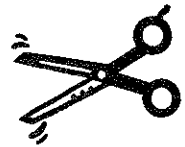


What Is DMEA Doing about the Proposed Budget Cuts?



**United, Protected,
 Connected**

Des Moines Education Association

DMEA TEMPO

On Thursday, March 6th, the district made public its much anticipated proposed budget for the 2003-04 school year. The budget is based upon a 1.59% increase in allowable growth which generates approximately 2.4 million new dollars.

The budget calls for the elimination of 74.2 teaching positions, 9 clerical positions and 12 administrative positions. The district estimates that these reductions will result in the savings of over \$5 million.

What is DMEA Doing?

It's easy to criticize the district's handling of the budget, but DMEA decided it would be more productive to find money to help save our members jobs. The DMEA office has been busy combing through the budget looking for ways to save money and to avoid eliminating staff. The ideas have been shared with members via e-mail and were shared with the school board on March 11th. Here's what we've come up with:

Unspent Balance

The district had an Unspent Balance at the end of the 2001-02 year of over \$21 million. This number represents the district's spending authority. The real test is to determine if the district could fund the Unspent Balance. DMEA was able to determine that the district actually had

\$23 million behind the Unspent Balance. This tells us that the district actually has more money than they have the authority to spend.

Principals to an 11-Month Contract

One of our goals was to keep cuts away from the classroom. We think that high school principals probably need to have a 12 month contract. However, do the high school vice-principals, all middle school and elementary principals really need to staff the building for 12 months? Cutting this group from a 12 month to an 11 month contract would save the district slightly over \$1 million. Cutting these positions would save the jobs of 24.5 teachers.

Special Ed Funding and Medicaid

The district will be receiving over \$2.3 million in new money from the state for next year. However, they are backing \$677,748 out of this to help cover special education costs. Special Education should be receiving a windfall as they begin to bill for Medicaid reimbursements. Last year, Special Education ended the year with a \$150,000 surplus. We think the district should have sufficient funding to allow shifting \$150,000 in costs from Special Ed back to the general fund. This would save 3.5 teaching positions.

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In the absence of communication, rumor and innuendo fill the void.

Unknown

DMPS Proposed Budget

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Health Insurance

The district has proposed a plan that would require all staff (single and family) to pay between \$24-\$103 per month for health insurance. DMEA has rejected this and will continue to do so. We have offered several alternative proposals to the district that would lower costs without significantly reducing benefits. These would save between \$150,000-\$210,000. We have also discussed changing insurance carriers that would result in a savings of over \$1

million district wide. Even the smallest change would save the jobs of 3.5 teachers. Changing carriers could result in saving the jobs of 23.5 teachers.

In addition we have asked the district to double check figures on the cost of adding two additional teachers to Moulton and on the cost of a district-wide step increase for all employees. We think the figures being used may be incorrect.

We have also received considerable feedback on the idea of eliminating one contract day for staff. Several members

have suggested cutting a day other than Martin Luther King day for this purpose. Regardless of the day which could be used, the savings would be significant. Based upon our best guess, the district could save an additional \$461,000 by reducing the contract by one day. Eleven teachers jobs could be saved in this manner.

These were some of the ideas presented by DMEA at the school board meeting. The board's reaction was very positive and they have asked the district to explore our suggestions and provide information at future meetings.

Public Employees and Their Personnel Records

From time to time we receive questions about what information in an employee's personnel file is open for public inspection. It is important to know that public employees do not have the same expectation of privacy in some of their personnel information as private employees do. Iowa's Open Records Law has been interpreted to provide the following guidelines about what information is open and what is not:

Open

1. Name
2. Business address, phone number, e-

mail address

3. Wages
4. Reimbursement for travel, meals, accommodations, etc.
5. Cash payments in settlement of an employment dispute.
6. Promotion or pay increase information.
7. Attendance information.
8. Certification/licensure
9. Information about other benefits.

Not Open

1. Home address, phone number, e-mail
2. Gender
3. Date of Birth
4. Social Security Number
5. Performance Evaluations
6. Disciplinary Records
7. Reasons why sick leave was used.

It is a good idea to periodically contact Human Resources and ask to review the contents of your personnel file. If you need DMEA's assistance please contact the office.

Calendar of Events



- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 1, 2003
DMPS School Board
Open Forum 5:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m. • April 3-4, 2003
ISEA Delegate Assembly
Ames • April 10, 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m. • April 15, 2003
DMPS School Board
Open Forum 5:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting 6:00 p.m. • April 17, 2003
Faculty Rep Assembly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North High School
4:15 p.m. • April 24, 2003
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m. • April 29, 2003
Recognition Dinner
Hotel Fort Des Moines |
|---|--|---|

A Staff Reduction Notice. . . Now What?

Every time the Register prints an article the numbers grow. The Superintendent announces that 70 teachers, no, make that 90, no, make that 110 teaching positions may need to be eliminated to cover the district budget cuts. While the numbers may not be consistent the message has been. As the budget process draws to a close the likelihood that some teachers will be reduced is very real.

