

The Advocate *GCEA*

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From the President's Desk:

It has been an extremely busy month. Most recently, members of GCEA attended the SLO Convening meeting in Washington Co. to participate in an MSDE led discussion of SLO writing, improvements, and impacts. It was stressed that SLO's need to be written by teachers for teachers. It was also encouraged that assessments be authentic and meaningful to instruction, not just standardized. We are looking forward to the next SLO Convening meeting.

Last weekend, eight delegates from GCEA attended the 149th annual Representative Assembly (RA) held in Ocean City, MD. Given the fantastic weather and beach scene, your delegates were actively involved in the decision-making and future of not only your local association, but MSEA as well. The RA was filled with excitement, collaboration, professional development, and some heated discussions. Overall, a lot of work was conducted and MSEA will work throughout the year to address the concerns, challenges, and ideas that were shared at the assembly.

Lynne, GCEA's Government Relations Chair, has sent several updates to your email regarding the New Business Items (NBI's) that were presented at the RA. She has provided some narratives about the debate and the outcomes of each NBI. I thank her for her commitment to lead such an important committee and the information that she shares with all of us.

Open enrollment documents have been delivered to each school. Evan has been answering a lot of questions regarding the documents that have been distributed. If you have questions regarding your benefits, please feel free to contact the GCEA office.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Damon
President

What is MSEA Fund?

WHAT? The MSEA Fund for Children and Public Education is MSEA's Political Action Committee (PAC). The money that is voluntarily contributed is used to elect pro-public education school boards, county councils, state delegates and senators, and governors. PAC is also OUR voice in Washington to help elect pro-public members to congress.

WHY? Political decisions affect your classroom, jobs, students and families. The most powerful tool that MSEA has to protect our association is the MSEA Fund for Children and Public Education. GCEA has an extremely small percentage of members who contribute to the PAC fund. Let's increase our numbers and become more involved in political action.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? We need association members, like you, to sign up for the MSEA Fund. Contact your building representative, UniServ Director, or president for PAC membership information. No payroll deduction is too small. PAC needs your help.

If you have ever wondered why GCEA is involved in political action, just check out this list:

- Salary
- Retirement benefits
- School budget
- Certification standards
- Class size
- School calendar
- Duty free lunch
- Length of work day
- Fringe benefits
- Collective bargaining and due process
- OSHA regulations
- Tax credits for school supplies
- And many more!

NEA Representative Assembly

Any member(s) interested in attending the National Education Association Representative Assembly that will be held in

Boston, MA, on June – July 2017, should contact his/her building representative for the application. The application to attend is due at the MSEA office by November 18, 2016.

The process only takes a few minutes to complete. Locals with enrollment under 500 persons need representation in the Maryland delegation. Try your luck and apply, the experience is incredible.

Committees

The following committees will be meeting in the next few weeks to begin their work and to provide a voice for GCEA and its members. The Calendar Committee will be meeting on or around November 15, 2016. Dates for the Planning and Workload Committee and the Health and Wellness Committee have not been announced.

If you would like to provide insights and offer your ideas for the representatives from GCEA to share at the meeting, please email the GCEA office.

UniServ Minute

As folks are already aware, GCEA and the Board of Education ratified Negotiated Agreements for both of our bargaining units in September. Several key components of that agreement are about to take effect.

First, GCEA President Patrick Damon has asked a number of members to participate in the committees that were made permanent by the Agreements. The Unit 1 and Unit 3 Workload Committees will be meeting in the very near future, as will the GCEA/GCPS Health Care Committees. Part of our negotiations involved GCEA asking for more access to the Garrett County Health Care Coalition. I reinforced that request with Dr. Wildesen, GCPS' new Director of Human Resources, last week.

Open enrollment for GCPS health insurance plans has begun. The new plan structure will take effect in January of 2017. One very important question that has been asked is how long members will have to meet deductibles. Members will have from January 2017- December 2017 to meet deductibles.

GCPS Human Resources will be offering an information session on open enrollment and plan changes on 11/2 from 5-7pm. Representatives from CBIZ will be available to answer questions from employees.

The possibility of adding Flexible Spending Accounts was also a result of our Agreements with the Board. GCEA intends

to pursue those accounts and hopes to have them as an offering to our members as soon as possible. Those efforts have been slowed somewhat by the vacancies in the Human Resources and Finance Departments. GCEA will update our members periodically as to what progress has been made with FSAs.

GCEA's leaders met in August to discuss our local strategic plan for the year. Part of that plan was to start the process of involving our members in negotiations for this year earlier. To that end, I'll be asking the Governing Board to start compiling a list of possible negotiations items to form negotiations surveys at the October Governing Board meeting. Once the Governing Board has approved the surveys, they will be made available to members. As always, members are encouraged to communicate any suggestions for negotiations to their Governing Board representatives and GCEA leaders.

Both our bargaining units are open for negotiations on salary, benefits and two items per side this year.

November 14th through the 18th is American Education Week and I'd like to express in advance how deeply I appreciate the work that our members do. You are the backbone of not only our schools, but our communities and our democracy. As always, thank you for everything you do.

GCEA Office

The GCEA Office is open 10:30-4:30
Tuesday-Thursday.

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Governing Board Meetings

Our next governing board meeting is TBD.

Your GCEA Officers

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