

Bargaining Update: mea & MESPA

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Furlough Days?

Meetings this week. MEA Meet-and-Confer was Monday, April 26, and MESPA met on Wednesday, April 28. In both sessions, the impact of budget cuts was the main topic. The committees will not meet next week. The next session for MEA is May 10. MESPA will meet on May 12.

What about Furlough Days? Even Budget Plan A (the “good budget”) includes a recommendation for two unpaid furlough days. Plan B, the contingency in case Proposition 100 fails next month, includes a recommendation for a third unpaid day. The district estimates that one furlough day will save over \$1.3 million – assuming that no employee would be paid for that day. For each employee, an unpaid furlough day is the same as losing .54% of your annual pay. Big questions remain regarding how such a day would be implemented. In talks this week, both MEA and MESPA explored those options with Dr. Ramirez and the District’s committees.

For certificated employees – teachers and administrators – Dr. Ramirez provided three possible options that the district is considering. 1) A furlough day on the teacher work day at the end of the school year in May 2011. 2) One or more furlough days during the teacher preparation days in August before the new school year begins this coming summer. 3) No pay for one of the “holidays” on the school calendar, such as fall break, winter break, or spring break. This last option required further explanation. Many teachers probably don’t realize that they are paid for 207 days, not for the 185 scheduled school and work days. When a teacher is “off contract,” the district deducts pay on a daily rate based on 207 days, not 185.

However, last summer when MEA and MESPA discussed furlough days with the district, we agreed upon this definition, which is now in the agreement documents: “*Furlough day shall mean a temporary unpaid, non-work day designated by the district that would normally be a paid work day.*” We believe that options one and two fit this definition. We believe that taking away a paid holiday is a legitimate topic for discussion, but it is not a furlough day: it’s taking away a paid holiday.

For classified employees – those represented by MESPA – the issue is also complicated. Many employees work only 180 days during the school year, and they don’t work on teacher preparation days. How can a furlough day be implemented so that it affects all employees if the district also wants to avoid closing the system on a regular school day? MEA and MESPA believe that a furlough day should be on a regular school day, so that budget realities are brought home to the community. MESPA’s spokesperson Rich Berumen recommended that we shut it down on AEA’s Day at the Capitol in early March, allowing everyone to march on the Capitol on our unpaid furlough day. What do you think?

MEA & MESPA Teams.

For MEA, representing certificated staff

Kirk Hinsey, Teacher, Powell JH, Chairperson
Val Angus, Professional Development
Joelyn Hilton, Ed. Tech., Trainer
Alex Reyes, Teacher, Westwood HS
Jennifer Tellez-Carson, Teacher, Entz
Will Moore, AEA Organizational Consultant

For MESPA, representing classified staff

Rich Berumen, Operations, Chairperson
Liz Dean, Instructional Assistant, SHARP
Deb Dutra, Secretary, Westwood HS
Gilbert Vargas, Trainer/driver, Stapley Trans.
Frank Hunter, Facilities Asst., Kerr
Will Moore, AEA Organizational Consultant

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