

# DMEA TEMPO

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## READ ACROSS AMERICA is coming!

By President Mann

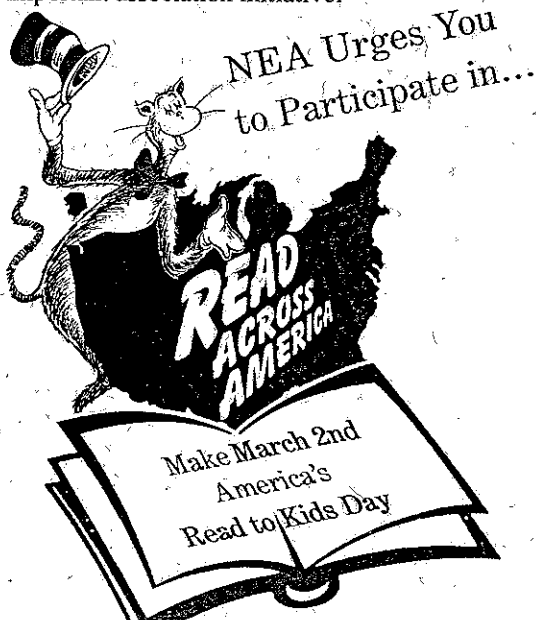
We are pleased to report that the community is responding favorably to our Read Across America campaign! Our IPD committee, under the direction of Marcia Minear, is finalizing plans for this major association effort to help all young people in Des Moines recognize the importance of reading.

The idea was first suggested to us at the NEA Representative Assembly last summer. At that time the NEA delegates voted to sponsor this association - led project that will hopefully result in every child in America sitting down with a book on March 2, the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

Here in DSM we have arranged to have "celebrity" readers at all of the public libraries and hospitals in DSM from 2-5 p.m. on March 2. DMEA members and officers and other community leaders, as well as sports, TV, radio, and newspaper personalities will be invited to participate. Day care and preschool centers may also sign up with the DMEA for an hour of reading.

There are opportunities for middle and high school students and teachers as well as elementary. Drama troupes could help us gain exposure to our event by staging plays adapted from Dr. Seuss stories for youngsters in the malls. Older students could be "celebrity" readers for younger students. Student groups could participate as part of service learning experiences.

The benefits to the students, community leaders and other participants, and the enhancement of a positive image of the association may be considerable! Thank you, in advance, for your understanding and support of this important association initiative!



## DMEA ELECTIONS:

### An Opportunity to Serve

By President Mann

We are entering the nominations phase of our DMEA election process! **Now** is the time to go to your DMEA Faculty Representative and request a nomination form for any of the open positions on the DMEA Executive Board, in the Departments of Nurses, Associates, and Secretaries, and ISEA and NEA delegates.

Nomination forms are due in the DMEA office no later than 4:30 p.m. on February 13 for all open positions. In the certificated unit (including SUCCESS workers), the offices of President, Vice-president, middle school Representative, 1 of the 2 Elementary Representative positions, and Ethnic Minority Representative are open this year. All officers serve a 2-year term.

In the Departments of Nurses and Associates, the offices of President and Vice-president are open. Also, the position of Secretary of the Associates is open (to fill a vacancy) for the one year remaining in MJ Sear's term. In the Department of Secretaries, the offices of President-elect, Secretary and Treasurer are open. In addition, 13 ISEA delegate slots and 12 NEA delegate slots will be filled.

Any DMEA member may run for these delegate positions. We especially want to encourage ethnic minorities and others who are traditionally under-represented in ISEA and NEA assemblies, such as young members, nurses, associates and secretaries, to consider running as delegates.

This year's ISEA Delegate Assembly is held in Ames on April 2 and 3. (There will not be a problem getting approval from the district for your absence.)

The NEA Representative Assembly will be held in New Orleans, July 1-6, 1998. In both cases, your expenses are covered by the DMEA.

There are many opportunities to serve students and your colleagues. Serving as an association officer, delegate, or committee member is but one of them, but it is perhaps the best one! Over the nearly thirty years of my association involvement, I have enjoyed and appreciated very much the opportunity to work with many dedicated association leaders all over the nation who work daily to help make things better for students and members.

The association is only as strong and effective as the members and leaders make it. We need you to consider making a personal sacrifice and a personal commitment to help make the DMEA the most powerful, effective voice for urban-educators in the nation! Together, we can do it!

