

# HEA HOT SHEET

November 2016

- **GRADING AT HHS – UPDATE FROM PRESIDENT LISA BEGLEY**

Meetings with the administration, the deans, and myself have taken place over the last couple of weeks. We were able to hash out some of our concerns. Not enough teacher evidence was provided to the union by the high school staff and it has been decided to not move forward on the labor violation. What we have been able to come to agreements on are as follows:

- The idea behind this shift in practice is that student grades have not been a true indicator of mastery, and also that there is a disconnect between many of the grades and third party test results. It is the feeling of the administration that if second chances can be provided to the students, with teacher-determined options regarding any remediation requirements, then the longer-term goal is to have students be more invested in their learning beyond just the report card.
- **Mastery** – An understanding or a grasp of a topic or a display of skill sets needed for that topic.
- **Regular Quizzes and Tests** – Students will be given the opportunity by all teachers to retake quizzes and tests. Teachers will have the ability to determine to the number of retakes as well as any remediation parameters they deem necessary. The teachers can also establish their own timeline for retakes, from one week to the end of the quarter. The timeline for retakes needs to be identified ahead of time on the teacher's syllabus.
- **Mid-terms and Final Exams** – are not required to allow any re-takes. This is up to the individual teachers.
- **Homework** – Can be given to the students however, if it is to be counted for a grade it should be showing mastery and not be just for practice.
- **Classwork** – Can also count for a grade when it is again checking for mastery. Students should be given the opportunity to practice and not feel as if grades will be assigned when they are still learning the material. Checks and grades given for participation should not be part of your grading system. Grading rubrics should be clear to the students.
- **Projects** – Can be used when showing mastery of the topics covered.
- **Late work** – Should be accepted without penalty for the window that the teacher has given. After the window, which may include the due date, and the window to re-take, if a student has not passed in the work then they may have a penalty of losing points, which again should be established in advance.
- **Second Chance** – Retakes can't be given if they did not do the work to begin with!
- **Discussion** – is still taking place on the availability of a late bus so that all students will have the opportunity for re-takes. Teachers will be able to leave their tests and or quizzes for example with the assigned monitor for students to have the opportunity for a re-take on a day that their teacher is not available.

- **MAYOR PLANS MOVE TO GIC, MAJOR HEALTH INSURANCE CHANGES IMMINENT**

- Last month, Mayor Fiorentini invoked his privilege under the current law to move Haverhill into the state's health insurance purchasing group known as the GIC, effective July 1, 2017. This means big changes with regard to all City of Haverhill employees and retirees. While more information will be coming from the city in the next couple of months, here is what you need to know right now: All members will need to choose a new health insurance plan from one of the 7 available options – Blue Cross/Blue Shield NOT being among the list – during the upcoming open enrollment period. Members should pay attention for emails and/or letters from the city informing them of information sessions and health insurance fairs they can attend to find out information about the available plans and to receive assistance in choosing a new plan. A Public Employee Committee (PEC) made up of representatives from all municipal employee unions has formed and has been negotiating with the mayor's office to come up with a plan to reimburse members for a portion of these increased costs. Under the law, the employees are entitled to 25% of the city's projected first-year savings, in this case an amount estimated to be about \$725,000. Once the PEC reaches agreement with the city on the mitigation plan, details will be shared with all members.

- **IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS (FSAs)/CROSBY BENEFITS**

- Using money deducted from your paycheck, flexible spending accounts, managed by Crosby Benefits are a great way to plan for healthcare expenses throughout the year. Up to \$2,250 per year can be deducted, pre-tax, to be placed in an FSA. However, **any unspent money is returned to the city**. According to the city's benefits coordinator, this money is used to manage the accounts and offset any losses. Before deciding how much

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money to contribute to an FSA, members should carefully consider their annual healthcare expenses and contribute only as much as they think they can spend! Last year, a new “rollover” feature was added. This allows up to \$500 of unspent 2016-17 FSA money to be rolled over to the 2017-18 FSA. Any money unspent beyond the \$500 is returned to the city. This is the first year of the rollover feature, so no money would have rolled over from 2015-2016 or any prior year.

- **GOOD NEWS FROM AROUND THE HEA!**

- We had another wonderful harvest with **Nancy Burke's Farm to School program**. Students had some of their items entered into the Topsfield Fair. There was a wonderful ceremony thanking all the different organizations that helped to make this a reality. On the union side we want to thank the NEA and the MTA for making this a reality.
- *Empty Bowls* – This program was part of a National Teachers Leadership Initiative that **Alice Yabe** participated in. Again both the NEA and the MTA supported this. Alice was able to gather additional support and assistance from the entire Fine Arts Department and HHS's own librarian, **Henry Toromoreno**. All proceeds went to the Emmaus House that helps support homeless families. Many students assisted to make this a successful event. Great job Alice!
- Consentino staff members recently raised \$300 to help the family of a former student currently in hospice care with brain cancer. The student's sister attends the school and staff used the money to purchase gift certificates to supermarkets and restaurants for meals for the family as they work through this difficult time. In addition, the school is holding a dance in November with all proceeds raised to go to the family.

