

DMEA Tempo

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Des Moines Education Association

August 20, 1997

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Paul Mann

Last year was a successful and frustrating year. We were hit with one crisis after another all year long, with almost weekly negative articles in the media about our school district! Remember the financial problems, the Meredith teacher bashing incident, the curriculum audit, the flap over the attempt to force IBM computers onto the district, the expensive Maxtell report, the Labor Department complaint against the district, the firing of the Technology Director, the tragic deaths of several members, the budget cuts and 104 staff reductions, the misunderstanding over early retirement, and then bell times!

Wonder what your dues money went for and in what projects your DMEA officers were involved and for what issues we fought? Just peruse the following list. We:

1. elected two DMEA recommended candidates to the Des Moines School Board.
2. organized volunteers for the Vision 2005 local sales tax election.
3. helped establish standards, curriculum, Internet access, and plans for placing over 1000 computers into multi-teacher work stations this year.
4. interviewed and recommended legislative candidates.
5. lobbied to defeat determined efforts to expand tuition tax credits.
6. worked to establish new bell times last spring and recently established the DMEA position to continue them relatively unchanged for next year.
7. awarded \$4000 in scholarships to sons and daughters of DMEA members.
8. established through the District Strategic Planning Committee a clearer focus for School Improvement Plans by narrowing district objectives from eight to three items, including a new School-to-Work objective for schools.
9. worked with Phase III funds to implement a new Mentoring Program for elementary professionals new to the district and expanded it to include new secondary professionals as well for next year.
10. established the opportunity for each eligible employee to receive up to two \$250 incentive payments for taking up to two Phase III classes, as long as at least one of the classes is a technology class.
11. established that ten current employees be hired as technical support personnel for technical and instructional support to elementary staff.
12. worked through the Des Moines Teachers unprecedented and extremely complex changes to the DMTRS to make it more competitive with IPERS.
13. bargained the first improvements in our early retirement system in many years by securing payment of health care premiums for those who retire at 55, rather than at age 60, uncovering a common, but serious misunderstanding about the timeline for bargaining early retirement.
14. achieved 4.8% increases in total compensation for current teacher unit employees, 5.3% increases in total compensation for secretaries and 5.3% increases for associates with only 3.1% new money available, as compared to 4.6% average increases statewide on 3.8% average new money available.
15. met many times with district administrators to develop new procedures for next fall that will give building staff full access to information on the suspension and expulsion records of transferring students.
16. retained fully employer paid health insurance coverage for all employee groups. Each year the pressure to change the fringe benefit program increases. We know it is a high priority for our members and our work at the bargaining table reflects that priority.
17. met with police officials and district administrators and forged new understandings about police procedures involving school investigations.
18. worked (with partial success) to change the elementary staff allocation formula.
19. took positions on 35 issues at ISEA Delegate Assembly and many more at the summer NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C.
20. handled hundreds of questions, complaints and grievances. Grievances this year included pay adjustments, evaluations, letters of reprimand, leaves of all types and transfers. We also represented members when accused of abuse. We are available to work with employee groups that contend with hostile work environments on a regular basis.

1998-99 will bring new issues and more work on old issues. We need everybody.

The Des Moines Education Association (DMEA) is an affiliate of the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) and the National Education Association (NEA). The strong relationship means the following for our members:

1. Information on the latest educational trends and issues.
2. Increased state and federal funding for education through political action and lobbying.
3. Legal services for employment related matters.
4. Discount purchasing and other special offers.
5. Public relations programs including advertising campaign to support public education.
6. An attorney referral program for personal matters at a discount.
7. Improvements in retirement systems both at the local and state level.
8. Liability coverage
9. Prohibited passage of increased tuition tax credit for parents of private school students.

Opportunities for Involvement

No matter what your area of interest, there is a way for you to become actively involved in making the decisions, developing leadership skills, making new friends, and carrying out the program of DMEA.

The DMEA operates with volunteers. These are your colleagues. All members are invited and urged to participate.

The major decisions for the DMEA are made by Faculty Representatives from every building and/or program. They represent you. You can communicate with them regarding your opinion about current issues or additional concerns you want addressed.

Volunteer opportunities are available to all through service on standing and ad hoc committees, school district committees or through one of four departments representing: nurses, retired teachers, Associates and Secretaries.

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Important Numbers

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OUR DREAM

The Association isn't just a building in Des Moines. It's people just like you who care about keeping the dream alive for children and education.

Working in education is a personal mission. Nothing can take the place of that feeling of satisfaction you get when that light goes on in student's eyes. But it sometimes seems that those special moments are few and far between when you're faced with the challenges and problems that today's students bring to your school.

Everything we do--from lobbying for increase school funding and higher school standards to protecting your rights and conducting public relations campaigns--we do so that you can keep turning on those lights in your students' eyes. Together, we can make sure that Des Moines schools are the very best they can be.

On behalf of the approximately 2,000 members of the DMEA, we thank you for your support and for your membership.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept. 4	Executive Board	4:15 p.m. @ DMEA
Sept. 8	GA Committee	4:15 p.m. @ DMEA
Sept. 9	All Associates	4:15 p.m. @ North
Sept. 11	Faculty Rep	4:15 p.m. @ DMEA
Sept. 15	HR/IPD	4:15 p.m. @ DMEA
Sept. 18	Executive Board	4:15 p.m. @ DMEA