



# 15-B INSIDER



**Marty Lankford**  
UniServ Director  
[mlankford@mea.org](mailto:mlankford@mea.org)

**1-800-300-1162**  
<http://www.me15b.org>  
[www.15buniserv.blogspot.com](http://www.15buniserv.blogspot.com)

**Tabby Grames**  
UniServ Field Assistant  
[tgrames@mea.org](mailto:tgrames@mea.org)



## MICHIGAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

2009

### POVERTY AND STUDENT SUCCESS

A study by Dr. David Berliner, released by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice, provides powerful evidence for a fact that school employees have known all along—if you don't solve the problems outside the classroom, you cannot expect all students to be able to achieve inside the classroom. The Michigan Education Association and the local Associations in the Northern Zone applaud Dr. Berliner in his call for leaders to address children's physical and mental health as well as safety and not hold public schools accountable for factors beyond their control. Here in Northern Michigan, where many families are now faced with a severe economic crisis, more and more students are losing their homes to foreclosure and job loss, which often also results in loss of medical care, lack of nutritious food, and enormous emotional stress. To expect these children to be able to fully concentrate and succeed in school is absurd. Solving the problems of poverty and homelessness will take involvement from the entire community. We must address these out of school factors if we are to close the achievement gap and significantly impact student learning. We urge every Michigander to join us and work toward making sure our students have the safety and security they need to achieve their full potential and be prepared for the jobs Michigan needs. Berliner study available at [www.greatlakescenter.org](http://www.greatlakescenter.org).



### OPIE BANQUET SUCCESS!!

We had 297 people registered this year to attend our 33rd annual Outstanding Persons in Education Banquet held April 16th at the Timber Lake Lodge. Eight school districts and sixteen local associations were represented. Donna Lutke-Director of Field Services, was our special speaker. We also honored our MEA 15-B Scholarship recipients. We were thankful for the beautiful weather and wonderful turnout. As usual, Harvey Miller did a great job as our emcee. The MEA Retired volunteers helped everything to go as planned by assisting with all kinds of tasks, including setting up, decorating, registration, parking cars, and cleaning up afterwards!! We would like to thank Mary Christian, State President of MEA-R for attending. A special thanks to the students from the McBain National Honor Society group who did a wonderful job as our "wait staff" for the evening. **Thank you to everyone who helped out!!**

### IMPORTANT WIN IN REDFORD UNION

Administrative Law Judge David Peltz of the Michigan Employment Relations Commission issued a decision last Friday in the Redford Union Schools unfair labor practice case that is extremely favorable for the Association. ALJ Peltz ruled that the Board and the Association were not at impasse in April, 2007, when the Board declared impasse and imposed an insurance program that included a very large deductible. Since the parties were not at impasse at the time, the Board committed an unfair labor practice by unilaterally changing the terms and conditions of employment. The Administrative Law Judge issued a proposed order that includes:

"Make whole the unit employees for any losses they may have suffered because of the unlawful imposition of any unilateral changes in terms and conditions of employment on or after April 27, including interest at the statutory rate."

The decision of the administrative law judge is subject to appeal to the full Michigan Employment Relations Commission. This decision should have a very positive impact on our member and the difficult bargaining situation in Redford Union. In addition, the opinion may assist us in other districts around the state by sending a message that school boards act at their own peril when they decide to impose rollbacks in terms and conditions of employment.

## **MESSA LAYOFF BENEFIT and the COBRA PROVISIONS of the ARRA**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides for an employer subsidy for COBRA premiums for involuntarily terminated employees. In short, an "assistance eligible individual" will only be required to pay 35% of his or her COBRA premium. The remaining 65% is employer-paid with the employer receiving reimbursement via a payroll tax credit. An assistance eligible individual is a person who becomes eligible for COBRA between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009 due to an involuntary termination of employment. The subsidy will be available for nine months but not beyond the end of the maximum period of COBRA coverage or the individual becoming eligible for coverage under another group health plan or Medicare. The subsidy is available to the employee, spouses, and dependents who are COBRA eligible. Further information about the Act is available at the U.S. Department of Labor's website.



### **PA 110-MPSERS HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE EXCLUSION**

Public Act 110 of 2007 Amended provisions of the Public School Employees' Retirement Act in an effort to contain retiree health care costs. One of the provisions could result in exclusion from coverage for members who fail to elect health care coverage within a period following retirement as specified in the amendment.

This provision could have the unintended consequence of excluding a MESSA member from MPSERS health care insurance if the member retires while on MESSA LTD medical waiver coverage. In such cases, a member often defers election of MPSERS service credit during the 2 school fiscal years immediately preceding the member's retirement effective date. It is our understanding that the MEA has initiated litigation challenging the application of the amendment to a specific member. **At present, it is imperative that MESSA members electing the LTD medical waiver coverage understand that MPSERS health care must be elected within a period during which the member earned ½ of a year service credit during the 2 school years immediately preceding the member's retirement effective date. Contact the Cadillac MEA office for further information if you believe you may be affected by this change.**

#### **Knowledge Has Value Fast Fact:**



Google spokesperson, Courtney Hohne, confirmed that **Michigan's** talent pool was a major factor in the decision to put down roots in the Ann Arbor area.



#### **\* MARK YOUR CALENDAR\***

May 25	Memorial Day-MEA Office Closed	
June 15-19	Labor Relations Practicum	Kalamazoo
July 28-30	Summer Leadership Conf.	Saginaw Valley
Aug 20	President Council	Cadillac MEA office
Sept 21	15-B Coordinating Council	Cadillac MEA office 7:02 p.m.

**\*\*This is the final issue of the INSIDER until next school year\*\***

For summer updates please visit [www.mea15.org](http://www.mea15.org) or [www.15uniserv.blogspot.com](http://www.15uniserv.blogspot.com)

**HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!**