

DMEA TEMPO

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Des Moines Education Association

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TECH WARS By President Mann

As the school year winds down, it is a relatively calm and relaxing time for many of us in DSM schools. NOT! With the extra half-hour per day, many of us are already at our wits end working to keep students out of CMSM, "complete mental shutdown mode"! Now the district seems poised to push forward with plans to replace Mac teacher workstations with WinTel machines as they come up for replacement, despite the disruption and loss of teacher productivity it will cause.

I was very proud of the work done by DMEA Technology Committee members, John Eller, Hoover, Deb Henry, Brody, Nancy Holmes, East, and community members, David Wright, Drake University, and Jon Neiderbach at the school board meeting last week. Each of them helped me make the case for continuing with our popular, 5-year, district technology plan for the final year before making any decision on moving to a single platform. There are tantalizing possibilities on the market (and in use right now) that will allow alternative delivery of L-Net services, just as we envisioned there would be 4 years ago. We really believed then and still do now that there are solutions which will allow both WinTel and Macs to operate seamlessly on one system.

Part of the problem seems to be that we are stuck with 15-year-old technology...you guessed it...CIMS...that does not interface well with other district technologies. Part of the problem seems to be that, in developing L-Net operations that are workable with CIMS, we have "outsourced" the development of the computer "load" that goes onto teacher workstation computers to GE Capitol, a technology firm that has no Macintosh-capable technicians. (Who made THAT brilliant choice, at a time when most of our clients were Mac users?) No wonder they are unable, or unwilling, to develop L-net solutions that will operate equally well with Mac and WinTel machines.

District worries about increased time needed in the future for network administrators to "de-bug" two platforms, rather than one, seem to be unfounded, given the experiences we documented from the net. Part of the problem is that the district is operating from a "common sense", rather than a "documented research" basis. If they have any documentation for their position, they are not sharing it effectively with staff, as is evidenced by the 555 responses to our technology survey. (40% of staff said they were unaware the district was standardizing teacher work stations; 96% said they had not been asked their opinion on standardization prior to the district announcement that they were beginning that policy; 94% said they were not surveyed by the district on that issue; 89% said they preferred a choice in selection of their next teacher workstation machine; and, 86% supported the DMEA position that teachers be allowed to choose the computer that best meets the needs of students in their classroom.) I delivered these statistics to the board last week. Thank you for your responses!

Many private businesses and other school districts have successful dual platforms, as is evidenced by the 266 pages of documentation gleaned from the Internet in just 48 hours and delivered by our DMEA technology committee to the school board last week. How sad that our school district, which aims to be the best in the nation, apparently can not or will not deliver a level of technology support to our teachers that is considered routine in most school districts! Yes, the district has backed down a little and will allow your Mac to stay in the classroom, but your machine may no longer be upgraded (unless you are one of the "exceptions") and will become a crippled, out-of date, relic over time. Your primary communication device will be a WinTel machine of some sort. Many Mac users feel they will lose time, money, productivity, and energy they have invested in district-approved technology. We also shared concerns that the network grading program that we will all be expected to use appears to be inferior to ones many staff are already using in the district. It will be like trading in a Porsche for a shiny, new Chevy.

If we must debate platforms again, which one is the better choice? Who decides? A handful of technicians or hundreds of teachers? What process does the district plan to use in making that decision? It will have to do better than the "rubber stamp" committee used sporadically this year. There are serious platform issues, requiring careful, comprehensive analysis, if we really have to go to one platform. (Remember, DMEA never sought this debate. We support continuation of the current district technology plan providing for classroom teacher choice.)

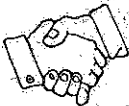
In closing, I asked the school board to:

- delay for one year any move to one platform, in order to research platform options and to prepare a "complete cost of ownership" study to assure taxpayer dollars will be well spent,
- direct the technology department to prepare a feasibility study for the board to consider replacement of the 15 year old technology that is restricting staff and student access to their full networking potential,
- issue a RFP to find network administrators who have the skills to maintain a bug-free, dual platform network,
- and, reaffirm this district's commitment to teacher choice in the selection of computers for their teacher workstations, so long as they meet reasonable district quality standards.

Although many of us are quite tired of discussing platform issues, I urge all of you who support the continuation of the 5 year technology plan to contact the board immediately (within the week) to support the 4 positions above. See your FR for a list of email addresses for the board members. There is little more that I can do for you, unless you speak up now. Together, we can make a difference.

➔ Briefly:

- School calendars for 2000-2001 and 2001-02 are now in place. It is the first time in memory that a multi-year calendar has been adopted. The 2000-01 calendar was approved in November, 1999 and the 2001-02 calendar was approved in March, 2000. DMEA will urge publications as early as possible so individuals can plan.
- Members have asked that we request that the district place your annual contract in an envelope before stuffing them in mailboxes that are less than private. We have made that request for next year.
- Speaking of contracts, the master contract negotiated in February has been printed and set for distribution in the next few weeks. You got this years in January, or half-way through the year.



Both the Department of Associates and the Department of Secretaries have completed bargaining with the district and both agreements have been ratified by the members. The total package for each group was about 5.5% including salary and the increase in health insurance which alone cost \$563 more per employee.

The Associates are also pleased with some language changes that solidify break time in the contract and an agreement on how to handle work time and comp time during parent conference weeks.

The district has also agreed to meet with the Associates and Secretaries on a regular basis to deal with issues that are of mutual concern. Bring issues to our attention so we can put them on the agenda. We already have agreed to discuss early retirement incentives based on unused sick leave and problems created for Associates when left alone in a classroom.

YELLOW PAGES



DMEA will advertise your summer business or service to all other members in Polk County. It's **FREE!** You prepare the ad and fax it to DMEA (471-8043) by May 5th and we will print it in our "YELLOW PAGES". It's a service to members who have businesses and to members who need the services.

SUMMER SERVICES:

CALENDAR:

- May 2 Associates Retirement Dinner**
5:30 PM Barratta's
RSVP by Monday, May 1st (471-8040)
- May 9 Special Election / DMEA Secretary**
Position is vacant due to the election of Chris Miller as President
- May 18 DMEA Recognition Dinner**
5:30 PM Embassy Suites
RSVP by Friday, May 12th (471-8040)
- May 25 Secretaries Retirement and Installation of Officers Dinner**
5:00 PM Gino's

