



Birmingham Education Association, MEA/NEA

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Collective Bargaining and You

Since 1965, Michigan public employees have enjoyed the right to bargain collectively. This means that, rather than accepting whatever the employer is willing to offer you as an individual, the terms and conditions of your employment are controlled by a contract negotiated between the employer and your union. Furthermore, as a union member, you have the right to offer input into what that agreement contains. And finally, the contract must be returned to you for your ratification vote before it becomes a binding agreement.

Your contract is a living document, subject to change according to your changing needs.

The salary and benefits you receive when you become an employee are not gifts from your employer. They are the result of many years of hard work on the part of your association members, leaders, and staff. Traditional benefits you enjoy in your contract include:

- Salary
- Health insurance
- Life insurance
- Long-term disability insurance
- Vision insurance
- Dental insurance
- Tax-deferred annuity
- Sick leave
- Personal leave
- Paid and unpaid leaves
- Class size or other controls on your working conditions
- Holidays
- Vacations
- Guarantees of adequate preparation time
- Extra-duty pay
- Layoff control and protection
- Protection against arbitrary discipline/dismissal
- A fair evaluation process
- A grievance procedure to redress problems
- Antidiscrimination
- Employment protection

In recent years, collective bargaining has empowered more members in such critically important areas as:

- School improvement
- Site-based decision making
- Special education
- Professional growth and autonomy
- School reform.

Collective bargaining works best when the members are informed, knowledgeable and involved. If you feel an area of your contract is deficient, or a new subject needs to be negotiated, you should advocate for those changes within your association. This means talking to your colleagues, completing surveys, attending membership meetings, and perhaps serving on your bargaining team.

A collective bargaining agreement is not an abstract document. It is the basis for all of your rights as an employee. It is legally binding on you as an employee, on your association and your employer. It is important that you understand it and think about how you would like to see it change in the future.

Since 1965, when the Public Employment Relations Act (PERA) was passed, the Michigan Education Association has assisted local associations and individual members to assist in collective bargaining. These include numerous training opportunities, information exchange and consultant services. Most important, the MEA offers direct, at-the-table bargaining assistance and consultation through your local Uniserv director. Uniserv directors are the local “front line” of the MEA. They are experienced, knowledgeable and well-trained labor relations professionals who can help you in your contract bargaining.

A local contract is only as strong as the association it represents. You can make both your contract and your association stronger by becoming involved.

We hope that you see the benefits of belonging to our union.

Join over 500 of your colleagues and become part of the BEA!

Scott Warrow

Steve Amberg

BEA President

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