

LEAdvocate

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*A Basic Right...
A Great
Public School
for Every
Child.*

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Paperwork: More Than the Kind That You Grade (or the kind your dog delivers, too)

And Why It Can Be Important...



In this day and age when the talk is always of going “paperless,” paper remains an important part of our lives. Here are some important pieces of paper associated with your employment that often gets forgotten or tossed aside and left unattended. It should not be.


- If you or someone in your immediate family is faced with a chronic illness and you begin to lose a lot of work, LPS is mandated to send out to you a copy of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) with forms to be completed by both you and your doctor. This is a federal requirement and it guarantees that your employer must allow you to take leave without putting your job at risk for medical conditions you or an immediate family member for whom you are assuming responsibility may have. FMLA does *not* require that the District provide you with paid leave if you have run out of annual or accumulated leave (you may also borrow from the next year or seek donated leave). If you are ever find yourself in a situation such as the above and you receive FMLA papers from LPS, be sure to complete the paperwork sent to you and return it in a timely manner.
- If you are faced with the need for leave that is likely to take you above and beyond the annual and accumulated leave that you have, contact the District (Kyla Jensby) in a timely manner requesting that you be able to seek donated leave. This paperwork must be done, turned in, and approved based upon your lack or inevitable lack of leave before requests can be sent out in your behalf for donated leave. Do *not* assume that you can get donated leave to retroactively replace days of docked pay after a pay period has expired and you have already had a reduction in a month’s pay check.
- Accident reports at work must be completed and filled out within twenty-four hours of the event. Do not assume that you are fine after a slip or a fall (or


any accident) and that you will continue to be fine and not need the benefits available to you via Worker's Compensation.

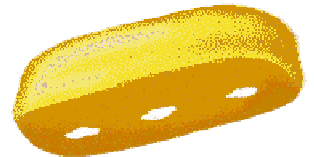
- If you receive an appraisal or observation form in writing, or a written reprimand you have the right to respond in writing so that a copy of your rebuttal or point of view is in your file, giving any prospective reader of the information both sides of the story. It is important that your response be timely, factual, and concise. LEA staff will assist you in this (or whether there should even be a response written), but to decide to write a response long after the initial receipt of the concern makes your response and your point of view seem of less significance. As always, when told to, you need to sign and return any paperwork given to you by a supervisor (or risk insubordination). *You can always add (and LEA suggests that you do) a disclaimer that your signature means you have read the material, do not necessarily agree to its contents, and reserve the right to respond in writing.* If anything of a critical nature is placed in your file without your awareness and the preservation of your rights with your signature, that material can be and should be challenged when and if discovered or there is an attempt to use it against you.

Anything placed in writing that affects your employment needs to be taken seriously, more so than verbal comments made to you. Never hesitate to contact the LEA for advice on any such matters and don't just assume that the concern expressed to you will go away if you ignore it... you already know how ignoring certain student behaviors never seem to go away, now don't you?

Urban Myths

 Do you follow the "five second rule" if you drop food on the floor? It's safe to eat what you dropped as long as you pick the food up within five seconds!

 Did you know that Hostess Twinkies have such a long shelf life because of the chemicals in them, and that Twinkies will "last longer" than the cellophane wrapped around them?



Sorry, these are both urban myths. Bacteria that comes into contact with food adheres to the food almost instantaneously according to research. That to-die-for chocolate chip cookie you just dropped on the floor could actually make you sick if you pick it up and eat it (Darn!) Twinkies have a shelf life of about twenty-five days, longer than many baked products because they contain no dairy products, but that's it... so you had best throw away that box of Twinkies in the cupboard with the freshness date of April 1999!

Here is another "urban myth" of which you should be aware:

Administrators, team leaders, etc. can call mandatory meetings on days marked on the calendar as Teacher Work Days. ***Not!*** Article 5-4 of the *LEA-LPS Professional Agreement* reads: "Five (5) days are designated as professional duty. During professional duty days, certificated employees will be on duty working in buildings or engaged in professional duties at their discretion. They will be placed as follows in the calendar: two (2) full days and one (1) half day prior to the first student day of the year; one (1) full day during the semester break; one (1) full day following the last student day of the year; one (1) half day scheduled according to principal discretion" (underlining is for editorial emphasis). Shall we review synonyms for the word "discretion" as it applies to this paragraph: "freedom of choice," "will," "option," and "preference" all apply. Thus, teachers are in command of how they use their time on these "professional duty day," not a supervisor or team leader. If teachers voluntarily desire to meet on a "professional duty day," that is their "option," but it cannot be required. Nor should teachers feel guilty or as if they are not being team players if they say no to a meeting on a

“professional duty day.” *Remember: what is in the contract has been mutually agreed to by both LEA and LPS because both parties feel the rights, responsibilities, and benefits in the contract are good for professionals—and that means it is good for kids, too!*

We have previously addressed Elementary Plan Days (in Issue # 7) during which absolutely no mandatory meetings can be required.

Correction: In one of our recent “urban myths” we reported that Mr. Ed actually was a zebra and not a horse. An astute reader contacted us to tell us that that is actually an “urban myth,” itself, and that Mr. Ed was played by two different horses, but never a zebra. Egads! What has it come to if you can’t trust a web site that is supposed to be debunking urban myths and they include an urban myth themselves? Is nothing sacred? So a “horse *is* a horse, of course” after all! We’ve been left with oats on our face! Whinny, whinny!



Continuing LEA/NSEA/NEA Membership



By both the personal contract signed by educators when they become members of the Association and through the LEA/LPS *Professional Agreement*, membership in the LEA/NSEA/NEA is automatic and continues each year unless a member requests their membership be revoked by sending a letter to the LEA Office between March 1 and April 15th for the following school year. Members who have a change in employment that moves them into an administrative position outside of the LEA

bargaining unit after the April 15th deadline, may drop their membership by contacting the LEA office in writing up to September 1st. An explanation of their change of assignment needs to be included with the written request to drop membership.

Individuals considering dropping their membership need to consider that by doing so, they lose **all** Association rights and privileges including job protection and legal services, access to discount programs, payroll deductions to organizations and life insurance policies implemented through the Association, and the free NEA Dues Tab life insurance benefits (which increase every year you’re a continuing member without a break in membership) allotted to all members.

Members going on leave for the next school year are strongly encouraged to continue their *active* LEA/NSEA/NEA membership. As per NEA policy, only by doing so will members on leave be able to retain all Association rights and legal services should the member encounter concerns upon returning to their district employment.