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Des Moines Education Association

DMEA TEMPO

Teaching Jobs Saved Due to DMEA Involvement

Educators turned out in large numbers for the Des Moines Public School's Budget Forums. That combined with the hard work of DMEA has led to nearly all of the proposed staffing cuts being eliminated for next year.

Smoother Sailing, Healthy Choice, and music programs were well represented at the budget forums. Large numbers of teachers, counselors, students and parents spoke in support of retaining the programs. This show of support helped push the Des Moines School Board to use approximately \$750,000 of its reserve fund to maintain most of these programs.

DMEA was also heavily involved in the fight to save members jobs. DMEA President Chris Miller and Executive Director

Randy Richardson spoke at school board meetings in opposition to the cuts. DMEA even developed a list of optional cuts for the school board to consider.

DMEA's best work, however, helped put pressure on Wellmark that resulted in a \$1.3 million reduction in health insurance costs. DMEA had lobbied hard to get the school district to consider bids from other insurance carriers. This resulted in the district receiving a bid from the Iowa School Employees Benefits Association (ISEBA) that was \$1.2 million below the original Wellmark proposal.

Faced with the possible loss of a large customer Wellmark came forward with a

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DMEA Reaches Tentative Agreement for Teachers, Secretaries, Associates

The DMEA Negotiations Committee has reached tentative agreements with the district for all three union bargaining groups. Contract language issues were largely the same for all three groups. The ratification process is currently underway and both the Association and the school board expect the contracts to be approved.

Contract Language

All three groups agreed to contracts that

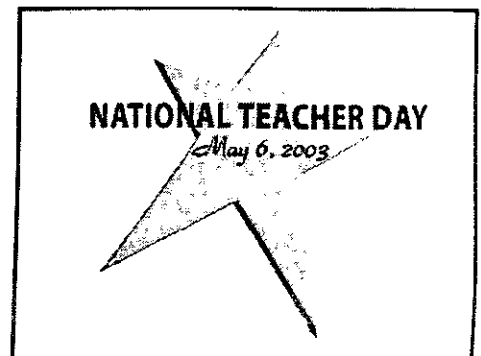
are for three years for language and one year for salaries and insurance. Among the major language changes are:

- Cleaning up language that was outdated.
- Eliminating the requirement that a person must supply their building principal with a transfer request.

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DMPS Involvement Saves Jobs

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"revised" bid that was based on "new data." This bid reduced the cost of the plan by \$1.3 million without any reductions in coverage.

This reduction directly resulted in

saving the positions of all elementary and middle school librarians, school nurses, ten middle school wheel positions and 11 other teaching positions. In all over 20 Professional positions were saved through the actions of DMEA. During the final school board budget meeting, the district announced

that it also planned to reinstate all middle school PE and high school activities director's positions.

We're often asked "What does DMEA do?" If you ever need a concrete answer you can tell people what happened this year.

Teachers and the ESEA: Are You Highly Qualified?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that all teachers who are newly hired in a Title I school be highly qualified and that all other teachers must meet the standard by 2005-06. However, the definition of "highly qualified" may surprise some people.

According to the law a "highly qualified" elementary teacher who is new to the profession must have a degree, be fully licensed, and pass a state spon-

sored test. Current elementary teachers must meet the same standards or meet demonstrate that they meet a statewide standard for competency (Iowa Teaching Standards).

Middle and secondary teachers who are new to the profession must meet the same standards as new elementary teachers, but must also demonstrate competency in their subject area. This can be done by completing one of the following:

1. Passing a state test
2. Meeting the requirements of a state evaluation standard
3. Completing an academic major or equivalent

Current middle school and secondary teachers will be required to demonstrate that they are competent by meeting the same standards by 2005-06.

Now Is the Time to Elect FRs

Your building/location Faculty Representative must be elected according to the following instructions as taken from the DMEA Articles of Incorporation:

Each building and each affiliated department are entitled to one repre-

sentative and one alternate for every fifteen (15) members or major fraction thereof. If there are fewer than eight (8) members in a building, the membership in the building shall be entitled to one faculty representative. FR and alternates shall be elected by secret bal-

lot conducted by the chairperson of the Faculty Representatives in the building.

We would appreciate receiving the names of new faculty representatives and committee members at the May 8th Faculty Representative meeting

Calendar of Events



- May 1, 2003
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m.
- May 6, 2003
Associate's Retirement Dinner
Barattas
- May 6, 2003
- May 8, 2003
DMPS School Board
Open Forum 5:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m.
- May 8, 2003
Faculty Rep Assembly
North High School
4:15 p.m.
- May 20, 2003
DMPS School Board
Open Forum 5:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m.
- May 26, 2003
Memorial Day
DMEA Office Closed

DMEA Reaches Tentative Agreements with District

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- Adding language defining “excess” employees.
- Clearly defining which days are for “professional development.”
- Creating three days of “family illness leave” where a person can use three days of sick leave to care for a sick family member without a dock in pay.
- Adding “grandchild” to the list of relatives for which an employee can take bereavement leave.
- Allow employees to take credit classes from Heartland AEA or accredited universities for advancement on the salary schedule without prior approval.
- Improved the grievance language by making it possible for grievances to be filed by a group of employees.

While the language items provide a valuable benefit to all employees, most individuals are more interested in the bottom line in terms of dollars and cents. This year presented a difficult struggle on money items with the district not having a great deal of new money available for salaries and insurance taking an ever larger piece of the money available for salaries. Following is a break down of the increases for all three employee groups.

