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*KMUC is affiliated with
WEAC and NEA*

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*This is an 11.29
communication with
WEAC members, Federal
Statute CFR 100.8 (b) (4)*

Representing Teachers and Support Professionals in Chilton, Elkhart Lake, Howards Grove, Kiel, Kohler, Lakeshore Technical College, Manitowoc, New Holstein, Plymouth, Sheboygan, Sheboygan Falls, Two Rivers, and KMUC Retired



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“Test Scores Can’t Get Teachers Fired”

Boy, did that catch my attention!! This was the title of a newspaper article appearing in the Manitowoc Herald Times Reporter on Tuesday, November 3. I thought it was another one of those articles about performance based pay or teacher accountability based on test scores. But, I was wrong. Actually, the article was about a change in Wisconsin legislation so, like all the other states in the nation, we would be able to compete for the Race to the Top funds (a special fund in the education stimulus package that is intended to improve student achievement). As I read it, I was amazed to notice how the article affected me – raising questions, permitting connections to my teaching career, and bringing back pictures of students I have had in the past. (Yep, I was monitoring my comprehension.)

Wisconsin is one of two states that doesn’t allow test scores to be used to evaluate teachers. In order to qualify for Race to the Top funds, states cannot have legislation that bans the use of test scores for evaluation of teachers or measures of student achievement. The proposal in our legislature now says that test scores can be used to evaluate teachers but not to fire, suspend, or discipline a teacher. There are some already who say that the teachers union (WEAC) is a roadblock to change. Yet, here is WEAC favoring this bill. The reason for that is that WEAC believes that Wisconsin needs to be competitive in the requests for Race to the Top funds. WEAC does not believe that standardized tests should be used to evaluate teachers – and neither should we!!

Would it really be blocking behavior to not favor a bill that allows test scores to be used to fire teachers? Well, let’s look at some of those questions, connections, reactions that occurred to me.

• Are all teachers equally at risk when test scores can be used punitively?

As you are thinking about how you feel about that question, there are others that need to be considered. For example, does every teacher teach something that is tested? Do all grade levels have testing? Do all teachers have the same student population demographics? Who is responsible for the test scores of a special education student – the classroom teacher or the special ed. teacher?

• Is the teacher evaluation system effective enough as it is so that test scores don’t become the only issue in discipline or firing?

Teacher evaluation systems vary from district to district and even building to building. They are meant to recognize best instructional practices as well as to identify areas that need to show growth. They are meant to be consistently applied and not subject to opinion. They are meant to be done regularly and some of them should be done at times that are not mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrator. So, that raises other questions. For example, do these principles of evaluation describe the system all teachers go through? Is student performance already a part of the evaluation system? Is the evaluator as knowledgeable about instructional practices in the subject area or grade level as the teacher is?

• In your mind, does the part of the new law that says that evaluation systems should be created with participation from teachers ring true for you?

This really brought back to mind for me how many different supervision/evaluation models I worked under in my teaching career. There were many but I cannot remember any of them being de-

“Test Scores Can’t Get Teachers Fired” Cont.

veloped with teachers in the room for the development.

- **If this law does happen and student test scores can lead to teacher discipline or firing, who will want to teach in schools where the population demographics is more “at risk”?**

This is really the question that brought connections to mind for me. I taught the last years of my career at a high poverty school where there was a large concentration of special education students. This was a challenging population but I can honestly say that the rewards far outweighed the challenges. The students were every bit as capable as other students in other schools but they required different practices and the understanding that their achievement depended more on what happened at school because home could be an issue. The most important component for any teacher in a building like this is high expectations combined with respect for the situations of the student and the ability to adjust instruction to meet the students. Of course, there are questions associated with this issue also. Is the comfort level for teachers at schools that are not as challenging more important than the need for them to be at schools where the population needs their specific skills? Is there staff development targeted to the student population needs at specific buildings? Would teachers opt to teach at a building with the challenging students if there were other options?

