



Messenger

A newsletter published for the education employees of the Howard-Suamico School District

Volume 10, Number 1

Message from the President *by Jason Berna, HSEA President*

August 25, 2009

Howard-Suamico
Education Association

Jason Berna
President

Dave Wickert
Vice President

Bev Schacht
Treasurer

Candice Perz
Secretary

Calendar of Events

August 31

Board of Education meeting
6 p.m., BP Forum Room

September 10

Executive Board meeting
4 p.m., UNE office

September 14

Board of Education meeting
6 p.m., BP Forum Room

October 8

General Assembly meeting
4 p.m., Townline

Who else besides us crazy old teachers could get excited about going back to work again? I hope that you have enjoyed your “summer vacation” as others like to call it. I know that many of you have been working on continuing your education, teaching summer school classes, volunteering for the countless picnics, brat sales/fundraisers, or other countless volunteer organizations. Now it is time to get back into the swing of “normalcy.” So **Welcome Back!**

For some of you this is your first year and for others you have done a great service for our society spending 30+ years educating America’s youth. For those of you that are new to the Howard-Suamico School District know that you are now part of the most successful staff in the area and we have the test scores to prove it! Your colleagues have set high academic and behavioral standards and they expect you to continue these values. Don’t be afraid to lean on them for help. You have a wealth of knowledge amongst you; don’t miss out on the opportunity to learn from them (we’re really not as set in our ways as one may think).

We all know that we are in a worldwide economic recession. Because of that, it is actually more important than ever to get involved in “YOUR UNION.” We are only as strong as our weakest link. If you choose not to partake in surveys, give your opinion, hand out/collect a paper or survey, skip the 10 minute meetings, then you are hurting the rest of us. We are in this together. Teaching is our livelihood and we need to make sure that everyone understands that. Just because times are tough, that does not mean that we should just roll on over. We are one of the largest unions on this part of the state and believe it or not, the smaller school districts are also affected by our actions. Your attitude has a ripple effect that may change the lives of people you don’t even know. We need to move as one large force.

Continue to stay active in the community. This is one of our greatest assets. When people see the efforts that we give on a daily basis, they will support us. Keep a positive outlook and keep smiling. I know that this can get tough around November, but you are doing what you love to do and you know why you are doing it! If issues arise in the workplace, please see your building representative(s) ASAP. If it is something that we can fix to make it a better place to work, you have my word that I will try very hard to do so. If you feel that your building rep is not getting the job done, or your issues is with them personally, then you need to contact me or one of the other executive board members.

I have a few new items that the committee has been working on for you this summer. In an effort to become a little more Eco-friendly, we are going to be moving more of our correspondences online. I know that most members do not

know anything about our webpage. Yes we have one and we are working on improving it to become a really valuable resource. <http://www.weac.org/HSEA/> is the link. There is a **Members Only** section to this as well. Check it out. However, to do so you will need your WEAC Card (it has your member ID # on it). If you lost yours, there are directions on how to get it replaced. We also will have building specific business cards available that have your Representatives names on it, as well as the website for quick reference. Cathy Allen-Schneider and the Negotiation Team are hard at work, trying to make our working conditions better, clean-up a number of language issues, and preserve our livelihood. We plan on keeping you updated, but you will need to use the **Members Only** portion of our website. Set these two very important dates down in your agenda, October 8 and May 13. These are the next two General Assembly dates. More information will be given to you by your Public Relations Chair, Kathy Krause, and Building Reps. We will continue to look for ways to improve attendance. Last May was the largest group in attendance in years. ☺ That is a step in the right direction. I would like to see nothing less than 90% attendance.

In closing, I wish you a happy and educationally productive year. Just as you would expect from the students that you see on a regular basis, stay healthy mentally and physically. It is not every day that someone can say that they had the opportunity to change a life for the better! You have the power, use it!

Jason

HSEA Executive Board Meeting—August 6, 2009

Newsletter Summary

Treasurer's Report: No report.

President's Report

- Executive Board meeting dates for 2009-2010: September 10, October 8, November 12, December 10, January 7, February 11, March 11, April 15, May 13. Goal is to limit meetings to one hour.
- Plan to use technology to increase involvement; survey monkey, blogs, member's only portions to the webpage. Would like to compile a list of member's home email address; could email newsletter and other info saving \$.
- Increase turnout at monthly meetings; goal is 90%. If not achieved, find out what could be done to increase participation? One suggestion was to offer babysitting services.
- All members will receive business cards with contact information regarding officers building reps, etc. Weingarten rights will be on back; read the back and know your rights!
- Building reps need to plan 10 minute meetings and have them consistently.

Committee Reports

Legislative/Political Action/Public Relations

- Combined committee chairpersons: Lee Bouchonville, Justin Nelson, and Jenny Johnston.
- Look for survey on various items in September.

Members' Rights

- Chairpersons: Darlene Schoen and Mary Lu Sachs.
- One pending grievance; meeting with board this week.

Negotiations

- Chairperson: Cathy Allen-Schneider.
- Early Retirement: not even close with district on this issue; in a holding pattern right now.
- Last team meeting was on July 23; went through insurance options and started working on proposal.
- Tentative insurance increase at 13%. District asked us to look at options to save money. This may include raising deductible, drug cards, etc. Denise Gaumer-Hutchison (WEA Rep) stated two things our district NEEDS to work on:
 - Stop visiting emergency rooms for non-emergency issues.
 - Use generics whenever possible.
 - Next meeting will be on August 20; will meet with Denise and other unions who are negotiating too.

Newsletter

- Chairperson: Jenny Soucoup.
- Would like reports submitted by noon on Saturday following the Executive Board meetings.

- Always looking for information for newsletter; feel free to submit items of interest.

Candice Perz
HSEA Secretary

Retired Liaison

- Chairperson: Lynne Glinski.
- Working with district to find a way to report to retirees what activity is occurring with their retirement package money. Right now they receive nothing that outlines how their money is spent, what their balance is, etc.

Scholarship

- Chairperson: Blake Bierowski.
- Last year \$700 was awarded to over 13 different students.

Social

- Chairperson: Kathy Krause.
- General Assembly meetings on October 8 and May 13 will take place at Townline. Attendance awards will be based on percentage of staff at specific buildings, not straight numbers.

Webpage

- Chairperson: Joyce Trembl.
- Lots of changes/updates coming to the web site.

Building Reports:

Bay Harbor:

- Cuts in cleaning; teachers will now need to wash own chalkboards, whiteboards, desks, etc.
- Concerns about sanitation and flu.

Bay Port: No report.

Bay View: Some PE classes are over 40.

Forest Glen:

- Moved a 4th grade teacher to 5th grade; now 4th grade numbers are around 28.
- Last year's 3rd grade scores were low and are now concerned about this year's scores with these large class sizes.

Howard: Class sizes in 4th grade at 29.

Lineville: Large class sizes are being questioned.

Meadowbrook:

- Class sizes in 3rd and 4th grade around 28.
- Large class sizes but two empty classrooms?

Suamico:

- Had four classes of 2nd graders last year; now will only have three classes of 3rd graders with class sizes at 25.

School email account reminder

If you want to discuss an Association matter with a colleague, building rep, or any other Association member, please do not use your school email account to do so.

While it is permissible to **receive** notice of upcoming Association meetings on your school email account, you **should not reply** to them.

Bottom line: if you cannot speak directly to another Association member, contact them using **their** home email address or phone number from **your** home computer or phone!

Ask the "Messenger"



Do you have a question about your insurance coverage? Need clarification on language you read in our contract? The answer to these questions and more can be found right here! All you have to do is ask.

Put your question in writing, mark it "Ask the Messenger," and forward it to any HSEA Executive Board member. Then look for your answer in the next issue of the Messenger.

Negotiations Update by *Cathy Allen-Schneider, HSEA Negotiation Chair*

It has been a relatively quiet summer for the negotiations team. Several members of the team met on July 23 to start preparing a tentative proposal. At this time, in addition to looking at salary and insurance, we're considering a number of issues to include in our proposal.

Denise Gaumer-Hutchison, our WEAC insurance rep, met with us on the 23rd to share some insurance options. Our tentative increase this year is 13%. We should have the final increase in early August. Because of this increase, the team is looking at insurance options and will be meeting on August 20 to continue the discussion on this. Members of the other negotiating units will also be present at the August meeting, since any possible changes will affect all of us.

Two areas of concern with our insurance were shared by Denise. Emergency room usage in our district is still very high. This was an issue a few years ago, and continues to be an issue. Denise shared the following facts:

*an average office visit costs \$125

*a visit to an urgent care or fast care facility runs between \$600-\$1,000

*an emergency room visit costs between \$3,000-\$6,000

The numbers are astonishing and it's important that we, as HSEA members, use our health care dollars wisely. It's important for all of us to find a primary care physician and go to him/her with minor complaints. Most clinics/doctors now have extended and weekend hours to help meet patient needs. Health care is not just an issue in our district, but is a national issue as well, so let's try to do what we can to lower our health care costs.

The other issue Denise shared is to continue to use generic drugs as much as possible. Overall, members have done well here, but we could be doing even better. It takes just a few seconds to remind your doctor when getting a prescription to ask for the generic version, if one is available. Again, using our health care dollars wisely helps all of us.

As mentioned previously, the negotiations team has another meeting scheduled for August 20. We hope to finalize our proposal to the district at that time so we're ready to meet with them sometime at the beginning of the school year. Hope all of you have had a super summer and are rejuvenated and ready to dive into another school year!

Plagiarism movie

From a teacher in Castro Valley, California:

"There is an excellent DVD on plagiarism by the producers of Adina's Deck. It deals with some cyber smart kids who figure out who plagiarized a paper. The students I've shown this DVD to have found it very true to life and easily identify with the characters in this 25-minute movie. More information can be found on their website: www.adinasdeck.com. It's a useful tool when setting the tone regarding copying and cheating, as the new school year begins."

No more chalk dust

For those of you who still have a "chalk" board, from a vocal music teacher in Hampstead, Maryland:

"An experienced teacher gave me this tip ages ago. For a terrific chalk board cleaner, dab a terry cloth rag with Old English Furniture Polish. Wrap it up right and put it in a Ziploc bag for a couple of days -- the oil will soak in. Use that rag instead of erasers for a "new board" look with no dust!"

<http://www.weac.org/Resource/bulletin.htm>

Check out the new and improved HSEA website at:

<http://www.weac.org/HSEA>

