

Des Moines Public Schools Slash Budget

On November 8th legislators returned to Des Moines for a special session to cope with massive revenue shortfalls. In an effort to balance the state's books some \$85 million was cut from the current year's budget.

The special session made the following changes in education funding:

- An immediate 4.3% cut in new monies for schools.
- The state will continue funding for school technology, Phase III, and early childhood/class-size reduction programs.
- School districts will have the option of moving school technology and Phase III dollars into the General Fund to help offset the loss of Allowable growth money.

Based upon figures provided by ISEA, the Des Moines Public Schools will receive \$5,927,785 less funding from the

state. The district is facing an additional loss of nearly \$1 million in revenue that is generated by the interest on investments. Lower interest rates have generated less revenue than expected.

In an effort to cope with the cuts imposed by the General Assembly, DMPS is in the process of adjusting the current year budget. The district has already cut \$4 million from the budget through a variety of measures. They plan to save an additional \$1.5 million by moving Phase III funding into the budget. They will save another \$650,000 by moving technology dollars into the General Fund. The district had also budgeted \$550,000 to be set aside to increase the cash reserve fund. This money will now be used to offset General Fund reductions.

What does all of this mean for DMEA members? In the short term we can give members fairly accurate information. However, with the legislature returning

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Early Retirement Update

One of the most confusing issues facing DMEA members is the early retirement plan. The plan, which was ratified last spring, was sent to the IRS for their approval. The IRS approved parts of the plan, but did not give a blanket approval.

Since that time the district and DMEA have been working to address the concerns raised by the IRS. We have at-

tempted to do this without making substantial changes to the early retirement plan. The issues we are working on are very complex. Discussing them in detail here would fill the entire *Tempo*.

We do, however, feel that it is important to keep you as informed as possible. In general terms, here are the changes that

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"Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire."

William Yeats

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for a regular session in January, it is difficult to speculate about what may happen for next year.

Based upon the information DMEA has gathered, the following information should be considered as accurate.

Job Security-No new reductions are planned for the remainder of this year. The district had previously announced cuts to the New Horizons program.

Phase III-Enough money remained

from last year's Phase III funding to pay for those programs completed and in progress. The district will pay for all classes and projects that are already in progress or have been completed.

Designated Days-The two days scheduled for this spring will not be held.

Teacher Compensation Money-This money was released by the state on Friday, November 15th. Teachers should count on receiving payments at the scheduled times. The payments will be slightly less than originally thought

due to the fact that 18 third-year teachers were not correctly included in the payments.

Mentoring-The state has provided schools with the money to pay mentors of first year teachers.

We know that many rumors are circulating around the district. If you have concerns please contact the DMEA office. We are also asking those members with ideas on cost-cutting measures to contact the DMEA office with their ideas.

In The Spotlight



This month DMEA spotlights two outstanding members who have recently received honors.

Ruth Ann Gaines, a drama teacher at East High School, has been selected as one of the first recipients of the Phyllis A. Yager Commitment to Diversity Award. The award is intended to recognize Iowa teacher's contributions to diversity awareness within their school systems.

The award committee stated that,

"Gaines has done magnificent work helping students understand, confront, and undermine the many overt and insidious manifestations of racism in American society." As a winner, Gaines will receive a \$1000 stipend to be used to further diversity initiatives or for professional development.

Janet Boyd, a teacher at Woodlawn Elementary was recognized as one of the five finalists for the third annual Excellence in Education Award. The finalists were honored at a dinner and

awards ceremony at the Younkers Tea Room on November 13th.

Congratulations to this month's outstanding teachers. If you, or someone you know, has recently been recognized for excellence in the classroom, please contact DMEA. We need to let people know that good things are happening in our buildings.

Calendar of Events



- December 3, 2001
Ail Secretaries Meeting
Garton Elementary
4:30 p.m.
- December 6, 2001
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m.
- December 10, 2001
Walt Galvin Scholarship Applications Due
- December 11, 2001
School Board Meeting
Public Forum 5:00 p.m.
Meeting 6:00 p.m.
- December 13, 2001
Faculty Rep Assembly
North High School Cafeteria
4:15 p.m.
- December 21, 2001
Winter Recess Begins
- DMEA Office will be closed during
Winter Recess

Salute to Our Faculty Representatives

By President Chris Miller

One of the most important jobs in the DMEA is that of Faculty Representative. The FR is the critical communication link between the DMEA office and the membership. Most of our FRs do an outstanding job of representing and reporting for our members.

The FRs must be alert to the issues in the buildings so that they can represent and advocate for our members. Oftentimes, the first the office hears of building issues comes from the FR.

The FRs spend more than two hours each month representing their buildings at the general meeting. They then vol-

unteer more of their time by having building meetings or getting minutes handed out or e-mailed to update the membership. Faculty Reps are also responsible for distributing materials to members, gathering necessary information for the DMEA, and helping guide the Association as we make decisions on how to deal with a variety of problems facing DMEA and the District. Occasionally they may also be asked to represent a member who has a problem with the principal. On top of all this they are called upon to conduct elections and contract ratifications. When some issue arises, it is usually the FR

that is the first person members turn to for information.

