

# Tempo!

## Legislation at the State Level

### Special points of interest:

- ISEA Lobby Day is February 18th
- DMEA Election March 5 - Voting window begins February 26th
- Barack Obama was inaugurated on January 20th, 2009

“When there are budget cuts, it affects everyone involved in our schools.”

### Greg Harris

#### DMEA Executive Director

I would like to welcome everyone back after winter break. The road ahead will be a little bumpy, but I know we all have that “I can do” spirit in all of us. I attended the ISEA Legislative Conference held Friday January 9, 2009, through Saturday January 10, 2009. There was lots of information given out concerning the state budget crises and other information given out to members so we can prepare for the challenges that await us in this legislative session.

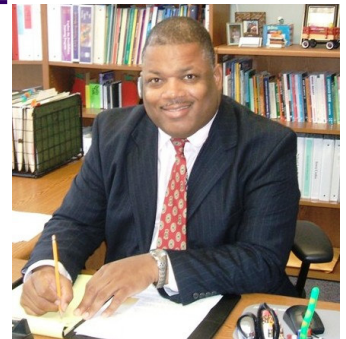
One highlight of the conference was a joint breakout session which included members as well as ISEA staff. We joined together to discuss the “**Rapid Response Teams.**” We also talked about how to get more members

involved in the legislative process. It is imperative that we as members get actively involved in taking care of our legislative program agenda. As educators we care about the children we service everyday. It is important to all of us to make sure that the children get the education that they need. We also have to make sure we are informed about the issues that affect us all.

When there are budget cuts, it affects everyone involved in our schools, no matter what your job title is, teacher, associate, or clerical worker. If you are a part of one of the DMEA Bargaining Groups, it matters how actively involved you are in making sure that your friends, family, and co-workers

understand the issues we face as educators. In light of Governor Culver’s surprise announcement of a 1.5 percent across-the-board reduction, we are carefully monitoring the situation with input from the leadership of ISEA. We will keep you informed of any changes that may affect our DMEA members.

I have met several times with the DMEA bargaining team to prepare for the upcoming bargaining. Thanks to everyone who took part in completing the survey. We will be working together with the bargaining team to address the information gathered from the survey data. We will continue to uphold the negotiated DMEA agreement.



### Melissa Spencer

#### DMEA Vice President

DMPs Professional Development Day Coming Up!

On February 16, 2009, DMPs staff will once again participate in a professional development day hosted downtown at the Polk

County Convention Complex and the Marriott. Teachers and certified staff will be able to choose from a wide variety of sessions, including keynote sessions with Ako Kambon, a nationally-known

speaker. More detailed information regarding this day will be emailed out in the coming weeks, so stay tuned!

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## President's Note

Alan Young, DMEA President



“Hope is short-lived without meaningful, timely “action.”

And now the hard part . . . governing.

More than ever we need elected officials to make decisions and create policies that empower and support, not mandate and control. Elections alone do not solve the problem of elected officials ill-affecting what we do in our schools and classrooms. I am glad that many pro-public education candidates we supported were elected. Many choices could have been worse. That shows our effectiveness. So, I am glad there is “hope.” But let us realize quickly that “hope” is short-lived without meaningful, timely “action!”

Whether about issues of “professional pay” or “professional say,” too many politicians listen to us during election season, but think they know more than we do about what is best for students, public education, and our profession when the time comes for legislating and governing.

This is less true, of late, on the local level than beyond. The DMPS School Board and Sebring Administration are listening to us and you can see the results of that in many areas. We have seats at the table and real input into the “menu” (ends). We still have areas of concern surely, especially with conflicting, narrow, test-centered curriculum; lack of individual and collaborative planning (especially in elementaries); quality, differentiated professional development that meets our needs; securing consistent administrative, parent, and community support versus control; and we surely have some isolated building challenges. There is little doubt that we are ENGAGED locally. Our influence and respect is apparent and growing.

The further you get away from the local, i.e. the state and national level, the harder it is to influence decisions that affect us (even with positive election results). At the state level, Gov. Culver’s across the

board 1.5% cut certainly has some effect on us locally, likely more than Gov. Culver knows or expected. We are not resigned to this, but organized and motivated. We are working to get some of the funding restored, especially as it pertains to compensation.

Other issues at the state level could affect us locally as well. If more standards and tests are imposed by the state, beyond the already ever-expanding Iowa Core Curriculum, our “say” and ability to teach the things that are most valuable - like the critical, creative, communicative, and caring capacities of our students that are seldom easy to measure by mandated, multiple-choice tests - will be eroded. More funds will go to testing and publishing companies, by-passing the students and educators who work most closely with them. Forcing 17 and 18 years olds to stay in school, without providing the significant resources to provide for costly alternative education settings and models, will also create far more problems than it solves. Reviving flawed market-based strategies would be distractive at best and are more often cheap, ill-conceived solutions with little hope of working beyond deluding legislators that they did “something.” “Public officials, hear us post-election!”

