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May Flowers - For the last two month, our SEA members have blazed an uncut pathway of education, bravely stepping into the unknown and confidently traversing the daily challenges set before us. The monsoons of the Coronavirus steadily increased as we held hope that we would finish out the school year from our places of warmth, comfort and familiarity, rekindling our face to face relationships with our students, partaking in our spring and summer activities, attending our end of the year celebrations, and cleaning out our classrooms and offices for the summer like we have always done. But, after Governor Pritzker's April 18th proclamation that schools would be closed for the remainder of the school year and subsequent announcements to prepare for multiple options, both remote and in-person, we have all come to accept that this was not to be. All of Illinois' schools shuttered for the rest of the year and remote learning the sole way that education be delivered to our students and children, possibly into the fall.

SEA and the District weathered the initial educational workplace challenges put before them. It was not perfect, but it sufficed. The initial Memo of Understanding (MOU) encompassing common and agreed upon practices and standards as was recommended by the *ISBE March 27 Remote Learning Recommendations During the COVID-19 Emergency* was designed to meet the initial emergency issues which stated, "school districts should work with their legal counsel and, where applicable, in consultation with relevant collective bargaining entities to address remote learning needs in policies and procedures. School districts must pay particular attention to any issues impacting the work conditions of employees, including the framework of any remote plans, acceptable use policies, and use of personal devices." Additionally, SEA members have worked alongside our union brothers and sisters in SEIU / Local 15 and District staff and administrations to breach major hurdles during this crisis, such as food, technology, delivery of educational materials, and instruction. Now, two months in, we realize that they may everything once planned may not be ideal and sense refinement as we proceed, we are returning back to the table with the District to put words and actions in place that are continually supportive of both District employees, students and parents.

Our personal fortitude, family units, educational systems, union and other bonds have been thoroughly tested through this storm. But hopefully soon, as with the flowers that bloom all around your neighborhoods, the proof of our efforts will effervesce. As with any great storm, there is always a calm after. SEA will continue to be personally available to answer any and all concerns by phone/text/email at any time of the day and stand firm on difficult discussions with District administrators, Board of Education while building bridges with colleagues and community members progressively through these times. Eventually, the rain will stop, the flowers will bloom and the fruits of your positive efforts will be received. Stay strong and stay safe.

We will continue to conduct SEA Association and Executive Committee meetings in order to keep open the lines of transparent communication. Since Friday, March 13th, I have spoken personally with hundreds of friends, SEA members,, many feeling (at points) they were on the brink due to the bereavement of our regular lives and support system of our schedules and colleagues, the pressure of additional technological stress and our connectivity challenges, struggles with child care and managing our households while attempting to meet deadlines and professional responsibilities, worry over our aging parents and their welfare; not being able to see them or care for them in the capacity we once had, and just the level of cabin fever, and disruption to formality of our lives. It is no wonder many of us have reached a tipping point. This has been the most unique tragedy that many of us have had to endure, together.

The Governor's and ISBE's main qualifier was that "no harm" be done to students. Our students, parents and communities are counting on us and it is our responsibility to deliver education in any way that we can, while keeping all of our families safe. We must continue to support each other, advocating for the true inequities that exist but not taking advantage of or attempting to slander those who may not be perceived as being in as tough a spot as others. We must stop and take the time to look closely at our system and use the microscope of this Coronavirus to shine a light on things that may not have been working in the first place, and carefully consider what is it that we need to do to build our fortress of public education stronger in the future. And we must not lose sight of the the fact that we are all inextricably linked together in the Springfield and surrounding communities... and what can prevent us from being separated and bring us back together for the next 6 weeks, and thereafter will display our true character as an institution and either further endear us to the public or offend.

Wanted: Copilot in Collaboration - Over the last two months, your colleagues have continued our flight ahead into the bargained Union committee work like our SEA Equity Committee, Curriculum Council, our District Health Insurance Committee, our SEA/District Collaboration Committee, Pest and Rodent Committee, our SEA Special Education Concerns and SEA / District Special Ed Task Force, and SEA Alternative Education Committee. However, as was recently witnessed in the "collaborative" insurance work, the existence of the committees alone do not necessitate true and equal consensus. Words on paper, do not make it so.

