attend the inservice once. For those who have not yet attended the course, it will be offered during the 2009-10 school year on the following dates from 4:15-5:15 p.m.

February 9	La Follette High School, C17
March 11	Memorial High School, Auditorium
April 26	La Follette High School, C17

Calendar of Events

- **Tuesday, January 19, 4:15 p.m., MTI**
MTI VOTERS Political Action Committee
- **Tuesday, January 26, 3:30 p.m., Doyle, Rm 129**
USO-MTI Negotiations
- **Tuesday, February 2, 4:15 p.m., Harmony Grill**
MTI Special Education Sub-Committee

Our Union Makes Us Strong!

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MTI's web page - www.madisonteachers.org
MTI's email - MTI@madisonteachers.org