

# DMEA TEMPO

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## TEACHING CHILDREN TO THINK AND DREAM AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK NOVEMBER 16-22

By Paul Mann

American Education Week (AEW) provides all of us with a time-honored tradition of celebrating the accomplishments of our public schools. It's a week for thanking those who make a difference in the lives of children and young adults: teachers, educational support personnel, parents, administrators, community volunteers, and PTAs. It's a week for building partnerships between schools and communities. It's a week for highlighting how important education is to the health and well-being of our children and of our nation.

This year's AEW theme, **TEACHING CHILDREN TO THINK AND DREAM**, is designed to remind people that schools provide students with both skills and hope for the future and that schools must be places of learning, intelligence, excitement and wonder.

Perhaps few of you know that the NEA was one of the creators and original sponsors of American Education Week. Probably even fewer of you know that the 1921 NEA Representative Assembly was held in Des Moines, IA. That assembly called for setting aside one week each year to spotlight the "accomplishments and needs of the public schools...and to secure the cooperation and support of the public in meeting those needs".

Then, in 1987, the NEA Representative Assembly called for the creation of a special day to honor the contributions of school support staff. This National ESP day has since then been observed each year on the Wednesday of American Education Week (November 19<sup>th</sup>).

All education employees are important partners in meeting the complex social, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of children. Together, we can celebrate the fact that 29% of the 1996 Iowa Merit Scholars were products of Des Moines public schools. Together, we can rise to the challenges of providing a quality education to a diverse body of students where all are expected to learn. Together, we can celebrate and complement one another this week for the outstanding accomplishments we achieve daily with Des Moines youth!

We at the DMEA, staff and officers, are proud to represent you! **Congratulations for work well done!**



Teaching Children to Think and Dream...



Teaching Children to Think and Dream...

"I like to think that the greatest success of any life is that moment when a teacher touches a child's heart and it is never again the same... Everything America is or ever hopes to be depends upon what happens in our school's classrooms." *Frosty Tory, editor, Oklahoma Observer*

### TWO EDUCATION SUPPORT PERSONNEL (ESPs) YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW!

There are two hard-working ESPs (in this case, Extra Special People) that you have just got to know! One of them is Lois Blum, the President of the Department of Associates and the other is Sharon Perkins, the President of the Department of Secretaries.

Lois Blum started in the Des Moines schools in 1967. She is a special education associate at Lutheran Hospital Adolescent Duo-Diagnostic Program.

Lois has served as Associate's President, Vice President, Treasurer, on their Negotiations Cadre, as an ISEA Delegate, has attended NEA National ESP Conference and served on the District's Health Benefits Advisory Council.

Sharon Perkins started in the Des Moines schools in 1979. She is the secretary at Oak Park Elementary School.

Sharon has served as Secretaries' President, President-elect, is a Negotiations Cadre member, attended the NEA National ESP Conference and ISEA summer workshop.

Both of these leaders have worked hard to meet the needs of their members and have represented their members well in negotiations. Say "thanks" when you see them.

Here in the DMEA we have taken significant steps this year to include ESPs in all association activities. We now have secretaries and associates on all regular DMEA committees and have developed a coordinated bargaining team to present a united front in negotiating health care benefits and salary increases.

## Student Abuse

If you are accused of student abuse, please do not assume that your interests coincide with the interests of the District. The District will protect itself and shows a tendency to accommodate parents. This is true even if the charges are false. They usually are false.

You need to protect yourself. Keep careful records and get representation immediately. If a member, call the DMEA office. Do that as soon as possible because the District may start the investigation process quickly. The "ounce of prevention" theory prompts us to repeat these reminders from the Legal Services Division at ISEA.

- ◆ Never leave your class unattended.
- ◆ Don't discipline in anger.
- ◆ If you must physically restrain a student in a discipline situation, use only "reasonable" force.
- ◆ Use good judgement.
- ◆ Keep accurate records.
- ◆ Communicate with others.
- ◆ Keep your classroom or office door open.

## Fringe Benefits

Last months' TEMPO looked at average salary comparisons. This column begins to explore our fringe benefit program.

Obviously, health insurance is the cornerstone of the fringe program. The Des Moines health program is unique in that it offers a choice of 3 plans, the premium is fully paid by the employer and covers employees in all job classifications.

The 3 plans vary only slightly in benefits. The major difference is the size of the network of doctors, clinics, and hospitals. Here is a breakdown of the plans, their cost and number of participants.

Plan	Type	Annual Cost *	% of employees
BC/BS Alliance Select	Preferred Provider	\$4821	62.8%
Principal Health Care	HMO	\$3739	33.3%
Principal Health Care Classic	Closed gate	\$3053	3.9%

\*Costs are based on a "composite" rate which combines single and family rates.

We have also successfully negotiated full employer payment for dental, disability and life insurance. The average annual premium for these additional programs is \$888. Add this figure to the above health premium to get the average cost of fringes. Members of the clerical bargaining unit also receive vision insurance.

Each year your bargaining team fights hard to maintain the program. We consider it a high priority and part of the way Des Moines employees are compensated. This year's health costs increase 7.5% over 1996-97. We don't know what to expect for 1998-99.

"There is a place in America to take a stand, it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny. It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape." *Tom Brokaw*

## BRIEFLY

- **The District** recently distributed a flyer to all employees regarding a change in the dental policy. It identified Unit 4 services (orthodontics) at \$1500 per lifetime. This is not a new limitation. Prior to July 1, the lifetime limit was \$750. The improvement is a result of the 1997 bargaining.
- **The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)** is the largest national organization that brings together gay and straight teachers, parents, students, and concerned citizens from all walks of life, in order to end the destructive effects of anti-gay bias in schools across the country. GLSEN Central Iowa is a fully accredited chapter of the national organization.

Membership in GLSEN is open to all who believe that each member of every school community is valued and respected. GLSEN Central Iowa Co-chairs are Steve Person (Central Campus) and Elaine Imlau (Windsor Elementary). If you are interested in becoming a member or would like to attend one of our monthly meetings, contact one of us. Our December meeting, with featured speakers Paul Mann and John Vint, will concentrate on what teacher organizations such as the DMEA can do to protect and defend teachers and staff employees whose gender orientation may be considered out of the mainstream.

- **Bargaining timelines** will be different this year. We will make our proposal on Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> and get the district response on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>. If the parties settle voluntarily, it could come in February. We will keep you posted.
- **The School Calendar for 1998-99** must still be approved but the recommendation of the administration will be as follows:

Monday, August 24	Employees report
Thursday, August 27	Student's first day
Two-full weeks for Winter Break	Dec. 18 – Jan. 4
Spring Break	March 22-26
Last day for elementary/middle	Thursday, June 3
Last day for high school	Friday, June 4

**Children ARE America's Future**