

# Legislative Action is Everyone's Job

by President Chris Miller

The members of DMEA have a lot to be unhappy about. Classroom supplies and materials have been reduced. Phase III funding has been cut off and is now in the grievance process. Professional leave has been curtailed. People vital to the teaching process were eliminated from the bonus money dispersal. If nothing changes in the near future, we will be looking at a new evaluation procedure and a career "ladder" scheme designed by non-educators.

Make your blood boil? I should think so. The Iowa Legislature has scored a direct hit on the employees of the Des Moines Public Schools. The question is, are we mad enough to do something about it? Last year when we were trying to derail the Teacher Compensation Bill the largest turnout we had to lobby was 21 members. That is 1% of our membership.

That is not enough. Since this is January, I would encourage you to resolve to be more active in legislative and election activities in 2002. That means more than just cursing the darkness and voting. It means attending legislative receptions, coffees and public meetings. It means writing your legislators AND the legislators in whose district you teach.

It means coming up with a succinct message to use whenever you contact legislators. It means getting your non-education friends and relatives to write and call legislators. That means not only

in-town but out-of-town as well. It means objecting when people say "You school teachers only work nine months anyhow."

We are looking at tough times for salaries and benefits for 2002-2003. If Allowable Growth is not restored to the level promised at the beginning of this year, there will be little, if any, increase. You need to make your voice and position heard.

The current legislature does not fill an educator with hope. This is an election year. In November, with redistricting, we have an opportunity to elect people who will make a positive difference for education.

This is also an election year for the School Board. We must also advocate with these elected public officials for our issues as well. Board members often tell me that they don't hear from teachers. Here is an opportunity to lobby decision-makers that have a direct impact on those of us in the Association.

In September three board members will be elected. As usual, we will be interviewing and recommending those we feel have the best grasp of the issues and a willingness to listen.

Sometimes just one vote can make a great deal of difference. Just one vote in a legislative race or a School Board race can make all the difference. We can and we must make a difference. Plan now to Get Involved, Get Others Involved, and Work for Education.

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"Every hour spent on such exam preparation is an hour not spent helping students to become critical, creative, curious learners."

Alfie Kohn



# Des Moines Public Schools Begins New Budget Process

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Faced with the possibility of less funding from the state, the Des Moines Public Schools recently announced a new budget process. The objective is to obtain greater input from teachers, associates, secretaries and parents.

The district will be soliciting ideas on how to contain costs from now until the end of the month. These will be presented at the regular school board meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup>. This information will then be presented at two public budget forums at Hoover and Lincoln high schools in mid-February.

Around March 1<sup>st</sup>, the state's Revenue Estimating Conference will make a report outlining the growth or decline in state revenues. This will guide the legislature as it determines the allowable growth rate for next year.

The school board will have a work session during this period to further

refine the budget. The actual budget will be presented for the first time at the regular board meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Following a review by the Polk County/DM Taxpayers group, the district hopes to have the budget adopted by April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The district is inviting DMEA members to participate in this process by making suggestions on how to cut district operating costs. These suggestions can be made on the Des Moines web site at <http://www.des-moines.k12.ia.us/survey.htm>. You can do the survey anonymously, but if you decide to e-mail the form to the district, remember that your e-mail address will appear with the message. Members can also print off the form from the web page and send it via bag mail to the district or they can pass the information along to the DMEA office for us to share.

Building principals have also been instructed to hold staff meetings and to work with our members to prioritize programs at the building level. Members need to be careful in this process not to make recommendations that can lead to the reduction of other association members.

In an effort to help members make informed decisions, the DMEA has formed a Budget Review Committee to look at the district's budget and to make recommendations on where savings could be found. As this information becomes available it will be shared with FRs. In addition, a preliminary list of possible areas for savings was distributed to FRs on Friday, January 18<sup>th</sup>. Please feel free to share this information with others in your building.

## In The Spotlight



**Mike Blair**, a physics teacher at Roosevelt High School, was recently published in the December 2001 issue of *Science Teacher*. The article describes a lesson plan which includes examples of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century inventions such as catapults. This is

Mike's third article to be published in the magazine.

**Stephanie Zuelke**, a teacher at Orchard place, and **Diann Peyton**, principal at Orchard Place were among two of the 21 runners chosen to run in the Council Bluffs leg of the Olympic

Torch Relay on Thursday, January 10<sup>th</sup>. Thousands of people lined the streets in Council Bluffs, Omaha, and Nebraska City as the flame moved on its 36<sup>th</sup> day of an 11,500 mile journey that will eventually lead to Salt Lake City for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

## Calendar of Events



- January 29, 2002  
All Associates Meeting  
East High Library  
4:15 p.m.

- February 4, 2002  
Governmental Affairs Committee  
4:15 p.m.

- February 5, 2002

School Board Meeting  
5:00 p.m. Public Forum  
6:00 p.m. Meeting

- February 7, 2002  
DMEA Executive Board  
4:15 p.m.

- February 14, 2002  
Faculty Rep Assembly

North High School  
4:15 p.m.

- February 19, 2002  
School Board Meeting  
Public Forum 5:00 p.m.  
Meeting 6:00 p.m.

## DMEA Well Represented at Board Meeting

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During the November special session of the legislature, lawmakers passed a bill that stated, "school districts may use Phase III funds to offset budget cuts. The Des Moines School District has decided to follow this course of action despite the fact that Phase III language is contained in the Comprehensive Agreement with the Association.

As a result of this action the DMEA and several individual members have filed grievances seeking to restore Phase III funds. The grievances are currently working their way through

the process outlined in the contract.

In a survey of the seven other urban districts in Iowa only one, Davenport, has decided to use Phase III money to offset the budget cuts. Davenport has decided to use half of the Phase III money to offset the budget cuts, but will use the remainder for its original purpose.

