

mea Bargaining Update

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Talks Suspended Pending Budget Decisions

At this point the district has no way to know how deeply the state will cut school funding for 2009-2010. Nor do we have details regarding the amount, duration, or limitations for Federal Stimulus funding. The “worst case” scenario could mean salary reductions as well as staff layoffs – here and in most other Arizona school districts. We don’t believe that we should make decisions about the 2009-2010 Agreement until we have better financial information.

Dr. Ramirez asked that we delay additional Meet-and-Confer sessions for the time being. MEA has recommended that we meet in April to deal with some of the unresolved non-financial issues still on the table. It may be several weeks before we can meet again to deal with next year’s compensation.

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Background Session. On Monday, March 9, the MEA and MESPA committees met informally with Dr. Ramirez at the MEA-MESPA Office. Our purpose was to talk about Meet-and-Confer scheduling and to review district plans for staff reductions. This was an off-the-record opportunity to receive background information.

Teacher Reductions. As you have probably read in the newspaper, the District is planning for the elimination of over 300 teacher positions – including a number of certified/non-classroom jobs. This doesn’t mean that over 300 teachers will lose their jobs; most of these reductions will be through retirements, resignations, and other vacancies. It does mean that many teachers will be transferred to different schools, and it may be summer before all teachers know where they will end up in the fall. With a loss of over 2,000 students, it’s necessary to reduce the number of positions. If the Legislature does away with all-day kindergarten, we will lose even more positions.

Classified Reductions. The total number of school-based support staff – especially at secondary schools – will also be reduced. Office positions will be redefined with less specialization, and current employees will be given first consideration for these more “generic” job descriptions. Because of vacancies due to the hiring freeze and with the expected normal attrition, we hope that the number of lay-offs will be very few. The district will notify classified staff by the end of the month if they don’t have a job for next year. A “hotline” will be open to help move these employees to vacancies at other schools.

Teacher Transfers. Principals have been told how many teacher contracts they will have for next year, and they soon will identify the teachers who will be on the obligatory transfer list. If a school must lose one or more contracts within a department, the teacher in that department with the most recent district hire date will be the first person designated for transfer. Teachers will be placed in vacant positions at other schools. If a teacher is planning to retire or resign from the district, the sooner he or she can notify the district, the sooner that vacancy will be available for a transfer.

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MEA Bargaining Team: Kirk Hinsey, Chairperson, MEA President and teacher at Powell J.H.; Valerie Angus, EVA; Sue Azizi, Emerson; Joelyn Hilton, Educational Technology; Eric Stuebner, Pomeroy; and Will Moore, AEA Consultant.

Spring Membership Begins in April

New to the Association? If you have never been a member of the Association – here or anywhere else – April is a good time for you to join. Here are the reasons why:

- ✓ You can become a Spring Member starting in April. You will immediately provide support to the Association and gain the benefits of membership. **But you do not begin to pay dues until next September.**
- ✓ Your membership in MEA-AEA-NEA will help you to support our effort to save school funding in Arizona and to gain an equitable Agreement here in Mesa.
- ✓ Your membership will allow the Association to support you and other members as we deal with transfers, re-assignments, budget cuts and possible layoffs this spring and summer. You don't have to deal with this alone!
- ✓ MEA is the only professional association recognized by the Governing Board to represent all certificated educators in the district Meet-and-Confer process. Be part of the organization that represents you!

Spring Enrollment Forms will be available beginning April 1. See your MEA Faculty Representative for a form and more information.

A Member in the Past? If you have been an Association member in the past, but are not a member of MEA now, you may sign an Enrollment Form this spring. This will demonstrate your intention to belong and you will become part of the MEA network. Your membership will begin with the new school year. MEA advice and consultation will be available to you this spring and summer as we deal with transfers, re-assignments, and possible layoffs.

