



2017 Employee Handbook Update #2

October 11, 2017

Representatives from MTI and the MMSD continue to meet as part of the annual **Employee Handbook Review/Revision** process outlined in Section 18 of the Handbook. Various work groups have been designated, comprised of MMSD and MTI appointed representatives, with a goal of advancing recommended revisions for consideration by the joint Handbook Review Committee by the end of October, 2017. The consensus recommendations of the Handbook Review Committee will then be shared with the Superintendent to forward to the Board of Education for consideration.

The **Substitute Teacher** work group met on September 25 to discuss ways to attract, retain, and reward substitute teachers. Included in their recommendations will be a significant increase in the long-term substitute pay rate and improvements in the calculation method to determine health insurance eligibility. There was also an agreement to provide substitute specific professional development during the school year on teacher All-Staff Days and a working agreement to continue meeting with USO-MTI leadership around issues impacting substitute teachers. This group will continue to explore other tangible ways to address the substitute teacher shortage.

The **EA Salary Schedule** work group met on October 4 to explore improvements to the EA/SEA salary schedule made necessary due to the achievement of a \$15 per hour entry wage. Those discussions included a consideration for modifying the EA/SEA wage schedule to provide one pay rate for both EA and SEA work hours (currently paid at two separate rates). This is seen as a major improvement and would provide a big pay bump particularly for EA hours. This school year, a number of SEAs witnessed some of their hours being reclassified to “Regular EA” hours at a lower pay rate even with no substantive change in assignment. Changing to one uniform pay rate for all EA/SEA hours would help address those concerns. The work group is also looking at modifications to the EA/SEA wage schedule in order to provide for annual pay increases for all steps on the EA/SEA wage schedules (beyond the base wage increase) as a result of the compression caused by the \$15 starting wage. The MMSD is recommending that any wage improvements become effective with the 2018-19 school year and MTI is advocating that wage increases be effective in the current school year, as soon as possible.

The **Teacher Compensation** work group is currently scheduling a meeting for later this month to review potential changes to the teacher salary schedule. A Teacher Compensation work group met during the 2016-17 school year, but little substantive process was made on these issues after the District instead focused on health insurance changes and the increase in the teacher base salary. Now that the \$41,096 base salary has been established, the Teacher Compensation work group will reconvene to explore other possible modifications to the teacher salary schedule to benefit all teachers.

MTI Executive Director Doug Keillor met with Superintendent Cheatham and HR staff this week to review the District’s preliminary ideas for teacher salary schedule changes in advance of the meeting of the Teacher Compensation work group later this month. The work we did last year on the MMSD referendum and the increased hiring rate provides us a real opportunity to achieve significant, long overdue, improvements in teacher compensation.

The **Teacher Work Day** work group met on **August 22** with the MTI appointees suggesting revisions to define sufficient planning time, especially for middle and high school teachers with no explicit planning time referenced in the Handbook. The MTI appointees also suggested revisions to the staff only day schedules to limit PD on such days and provide time for the professional planning and preparation needs of educators. The MTI appointees are also advocating to ensure that School Based Leadership Teams (SBLTs) are provided the legitimate voice that the Employee Handbook states they are supposed to have in designing the structure and content of staff only days. Numerous SBLT participants report that they are provided little input into such activities with the principal and/or Central Office mandating activities on such days.

The **School Calendar** work group met last spring and the MTI appointees proposed a suggested calendar for 2018-19 which included a return to a ten (10) day winter break. This Work Group was unable to continue to meet during the summer due to the unavailability of essential District staff. The work group is now working to schedule a meeting in the next couple of weeks. Included in calendar discussions are the placement of parent teacher conferences, the length of break periods, the number of staff only days, and the last day of school. The school calendar is restricted by the 192-day contract year, the timing of graduation and summer school, and the legislative requirement that school commence after September 1.

The **Special Education** work group met to discuss planning time needs, as well as compensation for Section 504 plans. Future meetings are being scheduled.

The **Benefits** work group met during the 2017-18 school year and recommended various changes for consideration by the Handbook Review Committee including, among other things:

1. The timing of benefit eligibility change (when coverage starts and ends) to have eligibility commence sooner for new hires; be extended by a month for 9 and 10-month ESEA-MTI represented retiring employees; and end a month earlier for employees who voluntarily resign.
2. Provide a voluntary short-term disability insurance plan for ESEA-MTI represented employees and other non-teaching staff (teachers have access to the sick leave bank which serves as a short-term disability plan). The plan would be 100% employee paid (i.e. the employer would pay none of the premium).
3. Create consistency of benefit offerings between employee groups, if possible (e.g. paid snow days for all staff).

Next Steps

The work groups described above will continue to meet to fine-tune their recommended changes. The recommendations of the various work groups will then be forwarded to the MTI-MMSD Employee Handbook Review Committee for consideration and recommendation. Revisions recommended by the Review Committee will then be forwarded to the Superintendent to advance to the Board of Education. The Board of Education has final authority over the recommended changes to the Employee Handbook.

All MTI members will continue to be provided updates as these discussions continue.