At the January 8<sup>th</sup> school board meeting several DMEA members spoke about the importance of Phase III and encouraged the board to reconsider the reduction. The following DMEA members spoke at the meeting:

*Justine Finley (King), Linda Kuiken (Central Academy), Lola Mann (Hubbell), Deb McMahon (Home Instruction), Diane Steggerda (East), John Eller (Hoover), Kris Mesicek (Tule), Paul Mann (Central Academy), Hance Throckmorton (McKinley), Mary Stimmel (Lincoln), Chris Miller (Goodrell).*

The Association can be very proud of how they were represented. Our members spoke eloquently in support of keeping those funds and truly negotiating with the Association. They were professional and on target.

## DMEA Elections Approach

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Election time is rapidly approaching and a number of positions are open. The following positions will be contested in the April elections: DMEA President, DMEA Vice-President, Middle School Executive Board Representative, One (1) Elementary Executive Board Representative, Minority Representative and the President and Vice President of Associates, Nurses, and Secretaries.

In addition we will be electing half our delegates to the ISEA Delegate Assembly to be held April 4-5 in Ames and all delegates to the NEA-Representative Assembly to be held July 1-7 in Dallas.

DMEA is continually looking for bright, creative people with new ideas to run for association office. It is important to the vitality of the organization that members are always presented with

a choice in an election for their leaders.

Statement of Candidacy forms are available from your FR. Please consider running for an office or being a delegate. It is a great way to get involved. If you have questions about the time commitments or duties involved please check with your FR for details or call the office at 471-8040.

## Governor Announces Budget; Education Takes a Hit

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On Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, Governor Vilsack proposed a \$4.8 billion budget that was designed to add more money for schools and colleges. However, upon reviewing the budget, it appears as though the plan will do little to solve the budget woes faced by schools around the state.

The Governor's plan calls for a 1% allowable growth rate, which would be the lowest growth rate in state history. That is bad enough, but to make matters worse, the growth rate is based upon the figures given to districts after the 4% across-the-board cuts enacted in November. This will not even get dis-

tricts back to the funding levels promised in the current school year. Under this proposal 3/4 of all districts in Iowa will be frozen at this year's reduced level. Des Moines will see a slight increase due to increased enrollment.

In order to fund this increase the Governor is proposing a shift of \$48 million that would have gone into the state's "rainy day fund" and \$60 million from the road-use tax fund. Both shifts face considerable opposition, even within the Governor's party.

Since teacher salaries in Des Moines are calculated on a formula that takes

into account the allowable growth rate, the cuts may have an impact on how salaries will be calculated. As tentative figures become available, DMEA will keep members informed of issues we are facing.

We have to consider the Governor's proposal as a starting point in this year's budget process. Both ISEA and DMEA will be working with legislators to find ways to solve these problems. As the article on page 1 says, "Legislative Action is Everyone's Job." Now is the time to begin contacting your legislator with your concerns about the budget.

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## Plan Now to Attend DMEA Recognition Dinner

Mark your calendars now! The Des Moines Education Association Recognition Dinner will be held April 30<sup>th</sup> in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Fort Des Moines. We will once again recognize our retirees, Friend of Education and Volunteer Award winners along with the two recipients of the George Fisher Scholarships. It is a great time to renew old acquaintances and say good-bye to our retirees.

The February DMEA *Tempo* will provide more information about the evening's events. If you have questions please call the DMEA office.

## DMEA Web Site Available to Members

The DMEA has now joined cyberspace and has a web site available to members at <http://www.dmea.org>. The site contains a variety of information of interest to members. Members can e-mail their DMEA board members from the site. In addition the Legislative page has information and e-mail links to your Iowa representatives and to school board members. We are in the process of putting information online that specifically relates to the jobs being done by school nurses, associates, and secretaries. The site also contains information to support new teachers. Check out the site and offer your suggestions for content!

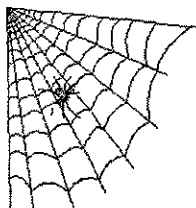
The DMEA Web Page is now online. Visit <http://www.dmea.org>

## Free and Inexpensive Classroom Resources

**Fantastic Flinn Freebies.** Flinn Scientific offers a variety of free resources for secondary science teachers including a sampler of some of the latest demonstrations and labs. To order your freebies visit <http://www.flinnsci.com/homepage/findex.html>.

**Dole 5 A Day Adventure CD-ROM.** This CD contains everything you need to get your students excited about eating fruits and vegetables. To order or download visit [http://www.dole5aday.com/Teachers/T\\_Index.html](http://www.dole5aday.com/Teachers/T_Index.html)

**Teaching Tolerance.** This outstanding magazine is published twice yearly by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The magazine outlines some great projects to promote diversity in schools. For a free subscription visit the web site at <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/expand/res/index.jsp>.



## Caught in the Web February is Black History Month

The following web sites contain outstanding Black History resources.

**American Slave Narratives**  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/wpa/wpahome.html>

This WPA project captured the words of over 2300 former slaves. Hear about slavery in the words of those who lived it.

**Little Rock 9 Integration 0**  
[http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/little\\_rock/](http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/little_rock/)

This webquest allows students to explore the 1957 integration of Little Rock's Central High School.

**African American Inventors Page**  
<http://www.ehhs.cmich.edu/~rlandrum/>

This site provides a great starting point for research into the contributions of African-

American inventors.

**CNN Black History Month Resources**  
[http://www.cnn.com/EVENTS/black\\_history/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/EVENTS/black_history/index.html)

Each day during Black History Month, CNN Interactive will profile one man or woman who has made a lasting contribution, ranging from literature, music and the arts to science and technology.