

DMEA TEMPO

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Des Moines Education Association

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DMEA 2000-2001

By Chris Miller, President-Elect

I would like to thank the DMEA membership for its confidence in electing me as your president for the next term. As June 1 approaches, I am reminded of the tremendous responsibility you have entrusted to me. I can not do it by myself. **We** are an Association. **We** are working together for the common good and the betterment of our students, our teachers and our schools. **We** must move forward together. If you are asked to serve on a committee or to serve as an FR, please consider it very carefully before you say no.

This is a difficult time to be a teacher in Des Moines. We have worked 90 extra contact hours this year with most of that time coming from planning time. It would be the easiest thing in the world to say, "I don't have time to participate in DMEA activities". But if we don't provide support, we weaken the Association's ability to respond. Those you have chosen to represent you on the Executive Board will spend many hours during the coming year above and beyond their teaching time. They are willing to do it because they know how critical it is for the Association. We have committee chairs in place that will spend considerable time this summer preparing for our Association to get off to a great start in the fall. We have a School Board election to prepare for as well. In spite of the gains made in negotiations there is much to do on that front as well. These things do not magically happen. They happen because people spend the time and energy to make them happen. If you are asked to serve on a committee, to call a representative or board member, attend a public meeting or whatever might be required to best assist the Association, please say yes.

I pledge to do all in my power as your president to meet the challenges facing us in the coming years. But working together we can raise the Association to new heights. Believe me. I know there are a limited number of hours in a day. I know we face unprecedented challenges to our profession. But I also know that working together, we can achieve the best outcome for those our Association represents. **The newly elected 2000-2001 DMEA officers are:**

DMEA EXECUTIVE BOARD

DMEA President - Chris Miller, Goodrell
DMEA Vice-President - Toni Austin, Park Avenue
DMEA Board Secretary - Kris Mesicek, Title One
Middle School Representative - Pat Papenheim, Hiatt
Elementary School Representative - Hance Throckmorton, McKinley
Ethnic Minority Representative - Carmen Winters, Findley
ISEA Executive Board - Paul Mann, Central Campus

DEPT. OF NURSES

President - Janice Bannister, Oak Park
Treasurer - Kathleen Paul, Weeks

DEPT. OF ASSOCIATES

President - Rhonda Anderson, East
Vice-President - Lois Smith, Longfellow

DEPARTMENT OF SECRETARIES

President Elect - Becky McNew, Granger

Salute to Paul Mann

By Chris Miller, President-Elect

This is the time of year for change in lives and schools. Seniors moving out into the "real" world, fifth and eighth graders moving on to middle and high school. So, too, with the DMEA. President Paul Mann, who has guided the Association for these past four years, is moving to DMEA Representative on the ISEA Executive Board. As our president, he has presided over tumultuous times for our teachers and District. He led the DMEA effort to have meaningful input into the selection of a new superintendent. During his term, we sold the building on Ingersoll and moved into our new quarters at ISEA. (He's still sneezing from the dust he found while sorting old records prior to the move!) He guided our FR's as they confronted and responded to unprecedented changes imposed by the administration. He was part of the DMEA team that began a radical new negotiation process that resulted in the best raises for our members in recent memory. He has worked tirelessly with the DMEA and District Committees to see that his vision for our members was carried out to the very best of his ability. Mentoring, Phase III, Governmental Affairs, DMTRS, all had his steady hand on the tiller. Thank you, Paul, and good luck in your new position. We know you will represent us with your accustomed flair.

Farewell
By President Mann

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, the members, for your steadfast support of our association activities over the past four tumultuous years of my presidency. It has been a time of incredible changes, with some frustrating losses and some significant gains. As I leave, it is with a continuing sense of pride in the collective and individual strength of our members, a sense of urgency in our mission of helping this district affect policies that will improve student achievement and adequately reward educators, and with a sense of accomplishment at what we have been able to achieve for our members.

As I assumed the presidency the district was engaged in technology wars, resulting in the firing of our technology director. Things calmed down with the adoption of a popular, dual platform, 5-year technology plan I helped write. Then, things heated up again with attempts, ultimately successful, to oust our superintendent. The hiring of our new superintendent was clouded first by criticism over secrecy in the selection process and later by the financial package he received. However, the DSM Register was obviously elated with the success of their plan to oust our superintendent, and their criticism of the DSM school district abated significantly. I worked with the district for many months to help set up the community conversations meetings to generate public input and support for the district. Our involvement with the district came to a screeching halt, however, with the adoption of their radical reorganization plan and our subsequent "no confidence" vote.

Nothing has been more personally aggravating than the near constant unfair treatment that the school district, we, as an association, and I, personally, have received from the DSM Register. They were also not helpful in their depiction of our legitimate concerns about the negative effects on teachers and students of elimination of collaboration days, cutting before and after school planning time, and lengthening of the school day. Our most significant loss, our inability to convince the district to accept any changes whatsoever to their radical reorganization plan, was depressing. The disillusionment, feelings of betrayal, anger, and the lack of confidence in our administration and school board continue to plague many of our members, despite serious attempts on the part of the administration to resolve the situation.

Ah, but our successes were many! Our goal of making all DMEA members the highest compensated K-12 educators among the largest 10 Iowa school districts should be a reality by the end of our historic three year contract! Considering that we started in about ninth place, we have made remarkable progress, while retaining the best fringe benefit package around! We have made impressive improvements in the Des Moines Teachers Retirement System and have retained excellent early retirement incentives, with even more on the drawing boards! With the \$18,250 NEA Member Benefits grant, we were able to do many extra things to assist FRs in membership recruitment. Probably nothing helped improve membership, though, as much as the consternation caused by the radical reorganization plan foisted on the district last spring. Our membership has dropped only slightly, despite record early retirements and the difficulty of recruiting new hires to the association. Among our wonderful victories must be included the one cent sales tax, the election of a real education governor, and the defeat of the constitutional amendment to limit taxes! Also, we received national recognition for our DMEA caucus organizing for the Al Gore campaign that was aired nationally for 20 minutes on Newstand and used by NEA as an organizing tool!

Also, we are meeting twice monthly with the administration in effective problem solving sessions which have affected real improvements in district planning, including the limitation of building meetings, additional time away from students for middle and elementary teachers at the end of the year, and the expansion of graduation requirements. We have established the first two year district calendar - one that rejected strong desires by school board members for mandated year round schools and two week intersession periods and that limits the use of "designated days" to four per year.

Taken as a whole, I take great pride in our mutual accomplishments and want to give proper credit to our wonderful DMEA staff members, Sharon Nelson, our wonderful office secretary, and John Vint, our excellent executive director! It has been a joy working with competent, compassionate, well-meaning office staff! Also, I want to thank the FRs and my standing committee chairs for their long, dedicated service.

There are many challenges facing us, organizationally, economically and politically. I know that I am leaving the presidency in competent hands and will be around to help Chris in every way that I can. I urge your continued involvement, as well. Together, we can continue to be the strongest local association in the state and can continue to play a vital role in affecting those changes that will make Des Moines a wonderful place to live, learn, and teach! Farewell.

DMEA Summer Hours will begin June 5th - 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM.