

PEA Newsletter

The Atriums North Ste 1210
4341 S. Westnedge Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 373-3913

Portage Education Association

Did you know...

MEA President
Paula Herbart

MEA Vice-President
Chandra Madafferi

MEA Secretary Treasurer
Brett Smith

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Meet the PEA Officers



Chris Furlong—President

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Ken Haughn—Vice-President

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Martha Keeler—Treasurer

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Sheila Clothier—Secretary

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Personal E-mail

Kat Frink is our PEA Communications Chair. If you need to update your email address, please contact her at peacommunications2016@gmail.com.

2017-2018 Calendar

August 2017

- 23-24 New Teachers Report
- 29-30 District/Building Meetings/Professional Development (12 hours)
- 31 Teacher Work Day 6-hours to work in room

September

- 4 Labor Day Recess
- 5 First Day of School- ½ day students am, pm work in rooms, staff meeting if needed
Reminder no meetings weeks of open house or P.T. conferences or 3rd Monday of every month
Open House TBD, with HS on a Wednesday, elementary on a Thursday
- 13 HS Open House
- 14 Elementary Open House
- 19 MS Open House
- 29 ½ day for all

October

- 13 1/2 day students a.m., pm Professional Development
- 27 ½ day for all

November

- 3 End Q1: ½ day students a.m., p.m. Professional Hours
- 6&8 H S Conferences*** 3:30pm – 7:15pm - School all day
- 7&9 MS Conferences*** 3:30pm – 7:15pm - School all day
- 14&16 Elem. Conferences*** 4:15 – 8:00 – School all day
- 22 No School for all
- 23-24 Thanksgiving Recess

December

- 25-29 No School—Winter Recess

January 2018

- 1-5 No School—Winter Recess
- 8 School Resumes
- 22-24 HS Exams a.m.-p.m. no HS students
- 25 HS-Exams a.m. – ½ day all students a.m., p.m. professional hours all
- 26 End of 1st Semester – No School for Students/Teachers Professional Hours

2017-2018 Calendar

February

- 6 & 8 Elem. Conferences*** 4:15 – 8:00 – School all day
 9 ½ day for all
 23 & 26 No School Mid-Winter Break

March

- 5&7 HS Conferences*** – 3:30pm – 7:15pm -School all day
 6&8 MS Conferences***–3:30pm – 7:15pm - School all day
 9 ½ day a.m. students; ½ day p.m. Professional Development
 29 End of 3rd quarter ½ day Students a.m., p.m. Professional Hours
 30 No School—Spring Recess

April

- 2-6 No School—Spring Recess
 9 School Resumes
 10-11 SAT/MME (unless moved by state of Michigan) (full count days)

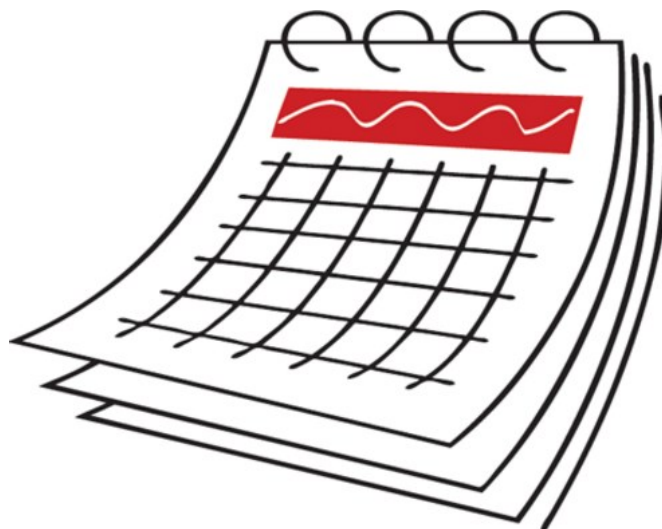
May

- 4 1/2 day students a.m., pm Professional Development
 25 ½ day for all
 28 No School—Memorial Day
 30-31 High School Graduations

June

- 1 High School Graduations
 11-14 HS Exams a.m.-p.m. no HS students
 14 ½ day for students am*, Records pm

Student Days: 180 Staff Days: 187



New Leaders Assume Office

<https://mea.org/new-leaders-assume-office/>

For the first time in decades, an entirely new slate of statewide officers will take the reins at MEA next month—and their first order of business will be to embark on a Listening Tour across Michigan.

Incoming President Paula Herbart, Vice President Chandra Maddaferi, and Secretary-Treasurer Brett Smith want to hear the stories of members—to learn about why they do what they do and what supports and changes they need to ensure a great public education for every student.

“We all ran for office with a vision of what we’d like to see the MEA become,” Herbart said. “Marrying our vision with the hopes of our local leaders and members will make MEA its most strong, its most vibrant, its most relevant going forward.”

The three new leaders were elected at the spring Representative Assembly in April and will assume their offices on Sept. 1. The Listening Tour will kick off in late August, and additional dates will be added throughout the fall.

Herbart compared the trio’s role in the listening events to being the lead geese in the triangle, encouraged to keep steady by the honks of those following behind them.

“People right now are honking and encouraging us to keep going, and we have to listen to keep our strength up,” Herbart said. “Without their words, without their knowledge base, without their ability to articulate what they see for us, we cannot lead.”