- **SAVE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN ENDS THIS WEEK**

- **Thank you** to all the teachers and ESPs that stood out for the Save our Public School campaign each Thursday over the last month of school. I know that some mornings it was cold but you showed up early and tried to make a difference in the lives of Massachusetts's students. No one can ask you for any more than when you truly put your words into actions. Thank you for giving that extra effort! Thank you to every member that put up a sign on their lawn, on their car, or who even wore a button. We shall see shortly if our efforts were successful!

- **NEED NEW GLASSES? OPTICAL ACADEMY TO BE AT HEA OFFICE NOVEMBER 15 (3-6pm)**

- We are having the Optical Academy come to our HEA office on November 15<sup>th</sup> from 3:00pm to 6:00pm. Bring your prescriptions and you can get some very inexpensive yet stylish glasses for both you and any family member. They will be at the office set up with all of their choices of frames. They can take a copy of your prescription and then you will have your new glasses within a few weeks. Who couldn't use a great new pair?

- **ISSUES AROUND THE DISTRICT**

- *Hunking Middle School – Start Time Violation*. It seems that students are coming into the classrooms earlier than the 8:30am start time. This does not give the teachers the needed time to be able to set up and be reading for their first class period. This situation has only recently been brought to the executive boards attention and is just now being addressed. I have reached out to the principal and am hoping to work together with their unique situation of not having their entire building available to put students while the new Hunking School is being completed. Please know that we are now aware of the situation and hope to have it fixed shortly.
- *Nettle Middle School – Prep time violation, change in working conditions*. Our grievance for the teachers not getting time within the first two days of the school year for preparation for their students is at level two. We have also filed a request to negotiate the change in the working conditions by the implementation of an intervention period resulting in a 7<sup>th</sup> period of instruction. The district has 45 days from the time this request was submitted to respond.
- *Special Education Dept. – Changing working conditions*. We submitted a request to negotiate due to the impact on changes that have been implemented within the special education department. The 45-day window to respond to the HEA's request has passed. We now have the authority to take it to a labor violation. I reached out to School Committee President Maura Ryan-Ciardello and she believes that the school's attorney should

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have already reached out to us regarding a discussion over this. I have not heard from him yet but hope that it will be soon. In the mean time we will file our labor violation. If we do meet and we come to some type of agreement over some of our issues then this violation can be withdrawn.

- *ESP substitute pay.* We are working on coming up with a standard form for the ESPs to be able to complete when they have covered six classes. Currently there is not a standard form and this is not being dealt with the same way at all schools. We are working on this issue. It has also come up that part-time ESPs who choose to substitute on their off days will revert to the standard ESP substitute rate based on their education rather than the hourly amount that they make on their normal scheduled work days. We just wanted everyone to be aware of this.

- **SECRETARIAL UNIT LABOR RELATIONS VIOLATION**

- We are now being required to enter mediation over the last secretarial labor violation. This is surprising because the HEA requested the hearing to avoid mediation. The judge ruled, however, that we must at least attempt to mediate before the matter goes further. A date will be set for the mediation to take place in the near future.

- **GRIEVANCES HEAD TO ARBITRATION**

- We have two dates for arbitration set for next month on issues that began last year. Both stem around the use of the Evaluation document. More will follow on these issues.

- **BYLAWS AMENDMENTS – 9 APPROVED, 1 REJECTED BY BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES**

- All the proposed bylaw changes (see October 2016's newsletter) passed with the exception of the proposed change to Article VII – Faculty Representatives. It was decided that this amendment needed further revision. We will be looking at this article at our next Faculty Representatives meeting and coming up with a different proposal to put out to our members.

- **SPED TASK FORCE CONTINUES TO MEET**

- Meetings of the Special Education Task Force continue to be held at 4:00 at the HEA office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month. The next meetings are scheduled for November 9<sup>th</sup> and December 14<sup>th</sup>. Contact Ted Kempinski (TedKHEA@gmail.com) for more information.

- **DECEMBER NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS REQUESTED**

- **Looking to buy, sell, or trade?** Trying to unload that unused exercise equipment? Looking to rent out a timeshare or vacation home? Looking for a good deal on hard-to-find items?  
**Place your ad in the HEA Swap Shop** feature! Free for HEA members!
- **MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED!** Are you organizing a fundraiser or community even for your school? Do you have an interesting story or valuable lesson learned from the classroom? Do you have any advice you can share with our members about evaluations, professional development, or best practices with which you've found success? Care to share your thoughts on the state of public education in Haverhill, Massachusetts, or the nation? This is your forum! If you have anything you'd like to share with your fellow educators, have it published in the HEA Newsletter!
- Email Anthony Parolisi (anthonyparolisi@gmail.com) to contribute (deadline: November 28th).

- **NEXT BUILDING REPRESENTATIVES' MEETING – November 17<sup>th</sup>, 4PM AT HEA OFFICE**

- Come to our next representatives' meeting! Each building is entitled to 1 representative for every 15-20 members. Most buildings only have 1 current representative and others have none! We need your voice! **Any members interested in being a building representative should contact Jeff Blaustein (jbandkb14@gmail.com).** If you can't make it to our meetings please forward any issues to your building representatives or the Executive Board.

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