- **Why are teachers on the line? Do they make all the decisions about what happens to create situations where test scores become an issue?**

For me, this is the most critical question. It seems that everything we read says that teachers will be on the line for test scores. In the Manitowoc newspaper, the representative from the School Board Association stated that they did not want a system that would stop a Board from removing an ineffective teacher from the classroom. But, in the penalties for not meeting average yearly progress in NCLB, the whole school is under analysis and the reports about schools at the final levels of being identified require changes in the school and/or District leadership. So, again, why are we talking about just teachers. Teachers, ask yourselves these questions. Do you decide who is in your classrooms – or does someone else set up the special needs make up of your class? Do you have control over the programs that are offered to support your students? Do you have budgetary control over your school or classroom? Do you choose the boundaries for attendance at your school? Do you decide who your teacher colleagues are? Are you in charge of your own collaboration time? I know these are issues that are not part of the teacher role. But, until there is some involvement of teachers in these decisions, why are the test scores the responsibility of teachers alone?

I do not want us or our union to be seen as blockers. But, neither do I want us to be the only group held accountable and also the only group

not involved in decisions that could make a difference in student achievement. So, until the aforementioned questions and concerns are resolved, I am willing to fight to block the move to make test scores be a reason to fire teachers. I hope you are too.

The good news is that after this article was printed a bill passed through both houses of the Wisconsin State Legislature and was signed by the governor about this very issue. The bill (SB372) allows the result of state-required standardized evaluations and the federal tests to be used for evaluation of teachers if certain conditions exist. The conditions are the saving grace of this legislation. The conditions state that the school board must develop a teacher evaluation plan that includes a description of the evaluation process, multiple criteria in addition to test scores, the rationale for using test scores to evaluate teachers, and an explanation of how the school board intends to use the evaluations to improve student achievement. And, if trust is a factor for you even after these conditions, the bill requires the school board to bargain collectively over the development of the evaluation plan. So, teachers are involved in the design of the evaluation system. But, if the above questions and concerns aren't answered, the work on the system should continue. The stakes are high and the collaboration with the school board must take into consideration all the concerns that teachers have about using test scores to evaluate them.



KMUC Report, 11-2-09

Stacy Gloede, Vice President

The KMUC Board met Monday, November 2, 2009. There were 19 board members present.

A workshop is being organized for teachers this coming spring. Dr. Michael Ford will be the presenter. Information will be distributed as soon as the final details are complete.

Effective December 1, 2009 the KMUC office will have a new phone

number. The new number will be: 800-967-9322. The fax number will remain the same.

A new policy was approved to designate funding for grievances.

Letters will be mailed November 4, 2009 to all those members who were recommended to participate in the Emerging Voices program being offered by KMUC and WEAC. Candidates will have

until November 23, to respond. The training is scheduled for January 29–31, 2010 in Green Bay.

The Electronic Newsletter is still a work in progress. There are many programming details to work out we will be working with WEAC to get the most efficient software to make this happen.

The next board meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2009.

WEAC Board Report, 11-6-09

Lei Lund, Phil Knier, Tara Leithold

The WEAC Board met on November 6th and 7th. Here are the highlights:

1. Visit from State Superintendent of Schools, Tony Evers

Superintendent Evers addressed the board regarding several issues, including the recent passage of legislation to make Wisconsin eligible to apply for Race to the Top funds. The grant parameters have been finalized, and now it is up to the Governor's office to complete the application. Mr. Evers also reiterated his plan to phase out WKCE testing and replace it with more comprehensive computerized tests, the results of which will be immediate and more useful to teachers. Lastly, he discussed the issue of

school funding. He believes that we can change some things so that education does not get short-changed in future budgets and that there are legislators who are wanting to get something done in this area before the next elections.

2. The Milwaukee Opportunity Plan

One of the Action Items at the Board meeting was a request for support from the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association—an Action Request to lobby legislators to support the Milwaukee Opportunity Plan and not Governor Doyle and Mayor Barrett's plan for a mayoral take-over of the Milwaukee School Board. KMUC Members will be hearing more in the next

few weeks about what they can do to support our Milwaukee colleagues.