For his part, Smith said he plans to use Tour stops to brainstorm with local presidents, veteran educators, and newer hires about the best ways to interest prospective members in joining the union.

“Obviously we can’t solve every problem right away, but listening to people is absolutely key to making the union stronger,” Smith said.

However, while listening to members will take center stage, Maddaferi said she hopes the members who attend Tour stops will be learning as well as sharing.

“I hope that people will see Paula as their leader, and they get to know her heart and her spirit,” Maddaferi said.

The leadership team agrees that the morale of school employees has fallen to an all-time low in recent years as funding cuts have stagnated pay and benefits, while over-testing and over-reliance on standardized testing data have hampered teacher and student creativity.

Privatization and corporate takeovers loom as major threats, but public sentiment has remained strong for neighborhood public schools, operated by elected local boards and fully transparent and accountable in their operation—unlike for-profit charter schools.

Also on our side? The passion of our people, Herbart said. “I know very few public school educators who wanted to do anything else with their lives but what they’re doing. They love their work, and they love their students, and that’s why they’re in this fight.”



Changes to MPERS: Answers to Your Service Credit Questions

https://mea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/07-2017-Service_credit_changes.pdf

Public Act 92, signed by Gov. Rick Snyder in July, makes a number of changes to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPERS) – most of which will impact individuals who have not yet been hired into public school service. However, one of the major changes impacting current employees targets members of the MIP and Basic plans. This change removes the ability of members of these plans to purchase service credit for any of a host of reasons previously allowed under the law.

As of 5:01 p.m. on Sept. 29, 2017, neither MIP nor Basic plan members will be able to purchase MPERS Service Credit for any of the following reasons:

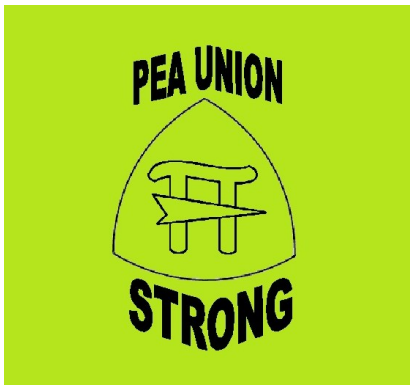
- Universal Buy-In*
- Out-of-System Public Educational Service*
- Parental Leave*
- Sabbatical Leave*
- Nonpublic Educational Service*
- State of Michigan Civil Service*
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 (CETA)*

After the Sept. 29 deadline, members will continue to be able to make service credit purchases for Active Duty Military Service, and to engage in various forms of payment for service already credited by the employer (i.e. Weekly Workers' Compensation, Professional Services Leave, and Professional Services Released Time), and for the repayment of employee contributions into MPERS that the member had previously had refunded.

In order to make a purchase, the member's paperwork AND payment (a tax-deferred payment agreement is considered payment) must have been received by the ORS by 5:00 p.m.

Members are strongly encouraged to visit the state's Office of Retirement Services (ORS) website and read up on the cost and benefits of a service credit purchase before contacting ORS to ask for a billing statement. A service credit purchase is not right for everyone – but it may be right for you. The ORS website for MIP and Basic members, www.michigan.gov/orsschools, lists service credit information in the menu on the left side of the page.

Unfortunately, when setting the Sept. 29 deadline, the Legislature did not make any adjustment to service credit purchase eligibility timelines, and consequently has created a situation that prevents some members from executing plans made in good faith with their districts (for example: districts will sometimes ask employees to participate in a "teacher-exchange" program with the district's "sister city," promising the employee that he/she will be able to purchase the years spent abroad and thus avoid the harm of losing out on his/her retirement benefit. A teacher who had taken and faithfully executed such service will now be unable to avoid this retirement harm because it will be impossible to accumulate the required 5 years of service in a MPERS Reporting Unit following his/her out-of-system public education service before the new September 29th deadline). The ORS is obligated to comply with the law, and is not empowered to "overrule" or "fix" this problem. Members harmed by timeline interactions are encouraged to contact their legislators or the Governor's office.



\$175

Amount paid to PEA annually by every full-time PEA member. Part-time teachers pay a percentage based on their FTE status.

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Putting Kids First

[www.portageea.org]

Know Your Contract!

Excerpt from Article 6 **Section 2:**

[...] Teachers may be required to attend meetings called by the School, with 48 hours notice (except in case of emergency), for not more than two (2) hours per week, unless extended by the following exceptions. If a scheduled meeting is cancelled and re-scheduled, the administration will provide three (3) working days notice.

[Non-State Mandated/Emergency] meetings may be called on Monday through Thursday of a work week, except on the days immediately preceding or immediately following holidays or vacations, and shall be contiguous in time to the regular school day. Such meetings shall be adjourned no later than 95 minute after student dismissal. Except in case of emergency, such meetings will not be scheduled during weeks of parent/teacher conferences or open house. The third Monday of each month is reserved for PEA meetings. At or near the start of each school year, the time of regular building staff meetings will be established by building vote.

*As a clarification, meetings required by law (IEP, 504, etc.) and meetings attended as a volunteer do **not** count toward the two hour maximum when “the School has made every effort to schedule such meetings within the restrictions [of the above sections]. Any excess shall be compensated for by compensatory release time at the beginning or the end of the teaching day following student dismissal.”*



Has there been a violation of your contract?
Contact your building rep or Chris Furlong immediately!