



United, Protected, Connected

Des Moines Education Association

DIMEA TEMPO

Spring is Approaching—Now What?

This is going to be a stressful spring for many people in our school system. A combination of events, largely beyond their control, will place school funding at risk and create a situation that will likely result in the loss of as many as 160 teaching positions in the Des Moines Public Schools.

With only three months remaining in the school year, many things will happen in a very short time. In an attempt to keep you informed, we're going to outline what and when we think things will happen.

On March 9th the school board is expected to approve a tentative budget for the district. At that time we should get a fairly good idea of where we're headed with staff reductions.

On March 19th the state Revenue Esti-

mating Conference will be issuing their quarterly report. A report that shows state revenues are lagging could lead to further reductions in state aid for the following school year and spur the district to have larger staff reductions.

On March 20th, ISEA is hosting a state-wide rally in the North High School Auditorium. This is your chance to once again let legislators know that we need a 6% increase in allowable growth to keep our schools afloat.

In April the school board will finalize its budget. By the final week of April the district will begin issuing staff reduction notices. The majority of this *Tempo* contains information on how members can deal with staff reductions and transfer issues.

Q & A for Those Seeking Transfers

The deadline for applying for transfers for the 04-05 schools year is April 1st. Each year people call the office asking how the district determines transfers. To help make this process a little simpler, here are some common questions and answers on transfers.

How can I know what is open? Vacancies are advertised on the district website and Jobline twice during the school year, January and March. However, your request

need not be limited to listed positions: in fact, you may request any position for which you are interested.

What does it mean if I've been declared excess? If you are declared excess it means that employment cannot be provided in the current building. People who are excess are considered first for transfers. Excess teachers and associates are not guaranteed their first choice, but generally are able to be

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To accuse the NEA of being a terrorist organization is grotesque, a smear tactic and a confusion of issues. Playing the "terror card" is disgraceful.

Jamie McKenzie
Publisher of nochildleft.com

Wellness Corner



Beating Low Back Pain

Low back pain ranks second to headaches as the most common cause of pain and second to the common cold as a reason for doctor visits. It's the primary reason for lost workdays and disability for adults under the age of 45.

Most low back pain results from poor daily habits such as lack of activity, long periods of sitting, poor posture, improper lifting and a lack of fitness.

Extended sitting puts more pressure on your spine than any other position. Get up frequently to stretch and walk around. Slouching irritates tired back muscles so it is important to have good posture.

A supportive mattress can make a big difference. Backache upon waking each day can mean your mattress is too soft or too firm. One study found that a medium-firm mattress reduced disability related to low back pain more than physical or medical interventions.

Regular exercise is the best weapon to fight low back pain. Simple exercise such as walking, biking and swimming can help. Proper weight training techniques can also help.

It is important for people to learn proper lifting techniques. When lifting a person should bend at the knees, not at the waist. Bending at the knees allows your leg muscles to do much of the work.

Some back pain is also caused by being overweight. Carrying around an additional 20-30 lbs. in weight places an increased burden on back muscles.

Q and A on Transfers

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placed in an assignment among their choices. Employee qualifications and district needs are considered regarding placement. Tentative assignments are reviewed by principals prior to being finalized.

Do I lose my current position when I ask for a transfer? No, you are assigned to your current position until you are transferred. Those declared excess in the building are the only ones who lose their current positions.

What if I change my mind and do not want a transfer? If you change your mind before May 1st, you may rescind your request in writing to Human Resources. After May 1st, if the transfer has been made, it may not be changed.

What if I want to expand the list of positions I am interested in? Again, do so in writing by May 1st. The district cannot accept telephone changes.

Will I be called to see if I want the position before I receive a new assignment? Generally not. List only those positions you would want to be assigned to on your request. The only time you are called is if the assignment is only close to what you asked for, not exact.

I am a special ed. teacher and want a regular education position in my building. Can't I just move to it rather than go through the transfer process? No, you must apply for a transfer. Special Education, Title, ESL and Head Start teachers are considered separately. That is, they are treated as though they are in a separate building called "Special Education" or "Title." Therefore, they may not automatically transfer into the regular program.

What if I get a position I asked for and one I like better comes open later in the summer. Can I transfer again? No, once you have received a transfer, your request has been granted, and your file is closed.

ISEA/NEA Delegate Elections

In the approaching DMEA elections we will be electing 11 people to attend ISEA Delegate Assembly and 15 to attend NEA Representative Assembly. Why? What does it matter?

Delegate Assembly is the major policy making body of ISEA. The Assembly will establish a budget, Legislative Agenda, and policies to govern ISEA for the next year. Our involvement gives members a chance to directly influence the direction our state organization takes in the next year.

Representative Assembly, which is touted as the largest democratic meeting

in the world, works much the same way at the national level. Delegates from across the country come together to map the path of our national organization. Our delegates will also have a chance to elect some of the leaders of the NEA.

Delegates to both Delegate Assembly and NEA Rep. Assembly play key roles in the association. Our elected representatives give us a chance to make sure DMEA has a role in decision making at the state and national level. It is important for members to use their votes wisely and select delegates who will work for the good of our membership.

