

MCEA Members -- Leading in Our Schools

A Vision for Teacher Leadership

Roles are Changing

Public support for – and expectations of – public education are changing rapidly. The way we have always done things will no longer be sufficient to meet the new challenges we face in our public schools. For MCEA, this means putting the quality of teaching and learning at the center of our agenda. We understand that our members' futures depend on the success of our schools.

The Role of Teacher Leadership

MCEA believes that *teacher leadership* is an indispensable ingredient both for school success and to ensure quality in our profession. We believe that those who teach every day are in the best position to define and guide decisions about teaching and learning in schools. When teachers lead, it should not be for the purpose of being promoted into school administration but rather to grow the capacity of the teacher workforce to improve teaching and learning. There must be opportunities for teachers to guide, direct and influence other teachers to achieve a common vision of effective teaching—and to be acknowledged, affirmed and compensated for their leadership *as teachers*.

Teacher leadership means that teachers are empowered to take responsibility for the quality of their work, the profession and the school. To accept these responsibilities, teacher leaders must be enabled and trained to participate in school decision-making processes, to represent the interests of their colleagues, and to organize others to help advocate for change.

MCEA has worked hard to establish and enhance a range of teacher leadership opportunities within MCPS. Through contract negotiations we created the Elementary Team Leader position. We have continued to improve the salary supplements for it, as well as for secondary Resource Teachers. MCEA led the way in defining and establishing the positions of Staff Development Teacher and Consulting Teacher. And now (through development of a 'Career Lattice'), we are working to expand opportunities for teachers to take on responsibilities in their schools beyond their own classroom - without having to leave the teaching profession for administration.

Teacher Leaders as Union Leaders

Certain teacher leadership roles are naturally more aligned with union leadership than others. For instance, the new Elected Faculty Representatives, while not officially part of MCEA's governance structure, are critically important teacher leaders with responsibilities to their colleagues, their school and their profession. Elected Faculty Reps to School Leadership Teams are unique teacher leadership opportunities because these positions are elected by — and accountable to — their colleagues on a school faculty. At its core, the EFR position is accountable to the faculty in ways that other teacher leadership roles are not.

MCEA's *Union Reps* (also know as building reps or delegates) remain at the heart of union leadership in schools. However, even Union Reps must begin to re-conceptualize their role in the schools. MCEA Reps must represent not only individual members, but also the best interests of the faculty as a whole. They must be advocates not only for the improvement of teaching and learning conditions, but also for the teaching profession itself and for school improvement.

Elected Faculty Representatives To School Leadership Teams

Background

The EFR position was established by the 2004 contract negotiations between MCEA and the Board of Education. It is an outgrowth of many years of work by MCEA and the Board to improve labor-management relations within local schools and provide for faculty involvement in school-level decision-making.

For many years, the MCEA/BOE contract provided for “Liaison Committees” – a prescribed structure that allowed faculties to elect their own representatives and which required local school administrators to meet with the Committee to address “issues and matters of concern”. Liaison Committees had a mixed history of success: a majority of schools did not have them, and in those that did – they were often viewed as adversarial and unproductive.

As a result of the 2001 contract negotiations, Liaison Committees were replaced by FACCs – “Faculty-Administration Collaboration Committees”. MCEA, the administration, and the principals’ union committed to joint training of FACCs, and there was a renewed emphasis on collaborative problem-solving. Yet confusion persisted over the role and responsibilities of FACCs compared to school leadership teams (Instructional Councils, etc.). Ultimately, in the 2004 negotiations, the bargaining teams agreed to transcend this dual process and to fully align labor-management problem solving as an integral part of the work of school leadership teams. The result was the new EFR position, complete with salary supplement and summer supplemental employment days.

