

## **Education Agenda**

### **2008 – 2010**

#### **The Michigan Education Association believes:**

- Every student must receive a quality education.
- Every school must be a quality school.
- Every educator must be a quality educator. All educational personnel must be qualified.
- Every teacher and support staff must receive adequate support and resources to deliver quality education.

*To achieve these goals, the MEA staff, leaders and members must advocate and work in a bipartisan manner to support programs/legislation that will guarantee that:*

- All schools are safe and orderly. Learning takes place best in structurally sound and healthy environments (classrooms, busses, cafeterias, athletic/extra/co-curricular facilities, library media centers, computer labs and playgrounds) where discipline, order and civility are maintained.
- Student achievement increases when class sizes are reduced.
- An effective certified teacher will be in every classroom. The relationship between teachers and students is a critical component of education.
- Parents will be partners in the education process. Research proves that students whose parents are involved in their education achieve more.
- All schools will receive full funding to educate all students. State and federal funding of public education must meet the needs of all students.

*We will know Michigan public schools have accomplished these goals when:*

- Every public school is structurally sound, healthy, safe, orderly and a civil learning environment.
- Every public school student in Michigan not only is held to, but is also given the opportunity to meet the highest possible standards of achievement.

- Every public school student should be provided the opportunity to participate in community service activities and events that promote studies of citizenship and local government boards (agencies, judiciary, etc.) as they consider important issues of the community.
- Every public school student in Michigan obtains proficiency in the fundamentals of reading, writing, math, science, social studies, critical thinking, the arts and problem solving.
- Every public school student in Michigan leaves high school with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a university, a community college, a technical school and the workforce.

**MEA will continue working to ensure a quality education for all students by:**

- Bargaining quality issues.
- Implementing and expanding staff peer assistance/mentoring programs.
- Reinstating funding for professional development so that all school employees have the opportunity to increase their effectiveness.
- Increasing funding for professional development and mentoring opportunities for all educators including support staff.
- Ensuring that all teachers and counselors are teaching/working within their area(s) of certification.
- Supporting MEA/ESP certification programs.
- Reducing class sizes.
- Guaranteeing that school employees have the training and tools to maintain discipline, order and civility.
- Providing meaningful and appropriate training opportunities and support services for all educators.
- Training members to analyze standardized test results and implement strategies to improve student achievement.
- Insisting that mandated testing is valid, reliable and fair.
- Continuing to work with teacher-training institutions, the Michigan Department of Education and the State Board of Education to develop high standards for new teachers.

- Continuing to develop new materials and strategies to help members build partnerships with parents.
- Continuing to develop bipartisan legislative support for public education issues.
- Introducing third-party contract resolution ending in binding arbitration.
- Giving members the power and tools needed to ensure discipline, order and civility.
- Providing educational programs/opportunities for disruptive students.
- Providing resources to fix unsafe and/or unhealthy learning conditions.
- Providing alternative educational programs.
- Guaranteeing adequate services for special education students.
- Increasing the support services of school social workers, school nurses, psychologists and counselors.
- Guaranteeing that a high quality core curriculum is available to all public school students.
- Restoring adult education funding.
- Guaranteeing fully funded public schools.

# **MEA Legislative Program**

**2008-2010**

## **Introduction**

The Michigan Education Association Legislative Program is presented in the form of three core initiatives for Michigan public education students and MEA members: Quality Education Agenda, Funding, and Professional Conditions. These initiatives are followed by the clear delineation of the legislative and political objectives of the organization as stated in “MEA’s Legislative Issues” and “MEA’s Continuing Legislative Concerns.” Even though realization of these goals may take more than one legislative session, MEA engages in a readiness campaign, assuring that the groundwork is laid for the eventual advent of the political climate that can bring these items to fruition.

## **MEA Core Legislative Initiatives**

### **Quality Education Agenda**

MEA supports a Quality Public Schools Agenda to help strengthen public schools and the relationship between schools and their communities.