You may want to search out and thank your FR for taking on these various roles for you and the Association. They willingly sacrifice their time and effort to keep you informed and represented.

A few of our buildings still need an FR. If you would like to serve in this capacity please contact the DMEA office. When new FRs are selected next spring, you may want to challenge yourself by taking on this responsibility.

Report Assaults to DMEA Office

DMEA is concerned about number of student attacks upon teachers and associates. Several teachers have contacted DMEA to report such incidents, but have been afraid to take action for a variety of reasons.

In addition, a number of members have reported that building principals are coming under pressure to reduce

the number of suspensions of students. A recent article in the Des Moines Register has increased that suspicion.

In order to better assess the threat to the safety of our members, DMEA is asking that members report all assaults on teachers and associates to the DMEA office. When you call please be prepared to give us information about

the type of assault, the date of the incident, injuries, and actions taken by the principal. Information will be shared with the district unless you ask that it be kept confidential. The office number is 471-8040.

Early Retirement Update

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have been made in the plan:

- 1 Those members who want health insurance coverage upon early retirement will be required to make a fixed, pre-tax contribution for coverage. A formula will be developed to calculate future health insurance costs.
- 2 Those members who do not want health coverage will need to opt-out of the district plan at some time during their final year of employment. That date will be determined with

input from the IRS. Anyone who opts out is guaranteed the right to re-enter the group at a later time. They can then purchase coverage with post-tax dollars.

- 3 Any money left over after paying for insurance coverage will be placed in a tax-sheltered 403B plan. As much as \$200,000 can be placed in this plan. Options still exist for a cash pay-out, but in all likelihood no retiree would have any money left after contributions to insurance and tax shelters.

The changes have been submitted to

the IRS for their approval. We hope to have that approval by mid-January of 2002. The revised plan will then be presented to members at a series of meetings. Following these meetings we will take the plan back to the membership for another ratification vote. While we would hope the process will be complete by the new February 15th retirement deadline, the process may take somewhat longer.

If you would like a more detailed explanation of the changes that are being considered please call the DMEA office (471-8040).

Des Moines Education Association

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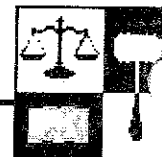
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Legal Update-Technology Use



Two recent issues have been brought to the attention of DMEA. Both concern the use of technology and our members.

Members in one of our buildings contacted DMEA with a concern about parents secretly recording a meeting with teachers. ISEA attorneys want members to know that this is legal. Anyone who is a party to a conversation has a right to make a secret recording of the meeting. If you suspect that a parent may be making a secret audio tape of a meeting be very careful about what you say. Make sure any statements are facts that can easily be corroborated. Teachers also have the right to ask parents at the beginning of the meeting if they intend to record the proceedings.

The district recently sent a memo to some buildings warning teachers about Internet use. The district has the ability to monitor individual computers and can determine not only the web pages you visit, but the length of time you spend on the page. As a general rule of thumb, do not use computers to participate in day trading, visit pornographic sites, or play online casino games. If you accidentally enter an objectionable site, move out of the site as quickly as possible. If you leave a classroom computer on while you are not in the room, it is a good idea to know if anyone else has access to your room. For maximum safety log off of the computer when you leave your room unattended for a period of time.

[The DMEA Web Page is
coming soon!]

Free and Inexpensive Classroom Resources

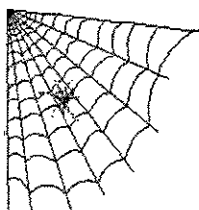
Given the state of our education budget, it is more important than ever to find cheap resources for the classroom. Each month we plan to highlight some of the best free and inexpensive resources.

HowStuffWorks Express "Free to Schools" program. Teachers can sign up for this program and receive 60 free

copies of each issue of the magazine to hand out to students each month. There is no cost or obligation. You can sign up at the company's web site
<http://www.howstuffworks.com/teacher-info.htm>.

All Hands on Deck: Learning Adventures Aboard "Old Ironsides"! Get a

free kit to study America's most famous ship. The kit comes with a video tape and integrates geography, math, social studies, arts & crafts, history, science, language arts and more in 14 lessons for grades K-12. Sign up at
<http://www.usconstitutionmuseum.org/education/ahod.html>



Caught in the Web

Holiday Web Sites

As this issue of the Tempo goes to print the winter holidays are approaching. The following sites will help students celebrate the diversity of these special dates.

Ben and Jerry's Winter Holiday Home Page

<http://www.benjerry.com/yule/index.html>

If you don't mind the ads, this site from ice cream maker Ben and Jerry has excellent resources on the winter holidays. And yes, you can order ice cream here!

Holidays Around the World: A Festival of Lessons

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson213.shtml

Education World's site offers ten lessons about winter celebrations, observances,

and activities from a variety of cultures.

Valuing Our Differences: Celebrating Diversity

<http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/>

This site from the University of Kansas provides a month to month calendar of celebrations around the world. It also has links to games and activities.