Official MCPS Position Description of EFRs

“As a full member of the school’s leadership team (the core leadership group involved in local school decision-making), the Faculty Representative works with other leadership team members collaborating with school administrators. In this role, the Faculty Representative, along with other leadership team members, serves as a communicator and liaison with the school’s faculty. The Faculty Representative helps to facilitate and solve problems through the leadership team. In addition, the Faculty Representative shares responsibility for ensuring effective communication between the administration and the faculty and for increasing faculty involvement in, and ownership of, local school improvement. Faculty Representatives are selected annually by the faculty, and receive a salary supplement and summer planning day(s), in accordance with the Agreement between the Montgomery County Education Association and the Board of Education.

Knowledge, Abilities, and Skills:

- Has the respect of both one’s teaching colleagues and the school administration
- Demonstrates skill in working effectively with people
- Demonstrates effective problem-solving skills
- Is committed to improving student learning

- Is committed to continuous improvement and the development of a professional learning community
- Is willing to participate fully in the Leadership Team and its activities
- Is reflective and able to see multiple perspectives
- Sees the big picture
- Understands countywide policies and procedures as they apply to the school
- Has the ability to work collaboratively with a diverse group of individuals

The Faculty Representative is expected to participate fully and equally in the work of the Leadership Team. This will require that the representative understand and support the collaborative decision making process of the team, including the decisions of the team, and the selection of decisions to be made by the team as well as those delegated to other groups.

Examples of Duties & Responsibilities of EFRs

School Leadership

As a member of the Leadership Team, the Faculty Representative may

- a. Represent the staff as a full participating member on the School Leadership Team, including designated summer planning days
- b. Participate in the design and implementation of the School Improvement Plan and the Baldrige School Improvement Process
- c. Assist in developing agendas for Leadership Team meetings
- d. Assist with the development of school schedules and calendars, including the testing schedule
- e. Assist in identifying teachers to participate on school committees and to be involved in school wide planning
- f. Assist in the evaluation and improvement of school programs
- g. Participate with the school staff in data analysis activities
- h. Assist with the identification of needs related to instructional technologies

Communications

As a member of the Leadership Team, the Faculty Representative may

- i. Ensure that there is good two-way communication between the school administration and Leadership Team with the rest of the school faculty
- j. Assist with planning and conducting of faculty meetings
- k. Help build faculty ownership in local school instructional decision-making
- l. Help foster cohesive, cooperative patterns of interpersonal relationships within the faculty
- m. Keep informed about new trends and programs relevant to the school

Representation

As a member of the Leadership Team, the Faculty Representative may

- n. Serve as a liaison between the faculty as a whole and the school administration
- o. Network with other schools and with the Councils on Teaching and Learning
- p. Meet with the principal
- q. Work with the principal and the leadership team to address matters of concern or interest to the faculty”

MCEA Perspective on the Elected Faculty Rep Job

As is stated in the official Position Description, the EFR is “*a full member of the school leadership team*”. S/he is a “*facilitator*”, a “*communicator*”, a “*problem-solver*”, and a “*liaison with the school’s faculty*.” Success in this position requires a fundamental commitment to collaborative decision-making, problem-solving, advocacy for - and accountability to - one’s colleagues.

S/he “*has responsibility for ensuring good communication between the administration and the faculty and for increasing faculty involvement in, and ownership of, local school improvement.*”

For MCEA, this means several things:

- **Ensuring that the full faculty is knowledgeable about the work of the leadership team – both before and after decisions are made**
- **Ensuring that the views and needs of the faculty are taken into consideration in the decision-making process**
- **Developing processes through which the views and needs of the faculty can be developed, sorted out, assessed, and expressed**
- **Ensuring that the concerns of the faculty are addressed**
- **Networking with EFRs at other schools to explore effective practices and opportunities for continuous improvement**
- **Being well informed about relevant countywide issues such as changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment**
- **Understanding the parameters of relevant countywide policies and contractual provisions**

MCEA (Building) Union Representatives

MCEA Union Reps are the heart and soul of the association. They are our grassroots leaders, selected by colleagues, to represent them in the creation of an effective organization that advances the interests of educators and public education. MCEA Reps are leaders, organizers, and problem-solvers.

