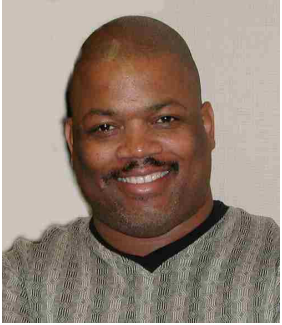


Tempo!

April/May Issue

March Winds, April Snow Showers

Greg Harris, DMEA Executive Director



March winds and April snow showers bring May flowers. I hope everyone is enjoying the spring weather. I found out the other day that

the weather in Iowa is sort of unpredictable. I was on my way to Omaha, Nebraska, when all of the sudden it started snowing. Having just coming from North Carolina, I couldn't believe we were having snow showers. I have adjusted to the Iowa weather and I enjoy advocating for our members.

As we approach the end of another school year, I would like to salute our Association Representatives. Your job is so important to the infrastructure of the Des Moines Education Association local. I hope you will

consider continuing your important role in helping us to build capacity within our local. If you are not planning to be the association representative for your school next year, or if you are moving to another worksite, please let the DMEA office know, and be certain to hold an election in your building to elect another representative for your school.

I have had the opportunity to meet several reps who were representing members regarding building level issues. This was so important; because, the representatives were able to relate to me important information concerning the member's problems or issues, and together we were able to find positive solutions by working with the member and his or her supervisor.

I went to a meeting the other day and, because of the relationships we are building within the district, the

meeting went very smoothly. I, along with the DMEA Member, listened to the concerns from the supervisor and responded in a positive and professional way. The meeting ended with the supervisor saying positive things about how things in the work place had changed, and the member acknowledged that the help the supervisor had given was helpful. The member was also able to express other concerns that they had, and the supervisor listened and responded in a professional manner.

Des Moines Education Association is a member driven organization that reaches out to our members. We care about public education. There are a lot of people who are talking about unions only wanting to keep bad employees, but we work with the school district to ensure that all of our members' rights are upheld and that they are treated fairly in disciplinary actions. I wish you the best and for a successful end to your school year.

President's Report

Alan Young, DMEA President



As the 2007-08 winds down to close, we can say that we continue to experience change, transition, and challenge. We are no longer in the days of full-fledged top down management as we were not long ago, but we are

not yet in a fully professional, collegial, and collaborative environment where those closest to the children

have much say in their own teaching, learning, and working conditions. We are making progress in this area to be sure, but it is not a quick and easy path.

With several emerging and renewed committees, our constructive engagement of administration via the Superintendent's Cabinet is just beginning to establish the voice and choice of education professionals into the regular problem-solving and decision-making culture of the Des Moines Public Schools. Consistency

and continuity are not yet here as we transition into new regional district decision-making structures.

We continue to have change and turnover in many district leadership positions. DMPS is very much in flux and this challenge affects the ability to realize change as quickly as one might hope. We know we still face many challenges daily in the areas of planning time, flexibility of scheduling, lack of support and differentiation in quality PD, student attendance, behavior, and (cont)

President's Report Cont.

engagement, and a frustrating substitute shortage to name a few. These problems eat away at our experience as professionals. It will take everyone working together, thinking outside of the box, to secure significant improvement in our daily teaching, learning, and working experience in DMPS.

Our new district “ends” can aid us by clarifying our vision and unifying our purpose. They certainly send a clear signal that we are moving in a learner-centered versus a subject-centered direction. But much must be done for these “ends” to be realized. If they are to be a constructive tool for change and more than just words on paper, district leadership must be committed and supportive. I have no doubt our education professionals have the ability to make this shift and create empowering learning experiences that will help each student to build these 21st century capacities. We help push for these “ends” to move beyond simple, narrow testing benchmarks. Sustaining and growing this effort will require district support that is not yet in place.

In these changing times, it is critical for DMEA to continue to grow our influence and build our capacity to lead. We cannot afford to rest on our laurels. To be successful, we must be strong building by building. It matters if we are able to “resist the bad.” It

matters if we are able to “create the good.” In these times, we cannot afford to wait for change. We must lead the change. This is not only at the district, state, or national level. This needs to be at the building level as well. We must collectively organize and strengthen our focus in the buildings so that we are leading from within each building as well as beyond.

To this end we have been growing our staffing capacity and improving our engagement at the DMEA office level. We have been strengthened by the new energy of DMEA Executive Director, Greg Harris, and our excellent office manager Kathleen Crouse and office assistant Maria Howlett. Full release of the president in a local of our size has also been critical to increasing our presence and engagement. NEA's grant support has been critical to this growth in staff and governance capacity. While our efforts have been felt as our capacity is increasing, our challenge is not static.

With the recent NEA Developmental Grant and the vision of our Executive Board, we will soon hire a second director to continue to grow and empower our members to lead change and improve our teaching, learning, and working conditions. This is an exciting moment for DMEA and most importantly for members. While we know change does not happen overnight, in a district as large, urban, and

complex as ours, we must persevere in these efforts so that they make their way into schools and classrooms more consistently, improving your teaching, learning, and working conditions. This will not happen without tenacity, persistence, and new thinking. But for all things, capacity is critical – and now DMEA is poised to have it.

But most important to remember is that our “capacity” is largely YOU! The increased staffing is here to increase YOUR ability to make a difference in your daily experience and in the lives of those with whom you teach, learn, and work. While the second director will not be here until fall and will take a bit a time to get our new team up and running, we will be looking for more ways to support, advocate, and empower you both directly and via support and training of DMEA Reps in your building.