### **Pre K-12**

MEA’s Legislative Program supports initiatives to advance the following goals: safety and order in every school, every student ready to learn, every school building in good condition, every classroom connected to current technologies, quality state-certified educator(s) in every classroom/program, and adequate numbers of instructional and noninstructional support staff and supervisory/administrative staff.

### **Higher Education**

MEA supports a quality educational program in every higher education institution, delivered by qualified full-time faculty and staff.

### **Funding**

MEA supports legislation to provide increased state funding for quality and equitable programs in Michigan’s public K-12 schools, intermediate school districts and higher education institutions that addresses the total social, economic and educational needs of all students. Mandated programs shall be fully funded by state and federal governments.

## **Professional Conditions**

MEA supports legislation that provides our members with the highest quality working conditions. Such conditions shall provide a safe and secure professional work environment that includes: the right to bargain collectively over wages, benefits, hours, terms and conditions of employment; just cause and due process; participation in educational decision-making; professional development; access to modern technologies and appropriate training; and securely funded retirement pensions and benefits for all who have served our students.

## **Health Care**

MEA supports legislation that preserves and protects our members' right to bargain the health care plan and carrier of their choice without restriction.

MEA supports the repeal of Public Act 106 of 2007. This legislation should restore a fair and equitable playing field for MESSA's large regional health care pools, eliminate statutory provisions that require the release of medical claims experience for groups fewer than 1,000 employees and fully protect the privacy of our members', and their families', medical claims information.

MEA supports legislation that guarantees our members the highest quality benefits (e.g., including but not limited to medical, long term disability, hearing, dental, vision and life) -

## **Privatization/Outsourcing**

MEA supports legislation that would remove the prohibition against bargaining over privatization/outsourcing (or the impact of privatization/outsourcing) that is currently contained in the P.E.R.A. [P.A. 112 1994] This legislation could include, but not be limited to, requiring a cost benefit study prior to any decision by a school board to privatize/outsourcing support services in any school building. Any study conducted by the administration of a school district regarding privatization/outsourcing of any bargaining unit/employee group shall be distributed 90 days prior to any decision by the board to all bargaining units within the school district.

## **MEA Legislative Issues**

MEA's Legislative Issues require MEA, singly or through coalitions, to initiate intensive activity to advance MEA's objectives. They comprise issues currently before the Legislature, or likely to be so in the near future, on which real, measurable progress can be made. MEA serves as a prime mover to initiate and advance its legislative agenda and to oppose those items detrimental to its members, public education and students.

### **Quality Education Agenda**

#### **MEA supports legislation:**

- That addresses the total social, economic and educational needs of all public early childhood and K-12 through higher education students in the State of Michigan.
- That provides for all schools receiving state funds to be staffed by certified professional personnel who are accessible to all students; participate in state mandated testing; comply fully with state accounting regulations; and adhere to all Freedom of Information Act requirements.
- To enhance student success at two- and four-year higher education institutions by significantly reversing the trend toward the use of adjunct and/or part-time faculty, and increase the employment of full-time tenured/continuing contract faculty.
- That clearly establishes the purpose of all state mandated testing programs. These tests will be based upon, but not limited to, developmentally, culturally, linguistically, and age-appropriate criteria, as well as optimal testing conditions and times.
- That ensures safe and secure schools.
- To create an enforceable process for eliminating school truancy.
- That will allow for an optimum class size of fifteen students in regular programs and a proportionately lower number in programs for students with special needs.
- To assure that handicapped and medically fragile students receive safe and proper care to meet their special needs. Health care services for all students shall be provided by certified/professional school nurses.
- To increase funding for public early childhood education (preschool) programs staffed by fully certified teachers.

- To require public schools to support a program of educational excellence with adequate numbers of curriculum specialists, instructional support staff, non instructional support staff and supervisory/administrative staff.
- To require all public early childhood and K-12 through higher education institutions to support MEA programs of excellence with adequate numbers of instructional and non instructional support staff.
- To secure the popular election of intermediate school board members.
- To support continuation of the statewide election of university and college trustees/boards.
- The appropriate use of any student test results as identified in the MEA Resolutions.