The ideal MCEA Rep should:

- Be an instructional leader in your school
- Have the respect of your colleagues – and the administration
- Be self-aware about your role as a leader – earning respect by the way you exercise your judgment, treat other people, and work to solve problems, and
- Do what is right for teachers and students.

Responsibility of Reps

Your primary responsibility as a Rep is to *provide union leadership* for MCEA members at your school or worksite by

- helping them solve problems arising from their work as educators in their school(or other worksite).**
- advocating for and representing their collective interests and needs as education employees.**
- mobilizing collective action when necessary, and**
- getting other members involved in the work of the union**

The most effective Reps develop a core of colleagues to share in the many tasks involved. The ability to recruit volunteers can be the most valuable skill for a Rep to develop.

Rep Structure

- Your school/worksite is entitled to at least one MCEA Rep, and additional Reps on the basis of 1 for every 15 MCEA members (or major fraction thereof). This works out as follows:

How Many MCEA Union Reps Should Your School/Worksite Have?

<i>Number of MCEA Members</i>	<i>Number of Union Reps</i>	<i>Number of MCEA Members</i>	<i>Number of Union Reps</i>
7 - 22	1	98 – 112	7
23 – 37	2	113 – 127	8
38 – 52	3	128 – 142	9
53 – 67	4	143 – 157	10
68 – 82	5	158 – 165	11
83 – 97	6	166 – 187	12
		188 – 202	13

- Reps should be elected at a meeting of the MCEA members at your school or worksite. Traditionally this is done during the pre-service week in August. Some schools do it in the spring, so planning can be done over the summer.
- MCEA sends out pre-service Rep Packets to all prior year's Reps to assist in the conduct of this first meeting.
- In sites with more than one Rep, one should be designated as the Head Rep.
- MCEA *strongly* encourages worksites to elect full complements of Reps, so that the responsibilities can be shared.

The Representative Assembly

- MCEA's Union Reps are a critical link in the communications between members and the elected Board of Directors.
- MCEA holds a countywide Representative Assembly (RA) the first Wednesday of every month (Sept.-June). The RA is held at the MCEA Conference Center at 60 West Gude Drive in Rockville.
- The RA is a policy making body within the organization. It operates under Roberts Rules of Orders and its own Standing Rules.
- The RA is open to all members. Voting is limited to duly designated Reps.

Effective Building Level Organization

There are many tasks involved in developing an effective building level organization. No one person can do it all. That's why **developing a core of volunteers is essential**. By distributing leadership and building the leadership skills of others, you will accomplish much more. A well functioning **team of Union Reps** shares the responsibility for:

- ✓ **Ensuring that your school/worksite is represented at every Rep Assembly**
 - Some Reps attend every RA themselves. Others rotate the responsibility among several Reps. The key outcome is to ensure that your school is represented.
- ✓ **Promoting communication about issues**
 - All Reps should be on MCEA's Rep email list to receive important news & updates.
 - The RA is a vehicle for two-way communications. Reps should share feedback from and to their colleagues about issues at the RAs.
 - Reps are encouraged to regularly read – and contribute to – discussions on the *MCEA Forum* on Outlook. The *Forum* is a powerful means of increasing teacher input into decision-making. Reps should take a lead role in advancing thoughtful discussions about the issues that matter to our members.
 - Reps should regularly copy MCEA's postings from the *MCEA Forum* to their own school's private folders in order to keep their members informed, and should be encouraging their colleagues to regularly read and participate in the Forum discussions.