While this marks the achievement of several years' worth of hard and smart work by many to truly help DMEA be staffed at an adequate capacity, it is truly just the beginning of our Association's effort to lead and move beyond mostly reacting to change. Thanks for all you do as part of our team that makes sure that the voice of education professionals is emerging in every part and every level of our district. The DMEA Team is strong and getting stronger. I hope you truly have a rejuvenating summer break!

Children Can Learn the Joy of Philanthropy

NEA Website

A service-learning program of the Central Asia Institute (CAI), “Pennies for Peace” educates American children about the world beyond their experience and shows them that they can have a positive impact on a global scale, one penny at a time.

A penny in the United States is virtually worthless, but in Pakistan and Afghanistan a penny buys a pencil and opens the door to literacy. Originally begun by Greg Mortenson, a

mountain climber who saw firsthand the need for literacy—especially among girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan—the program supports CAI's mission to provide community-based education, especially for girls. A fifth-grade education for a girl improves not only the basic indices of health for her and her family, but she will also spread the value of education within her community. Literacy, for both boys and girls, provides better economic opportunities in the

future and helps neutralize the power of extremist leaders.

This program is especially attractive because *only pennies*—no nickels, dimes, quarters, or dollars—are collected, making it possible for all children, including those of very limited means, to participate actively.

Classrooms interested in participating should visit www.penniesforpeace.org and regis-

THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

As many of you realize we are in the beginning stages of the Living Wage Campaign. We have put together a committee. These people are working hard to get organized so that this fall we can get up and running with this and contact our legislators and make them show us the money. We will need everyone's help once this ball gets rolling and it is up to all of us to make sure that we make it known how hard we work and how much we need to be able to live on this salary including benefits and not have to maintain at least two jobs and a family lifestyle that includes us. We will be calling on you, each and everyone who works for the district, members and potential members. So keep your eyes and ears open for more information.

SICK LEAVE

About the use and abuse of sick leave! I have received many phone calls from persons that are getting called into the office or downtown for a conference. Help yourselves out here gang, your sick leave is just that. It is for when you are ill or you have an ill family member. Not to use if you plan to take a long week end vacation with your spouse or family or just want to be home for several days because you are tired. Yes! We have some people who have worked for the District for several years, each and every year they have made sure that there are no days left.

This is not the way to go, if you happen to have a legitimate illness that takes surgery, or a long term at home. You have no time, guess who is responsible?? I know that some of us have legitimate illness' that require extra time off; but those that abuse it

have no excuse. These are not your days to abuse!! They are a generous benefit! Yes, a generous benefit!!

The District has been very lenient; they are now taking steps to stop this abuse. They have instituted a policy that if you are out of sick leave they call you in to counsel you with your administrator and state that you have only 1 illness day left, after that you will most certainly be terminated. There is little we can do to help out with this issue so I caution you to not abuse your sick leave. I cannot stress this enough: do not abuse your sick leave.

If you were working in the private sector they would not allow you even one more day, you would be terminated on the spot. Please remember this is a benefit, if you abuse it we all could lose it.

True-False Quiz Answers

1. False

6. False

11. False

2. False

7. False

12. True

3. True

8. False

13. True

4. False

9. True

14. True

5. False

10. False

15. False

Des Moines Education

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Summer Calendar

June Calendar

Tue 3 Last day for elementary and middle school students
Tue 3 DMPS School Board Meeting
Wed 4 Last day for high school students
Tue 17 DMPS School Board Meeting
26-29 NCUEA Summer Meeting

July Calendar

6/26-7/6 NEA Annual Meeting
Mon 7 School Board Candidate Filing Begins
Tue 8 DMPS School Board Meeting
Wed 9 Teacher New Hire Orientation
Tue 22 DMPS School Board Meeting
Wed 30 Teacher New Hire Orientation
Thu 31 Last Day for Candidates to File for School Board

August Calendar

Mon 4 ISEA Executive Board
Tue 5 DMPS School Board Meeting
5-7 ISEA Summer Conference
Fri 8 School Board Interview

August Calendar September Calendar October Calendar

Mon 4	ISEA Executive Board	Mon 1	Labor Day	Thu 2	DMEA Executive Board
Tue 5	DMPS School Board Meeting	Tue 2	DMPS School Board Meeting	4-5	NEA MW Regional Minority Leadership Training Seminar
5-7	ISEA Summer Conference	Thu 4	DMEA Executive Board	Tue 7	DMPS School Board Meeting
Fri 8	School Board Interview	Tue 9	School Board Election	Thu 9	DMEA Rep Assembly
Mon 11	DMEA Exec Board Training	Thu 11	DMEA Rep Assembly	Wed 15	Parent-Teacher Conferences
Tue 12	ESP New Hire Orientation	Tue 16	School Board Meeting	Thu 16	Parent-Teacher Conferences
Wed 13	Teacher New Hire Orientation	Thu 18	DMEA Executive Board-if need	Fri 17	No School
Fri 15	DMEA Rep Training Workshop	Fri 19	DMPS Staff Development	Tue 21	DMPS School Board Meeting
Mon 18	All Teachers Report	26-27	NEA Board Meeting	Thu 23	DMEA Executive Board
Tue 19	DMPS School Board Meeting				
Thu 21	Students First Day				
Mon 25	Voter Registration Forms Due				
Thu 28	DMEA Rep Assembly				
Fri 29	Election Registration Last Day				