DMEA/ISEA is working not only to resist such poor legislative possibilities, but also pushing for good things to affect us locally. First, we are seeking continued adequate funding. Cutting education cuts your best investment in Iowa’s future. We are lobbying to move ESPs toward a “living wage” to fulfill last year’s legislative commitment. If the economic downturn makes it harder to make gains in “professional pay,” then it is even more vital to address our concerns regarding “professional say.” We seek changes to the collective bargaining law so we can have some say in improving conditions which hinder our ability to teach, learn, and work. Certainly,

those prospective members who benefit from our negotiations and contractual protections and enforcement should pay their “fair share.” So you see, now is no time to rest on our laurels. “Hope” must yield to “action!”

Federally, there is hope of a possible new stimulus package related to education that might offset some of the state-level funding challenges, but we need no federal decisions that handcuff us locally. The challenge of the privatization and market-based reform approaches has not gone away with the election of Barack Obama. This threatens public education’s democratic mission, the quality of education we offer students, our profession, and our ability to collectively advocate for our students and ourselves. We will need major action to influence national decisions that will definitely affect your daily lives in classrooms and schools.

Certainly, the eventual reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), whose current version is called “No Child Left Behind,” looms large on the horizon. With Obama’s appointment of Arne Duncan, CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, as the next Secretary of Education, real concerns surface about the proliferation of the privatization agenda for things like merit pay, vouchers, alternative licensure, nationally mandated curriculum (pacing guides, quotas, tests, etc.) and other things that might erode professionals and communities having a local say about quality school improvement and teacher quality initiatives.

So enjoy this era of “change” and the “hope” we helped to usher in, but we are on the “front side,” not the “back side,” of hope and change. Realize, with clarity and soberness, that we are still at a critical crossroads in public education. NOTHING should distract us from meaningful collective “action.”

# December/January Issue

## Director's Report

Marinus van Kuilenburg, DMEA Director

The 2009 Iowa legislative session is guaranteed to be an exciting session. Considering we are in the throes of an economic recession, legislation that strengthens the position of public employees is needed now more than ever. Issues in the 2009 legislature include a Living Wage for ESPs, changes to Iowa Code Chapter 20, and Fair Share.

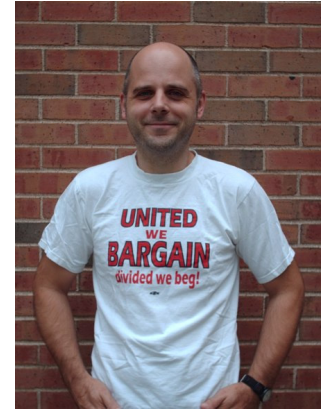
We should recognize that in the current economic situation, a Living Wage for ESPs will be difficult; however, this does not mean we are giving up our struggle. There is never a "right time". Even F.D. Roosevelt called during the Great Depression for the 'wages of a decent living' to be paid! As we see unemployment levels rising, the need for a wage that will support a family becomes even more of a necessity.

Changes to Chapter 20 could lead to an increase in the number of *mandatory* topics of bargaining such as class size or planning time. DMEA can bring these *permissive* topics to the bargaining table but the District can refuse to talk about them. While this makes bargaining more challenging, it should never prevent us from trying to negotiate non-mandatory topics regardless. Several other union contracts around the state of Iowa have agreements on non-mandatory topics.

Fair Share is important since Iowa is a Right to Work state. This means that employees cannot be made to join or pay fees to DMEA/ISEA/NEA. This is despite the fact that they receive all the benefits for which the union has worked very hard year in and year out. Fair Share would enable DMEA to negotiate with the dis-

trict the payment of a so-called Agency Fee by non-members. Usually the difference between an agency fee and membership dues is so small that many decide to join the union to have a say in union business.

There is no guarantee that changes to Chapter 20 or Fair Share will pass this legislative session. Given the economic situation, achieving a Living Wage will be difficult. We have to keep applying pressure on the legislature and keep reaching out to the community and our allies. We need to be strong during our contract negotiations. Our chances for success are increased by the number of active DMEA members and therefore we are beginning a membership drive. The road will be long and the struggle will be hard. But by standing and acting together we will succeed!



*"Our chances for success are increased by the number of active DMEA members"*

Congratulations to Speech-Language Pathologist Angie Forcucci for her interview in the Des Moines Register!

