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Des Moines Education Association

DMEA TEMPO

Vilsack Budget Maintains Commitment to Education

Governor Tom Vilsack unveiled his long-awaited budget proposal on January 31st. The budget proposes some modest increases for education. Specifically Vilsack recommended that the Legislature:

- Maintain the promised two percent allowable growth rate for next year and set the figure at 2% for 2004-05.
- Increase funding for teacher salaries under the Teacher Compensation law from \$40 million to \$44.7 million.
- Continue the \$30 million class size reduction initiative.

- Allocate \$20 million in 2004-05 to fund the two additional professional development days called for in the Teacher Quality Law.

Noticeably absent from his recommendations were any additions to Phase III or to K-12 technology funding.

The budget now goes to the Legislature where the real work begins. Republican leaders have indicated that they may be willing to work within the Governor's budget guidelines. As issues arise in the Legislature, DMEA will keep members informed and may ask them to place calls before key votes.

DMPS Budget—The Good, The Bad, & the Ugly

It's that time of year again when the Des Moines school district begins its annual budget preparation. The process is more confusing than usual because the district is also going through a comprehensive audit due to mistakes made in the allocation of funds to certain budget line items. What does it all mean for DMEA members? Based upon the information we've been able to gather here is what we think.

The audit which is currently being conducted by KPMG of the district's finances has found that the district made

\$9.1 million in errors by understating employee benefits, misstating balance sheets and counting open enrollment twice. This does not mean that the district will have to pay back any money to an outside group. It simply means that auditors will need to record the data into the proper accounts. It should not result in any real loss of revenue to the district and should not affect the negotiations process. It does mean that the district's cash reserves are lower than it earlier estimated and that the solvency ratio is

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**Education costs money,
but then so does
ignorance.**

Sir Moser Claus

DMPS Budget

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not as high as the district hoped.

The budget currently being prepared by the district is a different matter. Rumors have abounded that the district will need to cut approximately \$7 million from next year's budget. DMEA has asked the district to provide us with a briefing on the budget so that we can better ascertain if the figures are correct. Here is what we do know:

- **Des Moines received more new money than did many districts in the state.** New money received by the district is based upon a combination of allowable growth and enrollment. Enrollment is down in Des Moines this year. This means that the regular education funds for the district will only increase by about \$2.4 million or 1.59%. This may seem bad, but you need to remember 2/3 of the districts in Iowa have no increase in funding for next year and some have received no increases for several years.
- **Health care costs are increasing.** Health care costs for teachers alone will increase by over \$1.8 million. This represents an increase of about 16%. This may

seem huge, but some schools in the state will see an increase of over 50% in insurance premiums.

- **Other sources of revenue.** The district has a number of grants that provide funding for a variety of positions. This funding has been slowly increasing. DMEA will be asking the district for a list of all employees funded through grants.
- **The Unspent Balance has leveled off.** This is the amount of the district's unspent spending authority. The district's unspent balance rapidly increased from 1998-2000. It has now leveled off at just over \$21 million. This figure is often used by arbitrators to gauge if a district has the finances to afford a contract settlement.
- **Attrition will cover part of the budget cuts.** According to DMEA records 69 district employees opted for early retirement at the end of this year. Since these early retirements are fairly well distributed across grade level it should be possible to offset some of the budget reductions through attrition. Of the 69 early retirees 55 are in classroom teaching positions. Not replacing these folks would save

the district \$2.75 million.

The district has scheduled two budget forums to listen to citizen's ideas regarding the district budget. They are scheduled for:

- Monday, February 17th
6:00-8:00 p.m.
East High School
- Saturday, March 1st
9:00 a.m.
North High School

Following these forums the district will present its budget recommendation to the school board on Tuesday, March 11th. The board will formally vote to adopt a budget on Tuesday, April 1st. All meetings are open to the public and members are encouraged to attend.

We have heard that several buildings have asked for member input on possible cuts. It is important for members to not get involved in recommending cuts in programs or positions. We don't want to be in a position of pitting member vs. member in a game of who can cut the most from the budget.

If you are asked to attend a meeting such as this and want information on the budget don't hesitate to contact the DMEA office.

Calendar of Events



- March 1, 2003
School Budget Forum
North High School
9:00 a.m.
- March 6, 2003
Faculty Rep Assembly
North High School Cafeteria
4:15 p.m.
- March 11, 2003
DMPS School Board
Open Forum 5:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m.
- March 12-13
Parent-Teacher Conferences
- March 15-22
Spring Break
DMEA Office closes
- March 24, 2003
DMEA Delegate Orientation
4:15 p.m.
- March 27, 2003
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m.

FAQs on E-mail and Internet Use in the Workplace

We have recently fielded a number of calls from members concerned about e-mail and Internet usage. Given the questions that were asked it is a good time to answer some of our members biggest questions.

