

Bargaining Update: mea & MESPA

Published by Mesa Education Association • Mesa Education Support Personnel Association

May 19, 2010

Prop 100 Passes – *What That Means to You*

Big political win. The temporary sales tax measure – Prop 100 – passed with a significant statewide majority. Maricopa County voted YES by over 65%, which indicates strong local support.

The Association can take credit for the on-the-ground campaign. We organized the yard signs, neighborhood walks, and phone banking. We built on our strength from the Override Election last fall, and we continued to organize a political action cadre throughout the district.

What do we say to the local legislators who opposed this tax measure? Obviously Arizona voters believe in financial support for schools and other essential services. Too many legislators apparently represent only a very narrow constituency. On Thursday, May 20, MEA and MESPA will begin interviews with Mesa legislative candidates. Maybe we can find people who will better represent our community.

We won the Override last fall. We won Prop 100 yesterday. Electing a new legislature in November would make a huge difference. Organized political action will protect our schools!

For Mesa Schools – It's not *Plan B*. Winning Prop 100 means that the “worst case” budget cuts won't be necessary. But declining student enrollment and previous cuts to state funding still mean that the MPS budget will be reduced for next year – by around \$25 million. The Governing Board still must make decisions about next year's budget. Here are important budget issues we all need to understand:

- We will not have teacher RIFs this year; there are enough retirements to take care of the necessary reductions. We will see some classified reductions, but these are also mainly through attrition. The district has purposely held positions vacant in order to provide space for “surplus” employees.
- With passage of Prop 100, the district's budget plan recommends two unpaid furlough days. We are working on the details about how those will be implemented. It is likely they will be non-student days, and employees will not work or be paid for those days.
- It's likely that we will see another salary freeze. We are working to maintain our current insurance benefits. We are also working to provide “horizontal” or education movement on the salary schedule for those teachers who invested time and money to earn college credit.

What have we gained? When we work this hard and still see budget cuts, it's important to keep in mind what the alternative might have been. It's not as flashy to protect what we already have, but please remember the recommendations in *Plan B*. By winning yesterday, this is what we won't be facing:

- An additional furlough day and a 5% reduction in the salary schedules.
- Elimination of elementary counselors, reduction of elementary PE, and “transfer” of elementary art.
- Implementation of year-long “alternative” substitute plan (teachers cover the absences).
- Increase all class sizes by an average of 2 students – and RIFing the “surplus” teachers.

Members make it happen. By now, everyone in the district should understand the importance of organized political action. Without the Association, you would be facing *Plan B*. It's that simple. Will you help us elect a new and more representative legislature?