## **Funding**

### **MEA Supports Legislation:**

- That would hold harmless ISDs and community colleges from the Downtown Development Authorities and TIFAs (Tax Increment Financing Authorities) and other tax abatement, credits, or tax eliminations that contribute to the structural deficit for funding public schools. Hold harmless payments will be paid for out of general fund money.
- That would restore the funding lost from the school aid fund by the transfer of general fund programs.
- That addresses: declining enrollment offsets; equity increases to close the gap between the highest and lowest foundation allowances; capping schools' responsibility for retirement costs at 14.84%; and providing at least an increase in funding equal to the rate of inflation for early childhood, K-12 and higher education.
- To increase state funding for quality and equitable programs in each of Michigan's early childhood, K-12 and intermediate school districts. Such funding shall include, without priority, and not limited to:

- Adult Education
- Alternative Education
- Gifted and Talented
- ISD Operations
- Preschool
- Reading Initiative
- Safe and Secure Schools

School Modernization and Infrastructure  
Small Class Size Initiative  
Special Education  
Technology  
Transportation (criteria should include geographic factors)

- To provide increased state funding for professional development of public school employees including, but not limited to:

ESP Certification  
National Board Certification

- To increase state funding for equity payments to address funding differentials among public K-12 and intermediate school districts, while enhancing funding levels for all.
- To provide additional resources for students “At-Risk.”
- To provide additional resources for English language learners (ELL), whether mainstreamed or in self-contained classrooms or programs.
- To assure the state meets its full and true obligation for the funding of all special education programs.
- That provides the necessary state financial support to fund at least 50% of the Michigan public community college systems’ operating costs.
- That provides the state funding increases needed to assure quality academic, vocational and technical offerings at each of Michigan’s public colleges and universities.
- That prohibits the appropriation of public funds directly or indirectly to nonpublic or religious early childhood and K-12 through higher education schools.

## Professional Conditions

### MEA supports legislation:

- That would require the State of Michigan to provide low interest loans to probationary teachers for completing the required credits for a professional certificate.
- To restore and strengthen the collective bargaining rights of MEA members, including, but not limited to, the right to negotiate over the potential of job loss or change in employer, elimination of unilateral “declarations of impasse,” and compulsory binding arbitration (like PA 312 of 1969) as a contract dispute resolution procedure (interest arbitration).
- To preserve and strengthen state actuarial funding levels for the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System as well as legislation to cap the amount that a public school retiree contributes toward his or her health, dental, vision and hearing insurance premium.
- To increase employer contributions in community college and higher education retirement programs for members not covered by MPSERS. Increase employer contribution in community colleges and higher education retirements programs equal to the MPSERS contributions.
- To restore, maintain and/or improve the quality of the current retirement program by the following and other improvements:

To restore the right of all current and future members employed by Michigan community colleges and higher education institutions to have the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System as their primary retirement plan.

To increase the annual pension provided for public school retirees, including, but not limited to, compounding the annual increase for MIP participants.

To increase the multiplier in the retirement formula.

To set minimum pension for retirees who have retired prior to 1987 that reflects the impact of inflation.

To eliminate the intervening employment disqualification for maternity/child rearing retirement service credit.

- Creating an independent licensure board composed of a majority of certified school personnel empowered with exclusive authority to establish entry requirements for admission to the teaching profession and to grant and revoke licenses.
- To provide pay equity for all full and part-time MEA members early childhood and K-12 through higher education.
- To preserve the certification standards (including certification of substitute teachers) for all early childhood and K-12 employees.
- That provides just cause and due process for all public school employees.
- That will guarantee education personnel previously employed in a district that has been annexed, consolidated or merged into another district shall be entitled to all the rights and benefits to which they would otherwise be entitled had they been continuously employed in the district that was annexed, consolidated or merged.
- That prohibits the privatization/outsourcing of public school services and responsibilities. MEA will continue to pursue legislative activities that discourage all attempts to privatize/outsourcing district staff, substitute teachers and programs.

