

# DMEA TEMPO

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Des Moines Education Association

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## IMPROVING THE DES MOINES TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM

By President Mann

Historic changes to the rules of the DMTRS were recommended for school board approval by our Advisory Committee at the April meeting! For the past two years under the leadership of Dave Wilkinson, the DMTRS Advisory Committee (and our own Ad Hoc DMEA Retirement Committee) have been studying ways to improve our local retirement system in order to be competitive with the new and improved IPERS system. Now, significant changes are on the way which will hopefully make our retirement system attractive again!

The proposed changes are:

1. Change the time that "vesting" of your contributions and those of the employer occur from 45 years of age and ten years of service to four years of service (same as IPERS). This will apply to all members of the system immediately upon adoption and means that if employees quit the district after four years of service, they will not lose the employer contributions if they elect to leave their money in the system until they retire. This makes the system more attractive to new hires.
2. The system will move to unisex tables for computing benefits on money contributed to the system AFTER the change is approved. For previous contributions, the old rates remain. This change, which reduces benefits slightly, is necessary in order to keep the system on a sound financial basis.
3. The system will now provide a death benefit for a spouse of an active member who dies prior to retirement. This improves the current rules which require (just as in IPERS) that a spouse of an active member who dies loses the entire "district match" — the employer contributions and interest. Now, the spouse of the DMTRS members would get a death benefit equal to and makes our system BETTER in this regard than IPERS, where the spouse still loses the employer contributions and interest.
4. The system will provide a new retirement benefit pay out option in which an employee may receive all benefits over a five-year period. While this may not be attractive to many, some employees, for health or other reasons, may desire this.

In addition, this year the district began placing all new hires that did not select a retirement system into DMTRS rather than into IPERS, as it had in the past. New hires joining the DMTRS rose from only ten the previous year to 30 this year.

New hires will only join the DMTRS if we can assure them that DMTRS benefits are comparable or better than IPERS. This district must demonstrate conclusively that they will provide outstanding benefits to their loyal employees who elected to go with the district plan. To achieve this, additional improvements to the DMTRS will be needed and we are not done yet. We are still awaiting actuary information on the following additional change:

1. Allow substitutes to join the DMTRS. Previously, they have had to join IPERS and have tended to continue in IPERS when they got a regular teaching contract.

The DMTRS Advisory Committee will meet on May 15, at 3 p.m., in the boardroom at Central Campus to consider these changes. Meetings are open to members.

The next step is to convince the Board of Education that significant changes are vital to rebuilding the attractiveness of our system. The Board will probably act on these changes over the summer, when many of you are distracted or out of town. That's why you pay your DMEA dues. Rest assured that DMEA leaders will monitor school board actions closely and will work for needed changes for our members!

## DMEA SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

8:30 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

Beginning June 8<sup>th</sup>

## What Have We Done For You Lately?

By President Mann

Each year your DMEA leaders work very hard to address the hundreds of concerns that are brought to us by you, our members. For instance, this year we have been very visible in the press and have also worked behind the scenes, meeting with members of the school board, administration, and members of the public in early morning breakfast meetings and many committee meetings. In doing so, we:

- ◆ stopped the adoption of the DSM school district budget ("unprecedented" was the way the DSM Register described it),
- ◆ worked successfully to find ways to amend the district budget to save the jobs of 21 Smoother Sailing elementary counselors without increasing class sizes or causing other staff cuts for those working directly with students,
- ◆ received an \$18,250 Member Benefits grant from NEA for new programs,
- ◆ elected our two recommended candidates to the DSM school board,
- ◆ won grievances,
- ◆ established a unified bargaining team for our three bargaining units that won 4.6% raises for Certificated members, 4.1% raises for associates, 4.1% for secretaries with only 3.7% new money available to our district,
- ◆ worked through the Des Moines Teacher Retirement System Advisory Committee to make historic improvements in the DMTRS (see other article in this TEMPO),
- ◆ implemented a very successful Read Across America campaign involving over 50 celebrity readers in 7 sites around the city,
- ◆ successfully bargained health insurance payments for early retirees again,
- ◆ significantly increased our DMEA membership despite fewer positions in the district due to budget cutbacks and early retirement,
- ◆ conducted a successful DMEA Fall Workshop,
- ◆ funded 21 delegates to the ISEA Delegate Assembly, 13 delegates to the NEA RA in Atlanta, and 14 participants in the ISEA Leadership Development Workshop in Storm Lake,
- ◆ and handled hundreds of employment questions and concerns of our members!

### CONGRATULATIONS

Dennis Peterson, volunteer at Longfellow, has been selected as DMEA Volunteer of the Year. Alicia Claypool, Director of Interfaith Alliance and Bill Paterson, owner of Copy Systems Inc. were selected as Friends of Education. David Wilkinson will receive the Ruth Foster Award. These folks will be honored at the Recognition Dinner May 28th.

Sarah Fletcher, Granger Elementary, has been elected Treasurer on the DMEA Executive Board.

## Attendance Policy

Des Moines administrators are again looking at policy revisions and new policies in order to impact attendance and fighting. We have another suggestion for a policy but that will come later.

First, a district committee is going to recommend that the attendance policy return to the "strict" rules in effect during 1996-97. Remember the background. Several buildings piloted a tough attendance policy prior to 96-97 with considerable success. Absenteeism was down which of course was the point. The same result was observed when it was made district policy for 96-97.

The school board changed (read:weakened) the policy for 97-98 because of parent pressure. Never mind that it was working and supported by administrators and teachers.

Now the committee is recommending a change in policy again, and returning to the tough one. As usual with the school board, they will deal with it during the summer when our members are scattered. Get your licks in early.

The same district committee will propose a "Zero Tolerance for fighting" policy, also likely to come to the Board this summer. It will impose progressive discipline on students who fight on school premises or at school related events. That "events" part is intended to cover athletic events.

**Zero tolerance for weapons**

**Zero tolerance for fighting**

**Zero tolerance for unwarranted absenteeism**

Have you noticed that policies work best when enforced?

## Safety

Now for the proposed policy that DMEA would like to suggest. For now, we will call it Zero tolerance for obnoxious behavior on the part of parents.

**The title is too long but we will start there!**

The DMEA phones ring periodically to report unusual and even criminal behavior in the schools. Parents sit in classrooms all day and every day and succeed many times in disrupting the teacher and the class. Verbal assaults on teachers and administrators are common and physical assaults are growing in frequency. This is a safety issue.

Little is done. Parental involvement and access to our public schools is overrated when abusive behavior is engaged in and tolerated. Some parents have not earned the right to be in the building. We cannot discipline them but the district can limit their access until they learn to behave properly.

No other public building would tolerate this kind of behavior. Why schools?