3. Virtual Schools

A WEAC Work Team charged with studying the issue of Virtual Schools and recommending policies for virtual learning in Wisconsin's public schools presented its first report. Although the team's policy recommendations were not acted upon at the November meeting, they did generate a good deal of discussion. Clearly, virtual learning is an option in many districts, and many educators have concerns about its uses—and abuses. WEAC supports virtual education but wants to ensure that there is oversight, accountability, and fairness.

Interested in Becoming a UniServ Director?

The Wisconsin Education Association Council is currently seeking applicants for a staff internship. The WEAC Program provides for a one year, full-time internship (approximately July 1 to July 1). Interns are selected from applicants who are interested in an opportunity to become professional staff. **Women and minorities are strongly encouraged to apply.**

The intern selected will work directly with a group of mentors, including UniServ staff and WEAC program staff. The intern program is designated to be an on-the-job learning experience. Internships are full-time positions with duties scheduled during the week and on weekends. Interns can expect to receive cross-training on a number of programs and within a variety of UniServ units and WEAC.

For more information visit: http://www.weac.org/About_WEAC/job_opportunities/jobs.aspx

Applications are due Friday, January 8, 2010.

Keep Your Own "Personnel" File

Recordkeeping is important. Don't wait for trouble to start before you begin a records file. Having good records are very important, if you become involved in a grievance over your contract rights, benefits, or in a matter involving discipline or dismissal. To enable the best possible protection and representation, maintain your own "personnel" file. Your file should contain such documents as: college transcripts, evaluations, accumulated sick leave and days used, direct deposit (wage) records, records of student disciplinary referrals, Wisconsin Retirement System records, personal leave, documentation of honors and awards, notes on student accidents, notes on confrontations with parents or administrators, copies of all correspondence with supervisor(s) and administrators, and for teachers — individual teacher contracts for each year, licenses, and teaching assignments by year with subject taught.

Effective December 1, KMUC will have a new phone number:
800-967-9322
Please use this number when calling the KMUC office. Our other lines will no longer be in service.

A Note to Professional Development Plan Reviewers

(Teachers who have been trained in a DPI approved training and are on the DPI website as Professional Development Plan Reviewers)

If you have not reviewed a plan recently, you may find the goal approval and verification forms look a bit different now. The difference is that the first item on the checklist — which was the self-reflection — is not on the form anymore. The reason for that is simple: the self-reflection is optional and therefore did not need to be submitted so keeping it on the checklist was unnecessary. The forms also look different because they are laid out differently on the page to give more writing room for comments.

If you want to see the new forms, follow these directions:

- ◆ Go to the DPI website (www.dpi.state.gov)
- ◆ On the right of the homepage is a list of Quick Links. Click on Educator Licensing.
- ◆ When you get to the Teacher Licensing page, look at the left column for other links. Find the words TEPCD Home. Under it find the Professional Development Plan (PDP). Click on that link.
- ◆ Find the heading DPI Resources for PDP Process. Go to the fourth bullet under that heading and find DPI Goal Approval Form and PDP Verification Form to see the new forms.

Do-Able Differentiation

Presented by: Dr. Michael Ford
 Thursday, February 11, 2010
 At The Osthoff Resort

(This free workshop is sponsored by KMUC)

Brochures will be distributed with more details and registration information. This will be for primarily K-6 teachers but all teachers are welcome.

KMUC Calendar

<p>December 9</p> <p>CBC/President's Meeting KMUC Office</p> <p>6:00 p.m.</p>	<p>December 24—28</p> <p>Christmas Holiday</p> <p>Office Closed</p>	<p><i>Have a Safe and Joyous Holiday</i></p>	<p>December 29 & 30</p> <p>Office Closed due to staff vacations</p>	<p>December 31—January 1</p> <p>New Year's Holiday</p> <p>Office Closed</p>
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