Associates

Associates in the Des Moines Public Schools will see their salaries increase by \$.20 per day for next year. While this is a very small increase for a group that contributes so much, it is important to note that DMEA was able to protect

the current insurance package for associate members. The total package increase (salary, insurance) totaled a 5.27% increase. This will be one of the higher settlements in the state this year.

Secretarial

DMPS secretaries settled for an increase of \$4 in their bi-weekly rate of pay. Secretaries were also able to maintain their current insurance package. The total package increase for secretaries was 4.27%.

Some members have expressed concerns about the small increase for associates and secretaries. When negotiating for both groups we have to be aware of the comparability with settlements in other districts. Because both groups are relatively small, a slight increase in pay causes a large percentage increase in terms of settlements. Thus, the total package settlements received by DMEA associates and secretaries is above average compared to the rest of the state. It is also important to note that only one other school district in Iowa provides fully paid health insurance benefits for associates and secretaries. Being able to maintain this should be considered a major victory.

The secretary group also agreed to create a joint district/association committee that will study the development of a plan that will reward additional vacation time for longevity.

Teachers/Certified Staff

This group proved to be the most difficult to settle this year. The school board and district were both very vocal in stating that their number one goal was forcing this group to make a contribution toward the cost of health care.

By last week, negotiations were at an impasse after two mediation sessions and the two sides appeared headed to binding arbitration. A compromise was worked out that appears to meet the needs of most people. Teachers and other certified staff will see a \$200 increase on the generator base. We were unable to find enough money to return to the full steps on the salary schedule so staff will remain on the half steps for one more year. In addition we were able to maintain fully paid health insurance benefits. In order to do this we did agree to raise the deductibles on Wellmark insurance from the current \$100 single/\$200 family to \$200 single/\$400 family. We did not increase the maximum out of pocket which will protect members in case of a major illness. There will be no change to the Coventry insurance plans. The total package increase for teachers is approximately 3.8%.

The teachers bargaining group also agreed to a letter of agreement with the district that will create a joint district/association committee that will study the new evaluation system for teachers and that will make recommendations for changes in contract language dealing with the topic. If you are interested in being part of this group please let us know (ph. 471-8040).

The following people put in a tremendous amount of time with the negotiations process this year: Cindy Roerig (Chair), Hance Throckmorton, Travis Jacobs, Joan Anderson, Sue Case-Card, Jim Van Tuyl, Patty Trump, Paul Wallendal, Phyllis Suttek, Becky McNew, Rhonda Anderson, and Janice Redshaw. They deserve a big thanks for their efforts!

**Des Moines Education
Association**

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George Fischer Scholarship Winners Announced

Four Des Moines area high school students were recently selected as winners of DMEA's George Fischer Scholarship. Fifteen applicants submitted applications for the \$1000 awards. Winners will be honored at Recognition Night.

The 2002-03 winners were:

- Kirby Shiffler (Roosevelt)-Kirby is the daughter of DMEA member Linda Shiffler who is a teacher at Roosevelt.
- Caroline Harvey (West Central Valley)-Caroline is the daughter of DMEA member Ruth Harvey who is a teacher at Merrill.
- Krystal Crees (West Des Moines Valley)-Krystal is the daughter of DMEA member Teresa Crees who teaches at Capitol View.
- Alexandra Kennedy (Roosevelt)-Alexandra is the daughter of DMEA member Walt Kennedy who teaches at Roosevelt.

E-mail and Iowa's Public Records Law

The following article originally appeared in the Department of Education's School Leaders newsletter. We felt that is contained information important to all school personnel.

Almost all incoming and outgoing e-mail at work constitutes a public record. The computer on which a public employee's e-mails are sent and received while at work is owned by a governmental entity. Therefore, the documents stored within that computer are "public records" as defined in Iowa Code chapter 22 (Public Records Law).

If an email is concerning a specific student, the student's identity would need to be expunged before release to the public, but that would not spare the public employee (or employer) the embarrassment that a less-than-thoughtful communication can cause. Example: At a school district in another state a transportation director was complaining, via e-mail, to a building principal about the transportation requirements of a child with a disability. The principal electronically inquired about the student's problem. The director's answer, "His mother." When the mother asked for all documents concerning her child, this electronic information had to be disclosed to her.

The best rule of thumb is the "headline" test. If e-mail content won't withstand ridicule when printed on the front page of the local newspaper, consider using another mode of communication or rethink the wisdom of the communication in the first place.

E-mails from a citizen to a school district employee are also, for the most part, public records. The same is true of regular (snail mail) letters from citizens. Such communications are

public if any of the following are true:

1. the person making the communication consents to disclosure,
2. information in the communication can be disclosed without identifying the person who sent it, or
3. information in the communication discloses facts surrounding a crime or illegal act, unless the disclosure would jeopardize an investigation or pose a danger to others.

On the other hand, a school district has discretion to keep communications from the public confidential if all of the following are true:

1. the communication comes from a person outside of government,
2. the communication is voluntary and not required by any law, rule, or procedure, AND
3. the district could reasonably believe the public would be discouraged from communicating if such communications were available as public records.

All districts have their own web sites. A good practice would be to include a disclaimer on the web site to remind the public that citizens who write to the district should be aware that their letters could be open for examination and copying by others.