We have yet to get the District to come to the table on the multitude of other essential committees just bargained this past contract: the SEA / District Grow Your Own Committee, Restorative Practices, Nursing and Psychologist Recruiting and Retention Committee, District Systemic Issues Committee, Professional Development, ILT Reassessment. And, as many of you well know, we have less than a year before we return to the bargaining table. Over 1/3 of the way into our two year contract, many of your concerns, those of your colleagues, and those of your students and the community have yet to even be discussed. If you may share in this feeling that our bargained concerns continue to be unprioritized by the District, please consider communicating this with the Superintendent or your newly elected (by the Board themselves) School Board President, Scott McFarland. Although our educational paradigm has shifted, now is no time to let up on the thrusters of reform. It is into the future, we must continue to push. This is the way forward.



Reflecting on All of Those Who Support Us Locally - I have been in the business of education for nearly 25 years. I have been fortunate enough to work at nearly ten Springfield Schools and taught thousands of students. I have also had the pleasure of working in different career fields. During that time, like many of you, I have held part-time jobs in retail, restaurant, the labor world and the military and have coached and sponsored a myriad of after and during school activities, clubs and sports.

Through this COVID-19 pandemic, we have done some tremendous work with students and families and are almost able to take a breath. However, we are not finished yet helping our communities work through this tragedy. Our friends, families, neighbors and total strangers in our communities need us to support them and advocate for their needs to moving into the summer ahead. Please consider how you may support our local economy in celebrating and spending a little of your hard earned money locally. Money spent locally will help to assure our community has the best shot at recovery possible as we turn the corner and try to put the worst of the pandemic in our rear view.

May Days - The interesting thing about teaching is that sometimes we are so busy taking care of the needs of our students that we barely even realize the changing of the seasons outside or other subtleties in life (the rest of the world around us). As we stop, think about what May is to many others and how we all interconnect.

May is Military Appreciation Month, Melanoma/ Skin Cancer Prevention Month, Celiac Disease Awareness, Arthritis Awareness Month, National Barbecue, Egg, Hamburger and conversely Mediterranean Diet, Salad and Strawberry Month, National Nurses Week, National EMS Week, National Health Week, National Women's Health Week, National Teen Self Esteem Month, Free Comic Book Day, National Brothers and Sisters Day, Paranormal Day, Star Wars Day, National Hoagie Day, National Teacher's Day, International No Diet Day, National Nurses Day, National Tourism Day, Vesak, National Moscato Day, Wild Migratory Bird Day, National Shrimp Day, National Eat What You Want Day, Fair Trade Day, International Hummus Day, National Apple Pie Day, National Cocktail Day, National Receptionists Day, National Buttermilk Biscuit Day, International Day of Families, National Chocolate Chip Day, National Pizza Party Day, National Armed Forces Day, National Mimosa Day, National No Dirty Dishes Day, National Walnut Day, National Devil's Food Cake Day, National Endangered Species Day, National Be a Millionaire, National Waitstaff Day, Harvey Milk Day, International Day for Biodiversity, National Work From Home Day, National Maritime Day, National Taffy Day, Indianapolis 500, National Brother's Day, National Scavenger Hunt Day, Memorial Day, National Wine Day, Towel Day, National Sunscreen Day, National Paper Airplane Day, National Brisket Day, National Hamburger Day, Shavuot, Learn About Composting Day, National Mint Julep Day, National Macaroon Day, and No Tobacco Day.



Paid FMLA for Child Birth and Adoption - Yeah, Baby! Yeah!! -

According to the most recent federal data, about 77 percent of teachers are female, and many of them are in their prime childbearing years. Additionally, a 2012 U.S. Department of Labor study found only 12 percent of women had access to paid maternity leave in America. And according to NEA national survey data, among the teachers who leave the profession voluntarily, nearly a quarter say it's

because of personal life reasons, which include pregnancy and child care.

June 2018, the United Federation of Teachers struck an **agreement** with the City of New York to provide parents with paid time to bond with new children who come into their families.