### **MEA Continuing Legislative Concerns**

MEA's Continuing Legislative Concerns are issues constantly monitored by MEA that require appropriate MEA activity when matters arise in the Legislature. These issues represent ideas to which MEA is committed but which may not currently be the subject of legislative activity. When an MEA Continuing Legislative Concern becomes the object of legislative consideration, it is automatically treated as an MEA Current Legislative Issue: MEA pursues it accordingly.

### **Quality Education Agenda**

#### **MEA supports legislation:**

- That will enhance the nutritional value of the school lunch program for all students in public school education.
- That assures access to higher education for all students.
- That supports the preservation and strengthening of current civil and human rights laws.
- That provides Equal Opportunity (Title IX) for the State of Michigan.

- To provide affirmative action legislation to improve racial and gender balance in educational institutions.
- That provides every public school student a multicultural, gender-fair program curriculum consisting of the core curriculum subjects and other elective programs such as:

Career/Vocational/Technical Education  
 Co-Curricular Educational Opportunities  
 Computer Literacy/Technology  
 Environmental Education  
 Foreign Languages  
 Health Education  
 Library Media Skills  
 Music Education  
 Physical Education  
 Visual/Performing Arts

- That establishes and preserves Ethnic/Minority Education, Global/Multicultural Education and Diversity Education.
- For the increase and/or the preservation of bilingual education, limited English proficiency programs, migrant education, gifted and talented education, special education, and “at-risk” programs.
- Designed to increase parental involvement in the daily education of their children.
- To preserve the requirement to report subgroup data (female/male, majority/minority, advantaged/disadvantaged) by the 1996 Revised School Code so that areas of needed improvement can be identified.
- Requiring each Michigan public school board to: 1) implement PA 185 (1987) regarding AIDS education; 2) adopt a policy on the teaching of reproductive health; and 3) support a collaborative effort with the community to establish and maintain program(s) that foster informed and responsible sexual decisions by students.
- To provide a federal equal rights amendment to the United States Constitution.
- That preserves and strengthens academic freedom in curricula and instruction.
- To prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender and/or sexual orientation in public educational institutions or those institutions providing supplemental services.

## **Funding**

### **MEA supports legislation:**

- That provides funding programs in higher education based on student need and enrollment.
- To help defray the costs through funding innovations to students of post-secondary education.
- To provide funding for scholarships, grants and enrichment programs for all students, especially for ethnic and racial minorities, women and senior adults in higher education.
- To provide state funding, including differential tuition, to allow community college out-of-district students to enroll in programs not offered in their college districts.
- To restore funding to the Michigan Department of Education for the purpose of oversight and implementation of Title IX.

## **Professional Conditions**

### **MEA supports legislation:**

- That preserves current opportunities and enhances future participation by all public school employees in educational decision-making.
- That will advance equal opportunity rights for women and minority employees in higher education.
- That preserves and strengthens the licensure/certification rights of all public education employees.
- To enable public educational support employees to collect unemployment benefits during periods of traditional idleness (e.g., summer break, spring break, winter breaks, etc.) for which they are not compensated.
- To overturn the impact of *Smith v. MESAC*, thereby enabling employees to collect unemployment benefits where such employment is due to a labor dispute to which the employees' bargaining unit is not a party.
- That supports tenure as a means of guaranteeing due process and just cause in the dismissal of public school employees until such time as statewide legislation mandates school employee dismissal be subject to binding, impartial third-party arbitration.

- That supports due process rights for probationary teachers and other professional staff not eligible for tenure.
- That supports initiatives designed to reduce the length of the probationary period and make probationary evaluations meaningful in obtaining tenure.
- That supports due process rights for support staff.
- To preserve and protect the employment rights of substitute teachers.
- That provides the use of unisex mortality tables for insurance.
- To secure the election of community college boards on a one-person/one-vote basis for sub-units within public community college districts.

The initiatives, goals and objectives presented in this document are not presented so as to indicate a priority level or designation.