## ISEA Legislative Program

Greg Harris, DMEA Executive Director

ISEA represents 34,285 teachers, education support professionals, area education agency staff, community college faculty, and retirees. Our legislative program includes the following legislative initiatives:

- Allowable growth rate
- Competitive living wage
- Working conditions and fair share Professional development
- Area Education Agencies (AEAs)

- IPERS
- State local option sales tax

Community college initiatives:

- State general aid
- Faculty salaries
- Faculty professional development
- Media specialist, guidance counselor, and school nurse
- Local tax support

We are requesting that our members go to the ISEA and DMEA

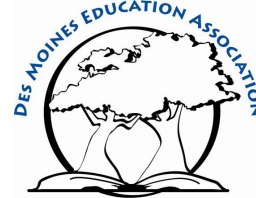
Web sites for updates about our legislative agenda during the 2009 legislative session. It takes a whole village to raise a child, and I must admit that it takes every DMEA member doing their part to make sure that our issues and concerns are addressed.

We can no longer sit back and wait for some one else to do it. We must be vigilant in our efforts to inform those who do not know or care about our educational concerns or issues.



**FEBRUARY CALENDAR**

- Tuesday 3—DMPS School Board Meeting 5:45pm
- Thursday 5—DMEA Executive Board Meeting 4:15
- Thursday 12—DMEA Rep Assembly 4:15
- NOTE: Statement of Candidacy forms are due*
- Tuesday 17—DMPS School Board Meeting 5:45pm
- Wednesday 18—ISEA Lobby Day



**Associates**

**Rhonda Anderson, Associates President**

Well one and all, I hope that your holiday break was wonderful, restful, and meaningful. I know it was one long four day weekend for me, but I am glad to be back into the routine.

One issue that is pressing, and will be for the next few years, is the “ESP Living Wage Campaign.” The committee is continuing to meet and work hard on this. We all need to remember that this is not an issue for just a few and that there is power in numbers. This is not a campaign that just a few can accomplish.

I know that I sound harpy, but I cannot stress enough that this is not a small issue. Membership is everyone’s responsibility. In recruiting we are the best ones to tell our stories, and those of others close to us, about what membership means. I want to express to you that membership pays.

The best way to describe how membership pays is that there is safety in numbers. We get many benefits such as lower car, home, and life insurances. ISEA provides

us with a discount card which has endless possibilities for usage, and much more. I personally feel the best calling card I have is that there is security for me to perform my job responsibilities with the assurance that I have people who know what it is that I do and will back me, if need be, with their expertise. The fee is small, but the comfort and benefits are grand, at least for me.

Speaking of membership, it is a wonderful time to join. There is a DMEA committee membership drive going on that reaps it own rewards. This year only we have been granted permission to charge ½ time dues until April 16th for **first time members only**. There is also a cash incentive for signing up new members. Five dollars for the first one, \$10 for # 2 and for everyone after two you get \$ 15 per person you sign up. This is a reward for those who work hard to get the word out and now is the best time to get going. All you have to do is place your name at the top of the membership form and the office will secure it from there. It pays to

follow up with that person, collect the form, and make sure it is turned in. We may return the forms to our building Reps, or make sure it gets to the DMEA office. It is easy to do, and it’s a good time to recruit. If you want a living wage in the next three years, it takes the entire group to raise our membership. To paraphrase Hillary: “IT TAKES THE WHOLE VIL-LAGE.”

ESP, what is it?? I know some of you are asking. We are ESPs! ESP is the acronym that is used by NEA to describe all those that are non certified teachers. E (educational) S (support) P (professional) that is you and me and all that are yet to be identified. In Des Moines it is the Associate group and the Clerical group. In some of our surrounding areas it is also the school bus driver, some bus associates, custodial staff, and kitchen workers. You and me are ESPs. Remember, “**MEMBERSHIP IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY**” so get out there and recruit.

**Josh Brown**

**DMEA SLA Committee Chair**



The strength of our union depends on you! With every member that is added, our voices become louder and our power grows stronger. I’m thankful for all that you’re doing to encourage others to join.

Thanks to NEA and ISEA, first time members can now join and pay half time dues for a full time membership.

We’re also offering rewards to those who recruit new members.

One incentive is a rebate of your DMEA dues of \$5 for the first member, \$10 for the second, \$15 for the third, and \$15 for each additional member you recruit. The school with the highest percentage of increase in membership will receive a pizza party hosted by DMEA Executives. The spring membership drive will end on Thursday, April 16th.

In addition to membership recruitment, we want to strengthen our local association through social

opportunities. Join us for ISEA Member and Family Night with the Iowa Energy on Saturday, January 31st at 7pm. Members and their families can receive half price tickets. To purchase your ticket, contact Danielle Clark at 515-564-8555 or dclark@iowanba.com.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you for all you do to strengthen our union.