Rep Mary Flowers, HB 0009 Creates the Paid Family Leave Act. Requires private employers with 50 or more employees to provide 6 weeks of paid leave for an employee who takes leave: (1) because of the birth of a child of the Employee and in order to care for the child; (2) to care for a newly adopted child under 18 years of age or a newly placed foster child under 18 years of age or a newly adopted or newly placed foster child older than 18 years of age if the child is incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability; or (3) to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

Years ago, as forwarded by legislation from Representative Mary Flowers (House Bill 0009), we were granted FMLA here in SPS186. It is actually law, nothing great that we bargained. Our system allows you to have 6 weeks of leave available. However, the time is not given to you. It is taken out of your sick days that you have acquired. Or, if you have not acquired enough days to feed the 6 week FMLA (and you have been in the District long enough), you can apply for Sick Bank and garner them in that manner.

I think that we can do better, and I would hope that you all agree. It is time to improve the manner in which we take care of our employees as they bring new kids into the world. We have to take care of our families first, if we are ever going to be ready to take care of other people's.

Trapeze With No Net - SESP Sick Bank - Sick Bank is a bargained benefit, to assist certified personnel who have, for one reason or another, been forced to be absent from the classroom due to illness, beyond the coverage of their accumulated sick days. The Springfield 186 School Board places one day in the Bank for each teacher employed as of the first day of October.

First year teachers are entitled to one Sick Bank day and second year teachers can receive two. Teachers will be eligible for full Sick Bank benefits (180 days over their

employment with the District) beginning with the third full year of employment. Persons on leave of absence are not eligible for use of the Sick Leave Bank. **A teacher may only draw from the Bank for his/her own illness;**

Any teacher currently employed in the District shall be entitled to draw from the Bank provided the following four conditions are met:

1. The teacher has used all his/her personal accumulated sick and personal days.
2. For medical leave, the teacher shall produce two doctors' certificates (from different practices) as proof of need. For maternity leave, only the maternity disability certificate from a doctor is needed.
3. The teacher shall have been absent more than three school days in connection with the same illness.
4. Any teacher eligible for disability benefits from Worker's Compensation or a disability insurance program shall, as a condition of acceptance into the Sick Leave Bank, show proof to the Sick Leave Bank Committee that said teacher has applied for benefits from Worker's Compensation. The Bank will supplement the difference between the net value of the disability benefits paid by Worker's Compensation or a disability insurance program and the net value of the teacher's salary less amount withheld for income tax deduction.

This past bargaining session, we were able to accomplish a ton together as certified and classified personnel, but we have keep working on this. Currently, we no safety net established must if we are ever to establish true equity for or Educational Support Professionals. And if not established by the fall when we may have to reenter schools, there are no protections for our colleagues working alongside us in the future COVID world. This simply will not do.

The Springfield School Foundation - Per the website, "The Springfield Public Schools Foundation (est 1981) incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1982 - the first such foundation in Illinois. It is a community-based organization, serving Springfield District 186 public schools for thirty-six years with the mission of creating a margin of excellence, carrying out our mission in partnership with Springfield School District 186 and the Springfield community.

Since 1981, the Foundation has contributed more than \$3 million to help create exceptional educational experiences for the students in our schools. Through donations, memorial gifts and fundraising, the Foundation has funded a wide range of educational programs and activities that otherwise would not have been possible. The Foundation raises funds to benefit all schools, students and teachers.

Foundation dollars have purchased hundreds of library books, computers, science equipment and musical instruments. In addition, Foundation dollars have supported STEAM/STEM programming, arts education programming, memorial scholarships, outdoor education camps, extracurricular sports and activities, technology initiatives, and Foundation

dollars fully funded the construction of an accessible playground at Lee School.

Each year the Foundation offers Pre-K through 8th Grade Classroom Library, Classroom Education, Extracurricular, Special Education Life Skills, Student-Led and Special Projects Grants to teachers and student to provide unique learning experiences throughout the Springfield Public Schools.

Please consider supporting the Foundation that supports you.

May Calendar of Events

ALL EVENTS SUBJECT TO RESCHEDULING

4 - Board of Education, 1900, 6:30 p.m

18 - AR Meeting - 2:15 pm and 4 pm

6 - Sick Bank, 1900, 4:00 pm

11 - Middle School Solutions - 3:45 pm

18 - Board of Education, 1900, 6:30 p.m

* All meetings will be via Zoom invite unless otherwise noted

