

Affiliated with the Arizona Education Association and the National Education Association

SPECIAL BARGAINING EDITION

NO AGREEMENT ON BOARD'S SALARY PACKAGE

By Will Moore, AEA Organizational Consultant, Mesa Office

We begin the school year with no agreement on salaries. After the Legislature finished its work on a new state budget, MEA and district representatives met on July 9 to try to finalize an agreement. Both parties agreed that the money is available for a 2% raise for the 2008-09 school year. MEA representatives expected to sign off on a 2% raise – just as we talked about when meet-and-confer sessions were recessed at the end of March.

Instead, the district presented a new proposal: that only 1% would go on the salary schedules and another 1% would be distributed to employees as one-time-only “bonus” payments. The rationale – as presented to us – was to avoid the permanent commitment of money to the salary schedules because the district cannot be sure that the state will provide necessary funding for 2010 and beyond. MEA could not – in good conscience – accept this proposal, and we asked Dr. Ramirez to go back to the Governing Board to reconsider their position.

The Governing Board met Tuesday, July 22. MEA and MESPA organized to have over 300 teachers and support staff at that meeting. After hours of deliberation in executive session and in public, and in spite of a unified message from the speakers, the Board voted to maintain their position and to impose their plan for 1% salary + 1% bonus – without agreement by the Association.

So where are we now?

First. This is the Governing Board's decision: a political decision by politically elected officials. They have the legal ability to make this decision; we have the right to focus our attention on electing Board members and Legislators. Three members currently on the Governing Board are not running again this year. We have talked about the importance of political action in the past. It ought to be clear to everyone now.

Second. The administration and MEA want to limit the damage to our working relationship. Our understanding is that the rest of the agreement – including the few tentative changes made last spring – will remain in force this school year. That means that class size, planning time, transfer procedures, etc. will all continue as written. For now, we operate under the “*un-agreement.*” MEA continues to be the legally recognized representative for certificated employees, and we will continue to advocate for our constituents just as we always have. A new round of meet-and-confer will begin in February and there will be much to talk about.

Your support is essential now. We will give you many more opportunities to express your opinions on these issues. You must let MEA know if the agreement is not being followed at your school. We need your help with critical campaigns during this election. You must help us prepare for an even more difficult round of negotiations this winter.

MEA and MESPA Members pack the Boardroom, inside and out, for the Governing Board Meeting, July 22, 2008.



Photo by Frank Hunter



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