✓ **Helping members solve individual and school-wide problems**

- You should establish a way for teachers in your building to communicate directly with MCEA Union Reps about any concerns or problems they face (individual or collective).
- A Rep or Reps should be designated to follow up on concerns by learning more about the problem, determining its scope, suggesting appropriate means of resolving the problem, involving others when necessary and helping the member(s) get a solution that works for everyone involved.
- It is appropriate for Reps to support individual teachers when meeting with administration.
- When problems are broad-based (affecting many teachers at the school), they should be brought to the attention of the Elected Faculty Rep to put on the Leadership Team agenda. You should work closely with the EFR to prepare the agenda item for Leadership Team and be available to speak with the LT about the issue.
- Remember, MCEA staff and officers are available to help you solve problems.

✓ **Organizing MCEA membership meetings in your building as needed**

- Some schools meet every month, others less frequently. But regular, short, informative membership meetings are critical to keeping your colleagues informed and staying in touch with their concerns.
- In other schools, Reps regularly provide updates during staff meetings.
- MCEA staff are always available to assist with worksite level membership meetings. They can come to answer questions and/or provide updates on current issues.

✓ **Promoting involvement in decision-making at your school**

- Ensure that your school elects its “Elected Faculty Representative(s) to the School Leadership Team”.
- Help members understand and interpret the contract provisions about staff involvement in decision-making.
- Serve as a representative of the faculty in resolving problems with the school administration and with the school leadership team.
- Ensure the faculty has good communication with the leadership of the school’s PTA.

✓ **Distributing MCEA materials**

- One member should be designated as the PONY contact. It can be the Head Rep, but this is a discreet responsibility that is often taken on by a member willing to help out on a specific, defined task. *The MCEA News* is distributed every two weeks and there are occasional special communications with members.

✓ **Conducting MCEA elections**

- MCEA is a democratically run organization. In addition to electing their own Union Reps, MCEA members elect the MCEA Board of Directors, the Board of the Maryland State Teachers Association, and delegates to the annual convention of the National Education Association. All elections are conducted at schools and worksites. This is another concrete, specific task that can easily be assumed by a volunteer other than the Head Rep.

✓ **Involving members in Association activities**

- There are always opportunities for member involvement: be it by enrolling in trainings or workshops, participating in forums or conferences, serving on committees or joint work groups, or participating in rallies or other collective actions. Reps play a critical role in encouraging members to participate. Reps should always be thinking about opportunities for involvement and what might appeal to specific colleagues. As with membership (*see below*) the only way people get involved is if they are personally asked.

✓ **Recruiting new members to the Association**

- Recruitment of new teachers is critical to the vitality of the organization. An MCEA Rep in each building should contact every new teacher personally.
- Early in each year, MCEA provides Reps with rosters to identify who is a member and who is not. Either the MCEA Rep or another designated “recruiter/welcomer” should both contact each new teacher and recruit to membership those who have not yet joined.
- All new teachers are required to either join the Association as a member or become a “representation fee payer” for the services MCEA is legally required to provide to them.

✓ **Promoting involvement in political action**

- As public employees, much of our work lives are influenced by the decisions of elected officials. Involvement in political action is essential to our ability to improve the compensation and working conditions of our members and the quality of public education.
- MCEA regularly works to mobilize its members to get involved in key political races, to work the polls, and to financially support political action through the *Fund for Children and Public Education*.
- The most important role Union Reps can play is recruiting colleagues to distribute the MCEA “Apple Ballot” at the polls on election days.
- This is another great opportunity to recruit one or more volunteers to take on discrete tasks that help build the organization and win improvements in the lives of our members.

Support for Reps

A primary responsibility of the leadership and staff of MCEA is to help Union Reps be successful. MCEA’s president, board of directors and field staff are all regularly engaged in helping reps organize their schools effectively. They are available to speak at membership or faculty meetings; to meet with reps, teams or departments to plan and organize; and to assist in problem-solving. The entire MCEA staff is available to help you as an MCEA Rep.

For more information about how to contact MCEA leadership and staff, and for the latest news, visit the MCEA Forum on Outlook and/or the MCEA website at www.mcea.nea.org .