# Teachers' salaries are not to blame

By Paul Mann, president, and  
 Russ Fisher, chair, Negotiations Committee  
 (Their letter to the editor of December 26, 1997)

Des Moines school Superintendent Gary Wegenke's remarks regarding the financial condition of the Des Moines School District gave many the impression that excessive collective-bargaining agreements were the primary reason for depletion of the cash reserves from \$14 million two years ago to only \$104,000 by next summer. Not true!

The largest expenditure of reserves was over \$4 million for the district's management-technology system. About \$1.7 million was spent for 45 positions originally slated to be cut but unexpectedly retained, due primarily to increased special-education needs. About \$1 million was spent for increased insurance costs, and about \$1.9 million was due to collective-bargaining agreements that exceeded the unreasonable low 2.3 percent budgeted.

Clearly, Wegenke "low-balled" the budget estimate. The board approved the collective-bargaining agreements last spring, so it is quite disingenuous to act surprised now.

Were the agreements, "excessive?" You decide. What salaries are appropriate for teachers who help produce the top-achieving students in the nation?

The average Iowa teacher salary of \$32,372 ranks Iowa teachers 34<sup>th</sup> in the nation, more than \$5,000 below the national average and more than \$9,000 below a neighboring state. In Des Moines, last year's beginning teacher salary of \$21,700 ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the state, despite the fact that Des Moines educators helped produce 29 percent of all Merit Scholars in Iowa and arguably have among the more difficult teaching assignments in the state.

The Des Moines base increase of \$600 was a whopping \$6 above the \$594 average base increase of the eight largest school districts in Iowa, and the Des Moines average teacher salary of \$36,799 ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in Iowa.

We believe Des Moines teachers are overworked and grossly underpaid, especially when compared with Des Moines administrators who are the highest-compensated school administrators in Iowa. And, contrary to Wegenke's premise, any fair-minded individual who examines all of the information will recognize that the collective-bargaining agreements have not been excessive and that the average salaries of Des Moines and Iowa teachers must be significantly increased as soon as possible.

## CALENDAR

Jan. 22	Executive Board	4:00 p.m.	DMEA
Feb. 2	GA Committee	4:15 p.m.	DMEA
Feb. 5	Executive Board	4:00 p.m.	DMEA
Feb. 9	HR Committee	4:00 p.m.	DMEA
Feb. 10	Associate's Party	4:15 p.m.	North
Feb. 12	Faculty Reps	4:00 p.m.	North

## Briefly

- ◆ The Iowa Legislature is back in town. It's supposed to be a year for education. They may miss the mark if we don't help them focus on real problems experienced in urban schools. Plan to attend lobby events scheduled as follows:

January 21	4:00 p.m.	State Capitol
March 4	4:00 p.m.	State Capitol

- ◆ The B.E.S.T Coalition is a joint lobbying effort including all employee groups, administrators, and the school board. That group will be meeting February 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the North High Cafeteria. Polk County legislators will be invited. See if you can get a team from your building including an administrator and a PTA representative.
- ◆ Are you ready for more discussion of bell times? It may be coming whether you're ready or not. District Administrators plan to provide an information packet to the school board on January 20. The Board will discuss the bell time issue on February 3. DMEA will have the information being supplied to the School Board. We will get it to the FR's as soon as possible.
- ◆ Follow-up to bell times - A group from Des Moines went to Minneapolis earlier in the year to learn about their bell time changes and how they think it is working. DMEA advised them that if Minneapolis is going to be used for comparison that they also take a look at the teacher's salary schedule while in Minneapolis.
- ◆ Bargaining has just gotten started. We will meet frequently with the district in the next month and a mediator is scheduled to help us on February 12 & 13 if needed.

## Faculty Rep Actions

The DMEA Faculty Reps met on January 15<sup>th</sup>. The following is a summary of actions:

- ❖ Voted to support a petition drive started by a group of citizens. The petition calls for another vote on the 1-cent sales tax with all proceeds going to schools for infrastructure needs. Your FR has the petition.
- ❖ Voted to lobby the state legislature and the School Board on the issue of class size.
- ❖ Heard a report on bell times but did not take action. The issue will be addressed at the February FR meeting. Express your opinion to your representative.
- ❖ Decided to form a committee to address the elementary report card problems. Call the office if you want to volunteer.
- ❖ Voted to ask the district and others to change "Take your daughter to work day" from February to the summer.