

Des Moines Education Association

Celebrations Continue...

Greg Harris, Executive Director



We just finished Halloween, now it's time to celebrate Thanksgiving, and Christmas is around the corner. I would like to wish all of

you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

The time has gone by so fast and before you know it, things will start all over again. I have enjoyed visiting schools and conducting ten minute meetings with DMEA reps and members. If you have not set up an appointment with the DMEA director for your school, please call to set up an appointment. I enjoy visiting schools and connecting with members.

Sometimes when we get busy we forget some of the important issues that we are faced with in public education today. As educators both professional and classified

we have to get involved in the political arena.

Since graduating from high school, I always knew voting was the right thing to do. Getting my first chance to attend a political caucus in Iowa has taken my political activity to a new level. I have been amazed at the excitement and just how politically savvy people in Iowa are. Iowa was the first to select Barack Obama during the primary races in early January 2008. Tuesday, November 4, 2008, was an historic moment for Americans, and for people all over the world, regardless of race, ethnicity, or beliefs. I hope that this will be a time when we as people will come together to celebrate differences, embrace each person's cultural differences, and learn about each other.

I remember the first time in high school when I encountered racism. It was when one of my good friends I sang in the school choir with asked me to carry his

books to class because he had broken his leg. I was excited to help, because that's the way my parents raised me. What I did not expect was what I faced from my peers at school who made negative verbal and racial slurs because I was helping a friend. I believe things have changed drastically since 1975 when I was in 10th grade at Jacksonville High School in Jacksonville, Arkansas.

If you are not involved politically, I want to encourage you to get involved, because everything is a political decision. The time you start and end work, the salary you receive, the curriculum that directs your teaching, the color of the school building, the carpet on the floor, the type of computers used at your school are all affected by political decisions. There are lots of other things I could list. I believe you get my point.

Please also read my 10 Points to Ponder.

Tempo Spotlight

Judy Cope, Studebaker Elementary



The Tempo! Spotlight this issue shines on Judy Cope, a full time Physical Education teacher at Studebaker Elementary.

Name: Judy Cope

Building: Studebaker Elementary

Hometown: Lyon County

"I grew up in Lyon County where I lived on a farm. During the 70s we moved to the Des Moines area when my husband lost his job during the farm crisis." Judy has been married for 35 years, and has three daughters and five grandsons. She is looking after her 92 year old mother-in-law who lives with her. All of Judy's family lives close to the Des Moines area. Judy graduated from Northwestern College in Orange City, and in July this year she received her Masters in Education, making her the first in her family to finish graduate school.

Why do you think teachers and ESPs should join DMEA?

"I have always been a DMEA member since I started teaching in the DMPS 23 years ago. Unions are important; I strongly believe in them. I became a DMEA building rep in February/March this year because I think there needs to be a balance between management power and union power." Judy appreciates the camaraderie she finds in DMEA among teachers and ESPs. Other aspects Judy is grateful for are DMEA's achievements when it comes to healthcare insurance and base salary. "When people say they cannot afford to be a member, I say, how can you not afford to be a member in this day and age with liability suits abounding? Becoming a union member is the most important thing you can do because you will have people behind you who will fight for you the best they can."



During this American Education Week, my President's Note will share a national perspective from Dennis Van Roekel, NEA president. Van Roekel's call for education professionals to transform

the early 20th century factory model approach to public education into a 21st century, learner-centered model, should sound strikingly familiar. It is exciting to see our NEA moving closer to where we have been.

This movement has been growing across the nation, with NEA now forging a collective, national effort to reclaim the voice of education professionals in decision-making about public education. In fact, NEA leaders are met yesterday with the Obama transition team. While there are no guarantees, NEA and its affiliates are clearly moving away from being mostly reactive to being strategically proactive. To be sure, we face steep challenges in uncertain times. But if our voice can finally lead the dialogue, we might actually be able to "create the good," and sustain it, instead of "resisting or facilitating the bad." We can no longer allow others to speak for us, not realizing our organizing our collective

power. Now is our time. Our success in electing more public officials, whom we perceive to be friendly to public education, should not lull us into complacency.

So read President Van Roekel's piece during this American Education Week and takes some time to celebrate the work we do as education professionals, individually and collectively. In spite of it all, we have not lost hope in tough times and are ready to rise and meet the challenge that lies before us. It will take all of us working together to create a truly better future for American education. Together, we can.