1. **Is it a violation of my privacy if someone reads my e-mail?** The short answer is a resounding “no.” Once you send an e-mail message it is no longer yours—it is the recipients and the recipient may choose to forward it to one or a hundred people. When you compose a message, read it over before sending it. If you’re comfortable with it being posted on a bulletin board then go ahead and send it. If not, then you may want to do a little editing. It is **not** a good idea to use e-mail to fight internal battles, conduct romances, tell jokes or blow off steam.
2. **Does the District have the right to monitor e-mail and Internet usage?** When you are using a school computer to access your e-

mail account or to view a web page, the district has the right to monitor what you are doing. The district’s network administrators will normally monitor your usage. They do not read all e-mail as it is being sent simply because the volume of e-mail would be impossible to handle. They do have the ability to retrieve old messages that you have read or sent and have the ability to monitor web pages you have visited.

3. **Can the District monitor my e-mail account if I access it from home?** If you are accessing your district e-mail account the District has the ability to monitor any messages you send or receive from a remote computer. If you are using a personal e-mail address from home you should be totally safe.
4. **What should I do if I accidentally access a forbidden web site?** The District uses filtering software which makes it difficult to access objectionable web sites. The soft-

ware isn’t foolproof so it is possible that you could accidentally end up at a web site with no educational value. If this happens close the site immediately (if you linger for more than a few minutes you may be assumed to be viewing the site). Some sites now use “capture” technology that opens additional windows when you attempt to close the browser. If that happens you can always shut down the computer. It is also a good idea to inform your principal that this has occurred.

5. **Can I use my school computer for personal business?** As a general rule it is not a good idea to use school computers for personal use. That means not balancing your checkbook or figuring income taxes. Members should also avoid downloading copyrighted materials such as music or movies. You should also avoid using a school computer as part of your home business. In other words, don’t sell things from your home business using a school e-mail account.

IPD Committee Announces Survey

Thank you to all who participated in the recent online survey put together by the Instruction and Professional Development (IPD) Committee. Results of the survey were as follows:

- Information can best be presented through the *Tempo* and online through the DMEA web site.
- Members expressed interest in learning more about assessment, the impact of the Teacher Compensation Act on Veteran Teachers, the Impact of the No

Child Left Behind legislation, and best practices in a variety of teaching areas.

- A top concern was the use of in-service days as well as the relevance of in-service activities. DMEA members are represented on a district wide in-service committee and they will be addressing these issues.
- Another common concern was TIME (or lack of)! The IPD Committee will be using the

DMEA web site to share resources that can help with this issue.

Nearly half of the respondents to the survey were elementary teachers with middle school and high school teachers evenly split among the remainder. The IPD committee plans to address a number of issues in upcoming issues of the *Tempo*. The committee meets the third Monday of every month at the DMEA office. They would welcome your input and suggestions!

—Molly Hagkull & April Symonds
IPD Committee

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Ruth Foster Award Nominees Needed

The Ruth Foster Award is presented each year during the Recognition Dinner. The award is given to honor an individual who has demonstrated outstanding service to the Association.

Nominees must meet the following criteria:

- The nominee must be a current member of DMEA and a member of the Association for the past 10 years.
- The nominee must not be a member of the Executive Board at the time of receiving the award, unless retiring from the profession.
- Nominees must have demonstrated service and leadership in a variety of DMEA, ISEA, and/or NEA positions and activities.

Any group within DMEA can file nomination papers on behalf of an individual. Nomination papers will be distributed at the FR meetings and will be available in the DMEA office.

ISEA Announces 18th Annual Design A Decal Competition

Des Moines students can gain statewide recognition by participating in the 18th annual "Design a Decal" competition sponsored by ISEA and Art Educators of Iowa.

A panel of evaluators selected by ISEA will review the designs. Up to 24 designs may be selected to be used as the 2003-04 ISEA Student Achievement Decals. No more than two designs will be selected from any one school. An attempt will be made to include designs developed by elementary, middle school, and senior high students.

All entries will remain property of ISEA. Teachers of students producing winning entries will be notified of the results of the competition in May. Results will be posted in the *ISEA Communiqué* and mailed to news media outlets the following fall by ISEA.



Guidelines for the 2003-04 competition are available in the DMEA office.

Drake Education Association/DMEA Partnership

Education students at Drake University will now have the opportunity to learn more about teaching in the Des Moines Public Schools and about DMEA. Lisa Martin-Hansen, DEA Faculty Sponsor, contacted DMEA and asked if our organization would be interested in partnering with student Drake Education Association members. Three different activities have been planned for the remainder of this year.

The activities planned for this year include:

- **One-on-one or small group tutoring.** DMEA members will be paired with Drake students who would work one-on-one or in small groups with students once a week after school. Participating teachers would be asked to provide feedback on students at the end of the semester.
- **Hearing from new teachers.** DMEA has been asked to identify three or four DMEA members who are in their first or second year in the classroom. These teachers would be invited to a DEA meeting in March to speak to students about classroom preparation and the new comprehensive evaluations they are completing. If you are interested in participating please contact Randy via e-mail at r-richardson@isea.org.
- **Read Across America.** Drake students have identified a building where they would like to be involved in Read Across America activities. DMEA will be contacting members in this building to urge them to help students become more involved.