DMEA does not expect the numbers to be as great as published. Fifty-five teachers have already opted for early retirement and in a normal year another 30-40 teachers resign to look for work elsewhere. An almost equal number request leaves of absence. With that in mind it becomes apparent that most of the announced cuts will be handled through attrition. Of course this means larger class sizes, but in this day and age that's better than having no job.

With that grim message, here are a few tips on how to handle the arrival of some news you'd rather not have.

If you are declared "excess" in a building, it does not mean your position has been eliminated. It only means that your position has been cut in your building. All "excess" employees will have a position with the district. "Excess" employees will be pooled with those people seeking transfers and those returning from a leave of absence. "Excess" employees will be given the first opportunity to choose a new building, followed by those requesting transfers, and finally by those returning from a leave.

Those people facing a staff reduction have a different set of concerns. They should refer to the following information:

The facts about Staff Reduction

- 1. Receiving a staff reduction notice doesn't mean someone is a bad teacher.** Receiving a staff reduction notice means Iowa and school districts are having budgetary problems. Staff reduction notices will likely happen in a few cases this year.
- 2. Any teacher receiving a staff reduction notice has a right to have a private hearing with the Board of Education.** *Code of Iowa*, Chapter 279, delineates teachers' rights regarding termination and hearings. Probationary teachers cannot appeal the decision beyond the local school board. Tenured teachers (teachers with over three years of experience) may appeal the decision to an adjudicator and ultimately to District Court.
- 3. Filing for a hearing does not mean that a hearing has to take place.** Filing for a hearing preserves all possible options. Many probationary teachers choose not to go through with the hearing. If a teacher does not file for a hearing within the five-calendar day time frame, he/she has indicated to the board that the termination will go unchallenged. If at some point prior to the hearing a teacher decides not to go through the hearing, it can be cancelled.
- 4. Contract language determines the order of staff reduction.** Individuals may or may not agree with what the contract says regarding staff reduction. However, the criteria are laid out in the language.
- 5. A resignation is not the answer.** Some administrators will approach teachers/staff requesting a resignation because it's "less unpleasant." Beware! A resignation eliminates the

option for unemployment and recall rights.

6. The Association isn't to blame for the staff reductions. If there is a belief that an employee has been wrongly chosen for a reduction, there is the option for a grievance if the employee is in at least the third year of employment. Iowa Code does not allow a probationary teacher to file a grievance regarding evaluation or job retention. The Association has a responsibility to ensure that the process is followed appropriately. Members may not like what has happened, but if the process is followed, there is little that will stop it.

7. The salary settlement is not the reason for staff reductions. There are districts that will attempt to "body bargain." In other words, they want the Association to take a lower settlement to "save jobs." If the Association bought into that strategy, the district could reduce staff anyway.

8. Employees who have received staff reduction notices need everyone's support. Receiving a notice of termination is a very frightening and upsetting situation. The rest of the staff should provide moral support and understanding ears. It's time to rally around them and help in whatever way possible.

9. Make sure RIFed employees keep in touch with Association leaders and the Executive Director. It's important to contact DMEA immediately. Don't rely on the generosity of the district when it comes to saving your job.

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DMEA Calendar Survey Results

Nearly 650 members responded to the recent DMEA calendar survey. Members had requested more input into the process following the announcement that the 2003-04 calendar would separate parent conferences and Spring Break by a week.

Members indicated a clear preference for the 2004-05 calendar. By a nearly 2-1 margin members told DMEA that they liked a start date for the school year that is similar to the current practice. In addition, 76% of the survey participants wanted the 2004-05 calendar to return to the practice of keeping Spring Break immediately after parent conferences.

One item on the survey which generated a great deal of discussion was a proposal to start school by August 9th and to end the semester before Winter Break. Participants rejected this concept by a wide margin.

The committee is now working to assemble a tentative calendar. They hope to have this process completed prior to the end of the year. At that time they will present the proposed calendar to the school board for their approval.

Second Year Teachers Near Decisions on Licensing

Second year teachers across the district have more than budget cuts to worry them. They are approaching the end of the first year under the new Comprehensive Evaluation System. Administrators that have second year teachers have been told that they should have all observations and information completed by April 1st.

On or around April 1st building administrators will begin to determine the licensing recommendation for each 2nd year teacher. Those teachers who successfully complete the process will be recommended to receive a standard teaching license. The principal will then sign off on the licensing application and give it to the teacher. The teacher is then responsible for sending the application to the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) to complete the licensing process.

Some teachers may find that their principal has recommended that they participate in a third year of mentoring. Once again the evaluator will sign off on the recommendation and give it to the teacher who will complete the application process.

Unfortunately, a few teachers may not successfully complete the evaluation. In this case the building principal will contact the BOEE and notify them that the person has not met the requirements for licensure. If someone in your building is notified of this, please have them contact DMEA immediately. Members who do not complete the requirements still have the right to contest the decision before an adjudicator. Members will be represented at no cost by ISEA attorneys.

Plan to Attend!

Hotel Fort Des Moines Grand Ballroom

Des Moines Education Association

Invitations will be mailed!!!

DMEA Recognition Dinner

Help us honor our retirees, Friends of Education, Volunteer of the Year and Ruth Foster Award winners.

Tuesday, April 29, 2003

Cash Bar-6:00 p.m.

Dinner 6:30 p.m.

