

# DMEA TEMPO

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## **Our Historic, Three Year Contract!**

By President Paul Mann

What a remarkable bargaining year it has been! After nine months of turmoil between school district leaders and teachers, the DMEA and the school district have agreed to a historic, three-year contract for our certificated unit! That contract includes significant progress on a remarkable number of "sticking points" that have troubled both sides in the past. The results are sure to pave the way for a new era of communication and cooperation between the administration and teachers!

This would not have been possible without the active involvement of our Executive Director and Chief Negotiator, John Vint, whose excellent, thorough preparation and research guided our moves, and Cindy Roerig, our Negotiations Cadre Chair, whose dedication and expertise and careful communication with other members of our cadre, allowed John, Cindy, and me the freedom to engage in three days of intense negotiations with Dr. Witherspoon, Pat Moran, and Jerry Wadden over a recent weekend. The agreement would almost certainly NOT have happened had not our FRs taken a tough, persistent, highly-public stance of "no confidence" last May and if they had not supported our filing of two prohibited practice complaints. And, this agreement would not have been possible without an administration that was willing to meet us MORE than half way on the many issues dividing us.

Our decision to change our traditional bargaining structure came after months of quiet meetings between the six of us, trying to resolve "time" issues that led to our filing the prohibited practice complaints. Since many of the issues overlapped into bargaining areas and because we knew our members had little trust in the administration, we felt it best to put many of our agreements into the contract. Since we six had developed a mutual respect over the previous months, it was easy and natural for us to meet in good spirited but at times tough and intense bargaining and problem solving. The result, given the overwhelmingly positive reaction by our members and the school board, is deeply gratifying to us.

As your DMEA chief spokesperson, I have received a lot of positive publicity for our unprecedented contract. I suppose that is natural, since I was also singled out for a great deal of negative press during our nine months of turmoil! But, all of our members must know that this was a team effort all the way, and all parts of the team deserve recognition. The team included your entire negotiations cadre, who advised us and worked closely with us during our "side bar" for you; the executive board, who supported our new negotiating process; the Faculty Reps, who not only took a courageous "no confidence" vote but also picketed the school board; and you, the members, who stood by us as we took the heat for you when demonstrating our collective displeasure with actions of the board and central administration. I believe we exhibited just the right degree of "toughness", professionalism, and flexibility to not only get their attention but win their respect.

Since last May, I have tried to set a tone that made it clear we were anxious to work cooperatively with the administration but that we would not tolerate the kind of surprises that were visited upon us last May. And, before agreeing to the "side bar", I reiterated our association goal of making DSM teachers the highest compensated teachers in the state (in total compensation). I advised them not to go into it, unless they were prepared to significantly reward our career teachers. Still, without the high regard in which John Vint is held by the administration, the crucial, initial steps toward our new bargaining process would probably not have occurred. And, without Cindy's careful, strong, passionate voice for our members, several key pieces of the contract, such as the \$500 bonus for 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers, would have been missing. We would not have accepted elimination of their step without it, and we could not have won the board's agreement on the total contract without it!

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not tell you that John, Cindy, and I believe that Dr. Witherspoon and the other members of the administration team shared our goals of making significant improvements that will allow the district to reward, recruit and retain the best teachers in the state! Additional goals included: improving the

morale of teachers and demonstrating commitment to the mutual goal of providing a public education for DSM students that is second to none! Our largest raise in the base ever, continuation of our current, excellent, health insurance package at a cost of an additional \$563 per employee, longevity increases, elimination of steps one and two, new \$2800 signing bonus over 3 years in shortage areas, lifting of the cap on years of experience you can bring into the district, signing bonus for supplemental pay in shortage areas, announcement of early retirement benefits for this year and next, increases in teacher prep/collaboration time during the student day, elimination of the 30 day "escape clause" for new hires, and our side letter agreements for a continuing (twice monthly) dialogue on various issues are proof of our mutual commitment to those goals!

With only 4.36% new money to the district, we got average raises of 6.8%, with first year teachers earning 13%, second year teachers earning 10.6%, and, with superlongevity increases, 5.01% (\$2500) for our veteran teachers. And, we have a formula that should generate similar money over the following two years of the contract. Additional benefits include not having to worry about the board extending our hours for the next three years. All in all, we believe it is a remarkable contract. It has been a wonderful ending to my four-year efforts as your president to help make DSM teachers the highest compensated in the state! We have made surprising progress toward that goal. Now, let us work with renewed vigor to make this district the premier k-12 public education institution in the nation!

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### ➔ Briefly:

- Bargaining for the 2000-01 contract for the Associates and Clerical staffs resumed on March 1. We have agreed to a schedule that should resolve the issues by mid-April.
- New employees are asked to get a physical before starting to work. They are also asked to sign a simple release saying that Health Services can share the information with Human Resources. That is an internal exchange within the district and is ok. The release you should be wary of is the type that releases your medical records. If the district asks you to sign such a release, refuse until you get some advice. Members should call the DMEA.
- The school calendar for 2000-01 is in place and was approved by the School Board last November. A proposed calendar for 2001-02 will go to the School Board on March 14 for discussion. Your FR has a copy of the proposal if you want to look at it and make comments.
- Complaints filed by students alleging sexual harassment by teachers still are filed despite most of them being false. In any event, here is a list of DON'TS from the ISEA Legal Counsel.

### **DON'T:**

- ✓ Touch a student unless you are confident the touch will be well received (the exception, of course, is when a student is disruptive).
- ✓ Put yourself in any situation which creates even the impression of impropriety. In particular, never give a student a ride home or invite a student to your home without the express permission of the student's parents and the presence of another adult.
- ✓ Become a student's counselor unless that is your job.
- ✓ Single out one student for unusual rewards or punishments without consultation with the student's parents or your supervisor.
- ✓ Give a written or verbal statement to anyone involving a situation where you are accused of doing something wrong until you have consulted with a person who is knowledgeable about your rights.
- ✓ Try to be your own legal counsel.
- ✓ Submit a resignation under pressure, regardless of how tempting it might seem at the time.



### Spring Break DMEA Office Hours:

The DMEA office will be closed on Wednesday, March 22 and Thursday, March 23.  
The office hours will be 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Monday, Tuesday and Friday.