The Top Ten Things Every Member Should Know About Staff Reductions



After false alarms in each of the past two years, it appears as though many district employees will actually be faced with the reality of staff reductions this year. Based upon information provided by the district, it appears as though there will be between 130-160 fewer teaching positions in the Des Moines Public Schools next year.

At this time it is impossible to quote the exact number of employees who may receive a staff reduction notice. We do know that approximately 60 employees opted for early retirement. These early retirements, coupled with a number of resignations should reduce the actual number of staff receiving a formal notice. We're hoping that only about 80-100 people actually receive staff reduction notices.

The Facts About Staff Reduction

1. The district must notify you by April 30th that your continuing contract be terminated at the end of the year. The district can notify you any time prior to this date, but it cannot go beyond April 30th. At this time it appears as though the district will send our staff reduction notices beginning April 26th.

2. Any teacher receiving a staff reduction notice has the right to 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. 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 the teacher changes their mind, the hearing can always be canceled.

4. Receiving a staff reduction notice doesn't mean someone is a bad teacher. Receiving a staff reduction notice simply means the Des Moines Public Schools are having budgetary problems. Last year over 500 teachers across the state received these notices and many more will this year.

5. Contract language determines the order of staff reduction. The criteria used for staff reduction is found on page 12 in section A2 of your comprehensive agreement. DMEA and the district have already been meeting to make sure this language if followed.

6. A resignation is not the answer. Do not resign if someone asks you to do so. Resignations eliminate the option of unemployment and recall.

7. The Association will make sure that the staff reduction process is completed fairly and accurately. The Executive Director will review the list of staff reductions to make sure they are done accurately.

8. Those people who received a staff reduction notice can be recalled. Any employee who is reduced has the right to be recalled to any position they are qualified for up to one year

from the date they are reduced. In the early 1980s the district laid off nearly twice as many employees as they plan to reduce this year. By the end of the summer most people who wanted a job had been recalled.

9. Employees who receive staff reduction notices need everyone's support. Receiving a staff reduction notice is very traumatic. Most of the people receiving them will be teachers who are relatively new to the profession. The rest of the staff should provide moral support and understanding ears.

10. Make sure RIFed employees stay in touch with Association leaders and the Executive Director. Make sure you stay in touch with someone in your building and the Executive Director for DMEA. They can keep you informed of possible recalls and assist you if you are seeking other employment.

The Executive Director of DMEA will be attending a training session in Colorado Springs when staff reduction notices first begin to arrive. He will be back in the office on Thursday, April 29th. DMEA will have a meeting at 4:15 p.m. in the North High School cafeteria on April 29th for all teachers who have received a staff reduction notice. At that time the Executive Director will answer questions and assist members in completing the required paperwork. If a member receives a staff reduction notice and does not want to wait until the 29th they should contact the DMEA office and leave a message for the Executive Director. He will check messages daily and return calls each evening.

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Plan to Participate in DMEA Lobby Days

By the time you read this the first DMEA Lobby Day of 2004 will be history. The DMEA Governmental Affairs Committee's building list for the remaining lobby days appears below.

March 17		March 31	
Monroe	Willard	Granger	Mitchell
Callanan	Cattell	Hiatt	Edmunds
Weeks	Casady	McCombs	Hanawalt
Merrill	Findley	Meredith	Howe
East	Hillis	North	Longfellow
Central Campus	Evelyn Davis	Lincoln	McKinley
Jefferson	Jackson	Moulton	Oak Park
Capitol View	Madison	Downtown	Phillips
King	Morris	Perkins	Wallace
Van Meter	Stowe	Greenwood	Woodlawn
	Stuebaker	Wright	

Fund Our Future Rally on March 20th



The "Fund Our Future" coalition is sponsoring a rally at North High School on Saturday, March 20th. The Rally will start at 11:30 a.m. and conclude at 1:30 p.m. Hy-Vee stores will provide sack lunches to attendees.

Each of the major groups in the coalition will provide speakers. Each UniServ Unit in the state has been asked to pledge that a certain number of people will participate in the event.

DMEA has pledged that, despite this being Spring Break, we will have 500 participants. The coalition groups hope to have several thousand people in attendance from across the state.

Over the next few weeks the coalition groups will be working hard to gather signatures on petitions in support of increased funding for schools. By the time of the rally the groups hope to have over 100,000

signatures to take to the legislature. If you have not organized a petition drive in your building, you may want to get one organized by parent conferences. This would be an excellent time to collect signatures.

You are strongly encouraged to work with community groups, such as PTA, to organize people to attend this rally



DMEA Calendar

- March 18, 2004
Faculty Rep. Assembly
North High Cafeteria
4:15 p.m.
- March 22-29, 2004
Spring Break
No School
- March 29, 2004
Delegate Orientation

- 4:15 p.m.
- March 30, 2004
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m.
- April 1-2, 2004
ISEA Delegate Assembly
Ames
- April 6, 2004

- DMPS School Board Meeting
Open Forum 5:45 p.m.
Regular Session 6:00 p.m.
- April 8, 2004
DMEA Executive Board
4:15 p.m.
- April 14, 2004
90 minute early dismissal