Time for America's Education System to Wake Up Dennis Van Roekel

Students today live in a weird world, and most of them are adept at using computers to find information, play or upload video clips, and even create personal web pages.

The digital age has dawned, but too many of our schools still rely on models from 1908 to meet the growing and changing needs of the 21st century. Simply put, many of our approaches are outmoded and out of touch, which makes it harder for educators to challenge students and hold their interest.

NEA is a firm proponent of providing all children with the critical, intellectual, and personal skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. This is why we serve on the board of Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21)—a coalition of business, education, community and government leaders focused on infusing creativity and innovation into K-12 education.

The fundamental belief of this partnership is that as the world is flattening out, it is imperative that our students are equipped

with skills that reach beyond those required for a simple multiple choice test. Our nation will need students capable of filling emerging job sectors like robotics, biotechnology, and microelectronics. And frankly, if we fail to move our students up the value chain by staying competitive, these jobs will simply go elsewhere.

As other nations around the world strive to improve their schools to create global citizens, the education conversation in America is dominated by an obsession with math and reading tests. This is a dangerous approach in an increasingly competitive global economy. We are clearly failing to do all we can to prepare our students to enter the 21st century workforce and secure our place as a world leader.

A national poll conducted recently by Public Opinion Strategies and Peter D. Hart Research Associates on behalf of P21 found that 88 percent of voters believe that schools can, and should, incorporate 21st century concepts such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, computer and technology skills, and communi-

cation and self-direction skills into their curriculum.

Clearly, we have aimed too low at a time when the stakes are too high. We're not going to get the students we need unless we change what and how we teach.

It is inconceivable that textbook selection and purchasing decisions are made without the involvement of teachers. The current system is terribly shortsighted and robs the real experts—classroom teachers—of their ability to fully harness the imagination of our students and help children acquire the skills necessary to prosper in the future. In my view, this spells more resistance to change and more of the same unrewarding outcomes in America's public schools.

We have absolutely no idea what the world will look like in the next 100 years. The only thing we know for certain is that the pace of change will continue, and probably even accelerate. It is our job to prepare our students to adapt and meet whatever challenges they might face in the future. We can't do that by living in the past.

Director's Report



After the longest presidential election campaign in US history we now have a winner! Barack Obama's election (the NEA's endorsed candidate!) to the highest office in the

land was truly groundbreaking. Americans overwhelmingly voted the first African-American president into office. Also exciting to me is the fact that so many ordinary Americans played a huge role in this achievement. Thousands of Americans, including many DMEA/ISEA/NEA members, worked hard to ensure that Obama and many other public education friendly candidates were elected. I'm proud to say that the van Kuilenburg family also pounded the streets of precinct 50 DSM, knocking on doors and talking to total strangers! In those crazy

pre-election weeks we connected with many different people. I spoke to first-time voters, those who just turned 18, new American citizens, veterans, elderly African-Americans, union workers, and young families. It was a privilege to be able to talk to so many about their hopes and dreams for a better America and how we can work together to get there.

We need to stay engaged to secure public and legislative support for our hard work to improve working conditions for educators and the education we give our kids. Getting this support is not easy.

It seems like every day the newspaper has negative articles or letters about teachers. "Teaching" slips down gradually in the most respected profession polls. Teaching becomes more challenging, from dealing with a changing student population and fewer resources, to more demanding testing requirements. Respect for associates and clerical staff is low. People often

Marinus van Kuilenburg Director

state that ESPs don't deserve a living wage because "it doesn't require a degree," or "anybody could do your job." DMEA disagrees; ESPs have to acquire specific skills and job training. Schools simply cannot function without the important work of ESPs. They perform some of the most labor-intensive, often thankless work, and deserve to be rewarded with job security, fair pay, and respect.

November 17-21 is American Education Week: "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and our Responsibility." We know that school employees take their responsibilities seriously. November 19 is ESP Day where associates and clerical staff have an opportunity to show pride in their work. Their work deserves respect. One way to show that respect is to provide ESPs with a living wage. RESPECT THE WORK WE DO. That should be our message to our supervisors, community, and the legislature.

