

District Budget and You

Background for Mesa School Employees



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The politics of the district budget determines your future. In November and December we conducted surveys and meetings, and we learned – among other things – that there is confusion and misunderstanding regarding budget and finance issues. Many of you requested that the Association provide background information on these topics. These bulletins will be our attempt to clarify matters.

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First – the Basics. In Arizona, school district finance depends on two things: student enrollment and state support. It's a dollars-per-student system. This year's enrollment is the basis for next year's funding. The amount of funding per student is set by the state legislature. The state is coping with a huge budget deficit. Mesa enrollment is down substantially again this year and we can expect little help from the legislature. Funding for next year will be reduced.

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Local Revenue & Override. The system doesn't give school districts much leeway for raising funds locally. The funding formula provides for a *budget limit*. The only way a district can go over that limit is to pass a *budget override*. This allows a 10% increase in the local operating budget. Mesa voters passed the first override in 1995, and they have renewed it two times since. This issue goes to Mesa voters again next fall. If the override fails, some 35 million dollars will be phased out of the district budget during the next three years.

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Classroom Site Fund or "301 Money." In the year 2000, AEA promoted and Arizona voters passed a sales tax measure which has provided a lot of new money for teacher compensation and school improvement programs. The law also directs money to the district's performance pay (school goals) program. Because this money is based on revenue from sales tax and State Trust Lands, we can expect a reduction in this funding too.

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Budget Decisions. By July the district must approve a budget for next school year. A key component in budget decision-making is the Meet-and-Confer process. MEA and MESPA represent all district employees in these talks. As always, we will deal with salaries and benefits, but in a time of down-sizing we might also have to deal with procedures for layoffs and transfers.

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Future Bulletins. This is the first of several of these bulletins. Watch for exciting information on Career Ladder, capital funds, Indian gaming money, salary and insurance costs and the truth about those secret bags of money hidden in the basement of the Mesa Bank Building.

On the back – MEA Survey Data



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MEA Survey Results – November 2008

Selected Data

The MEA Survey was distributed to all certificated employees during the week of November 17. Almost 1,200 people completed the bubble sheets – a typical participation rate for MEA surveys.

Here we are publishing a small piece of the data. More survey results – and other feedback that we received – will be included with future bulletins. Please note that MESPA plans to conduct a survey early in the second semester.

Salary (results from all schools)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
If I had to choose, it's better that the district pay us all a percentage cost-of-living raise instead of paying for step increases.	26%	21%	22%	17%	13%
If I had to choose, it's better that the district pay for step increases on the salary schedule and not provide a percentage increase.	18%	20%	28%	17%	17%
The district should freeze salaries instead of cutting staff or programs.	7%	16%	35%	36%	5%

Planning Time (tabulated results)

I am provided with the amount of planning time as called for in the MEA Agreement.	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
Elementary	55%	36%	10%
Junior High	83%	15%	2%
High School	78%	18%	4%

School Closing (all results)

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Because of the enrollment drop, the district should close one or more schools (even if that includes my own).	32%	25%	17%	14%	12%