Points to Ponder

Greg Harris, Executive Director

1. Never send out anything over the school e-mail system that you would not like another person to see.
2. Take evaluations seriously, especially if it has negative comments stating there are needs for improvement. Always contact your director to help assist you in the process of writing a rebuttal to dispute unfair comments concerning your job performance or other issues of concern.
3. It is always good to have open communication with parents when the students are failing and/or having behavior concerns in the classroom. Never wait until the last minute to make a parent aware of the possible retention of a student.
4. Read your DMEA contract and the school district's policies. Be aware of the dos and don'ts.
5. Think twice before letting something get out of control in the workplace with your supervisor or another colleague. Ten seconds could end your career. If you are having issues or concerns with a colleague, there are professional ways of addressing your issues or concerns.
6. Never speak to a supervisor in an unprofessional manner.
7. Always check your pay stub to make sure that you are being paid the right amount. If the district makes a mistake, and you are paid over the amount you should receive, according to law they have the right to collect any overpayments.
8. Always document meetings with parents, supervisors, and any other person; especially when you are being disciplined.
9. Never go into a discipline meeting alone. Take a DMEA rep with you to the meeting.
10. Always treat all students fairly. Never use force to get a student to comply with the classroom or school rules. If you have concerns with a student's behavior, speak with a building administrator to get strategies for addressing negative behaviors in the classroom.

I wish you the best in the rest of the school year. Get plenty of rest during the winter break and we'll see you in 2009. "You are all simply the best."

USEFUL INFORMATION

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

17th-21st—American Education Week

Thursday 20th—DMEA Executive Board Meeting

Tuesday 25th—DMPS School Board Meeting

Nov 27th-28th—Thanksgiving Holiday DMEA Office Closed

DECEMBER CALENDAR

3rd-6th—NCUEA Fall Conference

Tuesday 9th—DMPS School Board Meeting

Thursday 11th—DMEA Rep Assembly NORTH CAFETERIA

12th-13th—NEA Board Meeting

Thursday 18th—DMEA Executive Board Meeting and Christmas Dinner

12/22-1/2—Winter Recess-No Classes-DMEA Office Closed

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206 Center Street
Des Moines, IA 50309
Between 2nd and 3rd Streets
Across the street from the
Wells Fargo Arena and
Hy-Vee Hall

Strengthening Local Associations

Josh Brown, Chair

We are at the highest membership numbers in DMEA history. That has been made possible because of the positive differences we are making in lives of teachers in our buildings. We continue to build on our relationship with the district at all levels. We are looking forward to celebrating our membership success with a DMEA bowling night at Merle Hay Lanes on Tuesday, December 16th from 4-6pm. Bring your family and pay your way. More details will be coming soon.

Associates News

Rhonda Anderson, Associates President

Well, hello everyone! It is hard to believe that we have been in school for three months and only have three weeks to go before winter break. Another year beckons us to come in and join the fun. I hope and pray your break is safe, restful, and full of heart-filled moments.

We had our ESP Day celebration, and if you missed it, you missed a lot. We had Marinus van Kuilenburg, Greg Harris, and Alan Young as guests. We had a great discussion on the Living Wage Campaign (LWC) and what is happening. You are one and all included in the success and implementation of this plan. At our December meeting we will have a calendar of events, and though tentative due to the ever changing legislature, it shall be our guide. This process is not an overnight success, it can be compared to that of an actor, starving for several years (like we've been) then, with just a couple

of more years of hard work, it is a major success. At this time we are struggling to get everything in order and shall persevere. Success is just a couple of years away. The LWC committee meets every three weeks and is the most hard thinking and inventive group you could ever want. We should realize that we will not receive the amount of money that we need in one fell swoop. We are not just doing this for the Des Moines group, but for the entire state. They are also working hard.

The ISEA ESP conference was held at the beginning of November and was a tremendous success. We had 14 members attend, and each came away with a new enthusiasm for the campaign. The state logo for the campaign is **I DEAL**. It stands for **I**owa **D**eliver **ESP**s **A** **L**iving **W**age. Is that not great?! Our

Des Moines logo is **GLUE**—(**G**ive **U**s a **L**ivingwage **U**nifying all **ESP**s—everyone) We are the glue that hold the schools and communities together. We are working on a tube of glue with Rosie the Riveter and our saying on it. More on that later when it is done.

So, my lovelies, we are doing a lot even when you do not see us. It pays to be a member. We need at least a 55% representation before we can be taken seriously. Membership is everyone's business, yup, even yours. We all have friends and acquaintances that work in other buildings that we can recruit. Make sure to write your name on the top of the enrollment form, and let Rhonda know. The office will gladly process these requests. Have a restful, memorable break and come back refreshed, renewed, and ready for the fastest five months of the year.