

June
2007

THE CATALYST

A Publication of the Mt. Diablo Education Association

Noce Notes.....

From the MDEA President

An Opportunity for a Positive Change

As we head to the conclusion of another school year, we find ourselves with a couple of opportunities to rebuild a working relationship with the district's leadership and to significantly improve student achievement at a number of our schools.

The State of California has announced that six of our schools in Mt. Diablo will receive dramatically increased new funding to invest in programs aimed at boosting student achievement. The funds were allocated through the Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) that was passed last summer as part of a settlement of a lawsuit filed by Supt. of Public Instruction O'Connell and the California Teachers Association against Governor Schwarzenegger and the California Department of Finance for failing to properly fund Proposition 98 in the 2004-05 and 2005-06 budget years.

Instead of dividing the settlement evenly throughout the state to all districts, CTA wanted to address the needs of our lowest performing schools. The use of these funds will hopefully result in creating and

implementing positive changes that will increase the quality of education for these students, and lead to improvement in student achievement.

QEIA will provide over 2.5 million dollars per year to the six schools in Mt. Diablo. These funds will be provided for seven years. Three of our elementary schools, Cambridge, Meadow Homes and Ygnacio Valley will receive an additional \$500/student. Two of our middle schools, Oak Grove and Riverview will receive \$900/student. Mt. Diablo High School will receive \$1000/student. The QEIA invests in proven intervention reforms like smaller class sizes, more counselors, and quality training for teachers and principals. Most participating schools will be required to implement class-size reduction. High schools will be required to decrease the student-counselor ratio to 300:1 and teaching staff in all schools must participate in professional development. Schools in the program must exceed their API growth target for the school averaged over the first three years of full funding.

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Noce Notes... continued

Schools funded by the QEIA that continue to meet the program and achievement requirements shall be funded annually through the 2013-14 fiscal year.

In the past MDEA and the District have worked together on joint committees and projects for the benefit of our students and members. Example include our current elementary report card, our teacher evaluation rubric, our current transfer language, Measure C, and our early participation in the Cal-STAT process around the collaborative service delivery model. But over the last four years since the controversial 30-minute lunch MOU, our partnership with the district has deteriorated. I am hoping that the QEIA gives us a chance to work together productively again. I feel that for this historic project to succeed we need to think out of the box. Our members have great insight into what would help improve the quality of education at their sites. We need to have a process in place to gather this input and then follow the true Cal STAT model of leadership that has input from all stakeholders and is guided by the grassroots buy-in of all the participants. To make the kind of changes that will be needed, all stakeholders need to feel empowered by the process. It can't be a top down decision-making model. I know that our members can contribute to a successful plan to improve the quality of education at these sites if we are included in the process.

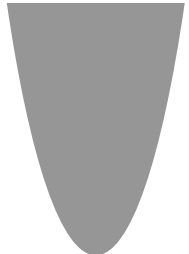
I am hoping that the QEIA gives us a chance to work together productively again

I have asked the district to form a joint MDEA-District Committee to look at what strategies we can use at these sites. I hope we will be allowed to have significant input. I am also sending a MDEA rep from each of these sites to a CTA informational meeting and discussion on QEIA in early June. We will also send some reps to the Summer Institute for an intensive week of workshops on QEIA. If you are at one of the sites that are receiving the grant, please stay informed and have discussions with your administrators and staff about what may be planned at your site. This is too important to not have input.



MDEA has made returning to district provided benefits and getting our total compensation to the average of other unified school districts in Alameda and Contra Costa County the #1 priority.

The other opportunity that we have to move toward a more positive relationship, to stabilize our quality workforce and improve programs for our students is a speedy completion of our successor contract negotiations. We have been told that the district will need to wait until after the May revise before making a proposal on compensation. Our first bargaining session after the Governor's May revision is June 6. Administration spokesman Greg Dannis and School Board President Gary Eberhart said a specific proposal on compensation would be presented at that session. The district's Bargaining Team also said the district has an intense desire to reach a tolerable agreement without going to impasse. I truly hope that the district's actions will support this desire.



Guided by our bargaining survey, MDEA has made returning to district provided benefits and getting our total compensation to the average of other unified school districts in Alameda and Contra Costa County the #1 priority. In order to achieve this goal over the next three years we will need to receive more than the annual COLA. MDEA's proposal was estimated by the district to be 21% over the next three years. We explained that MDEA members' percentage of the budget has

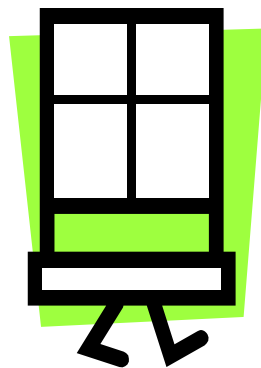
Noce Notes... continued

continually decreased over the last five years and that to get to average they would have to reprioritize the budget.

The district commented that we are a declining enrollment district and have less money. We responded that the district would need to adjust their current spending patterns and make budget decisions like other declining enrollment districts have made.

In response to our data comparisons that were based only on our MDEA members, the district shared data of total compensation based on all certificated employees, which included all administrators who also receive medical benefits. According to their data, the district receives less money and expends an amount equal to or more than the

county average for all employees. This is like comparing apples to oranges. One item that stood out to me from their data was that our district puts out the lowest % in the county on employee benefits for all employees. This district spent over 2% less of total expenditure on employee



We have a window of opportunity now to change the direction of our district to a new path where our students and community gain.

benefits than other unified districts in CC County or \$138.00 less per ADA in 05-06 on health benefits. This is \$5,083,920 less than what it would pay if they spent the average amount spent by other unified districts in the county. This would almost be enough to pay for the cost of single coverage for all our members who would take medical through the district or 46% of the medical rates for whatever each member needed (according to their needs as expressed in our medical survey based on 06-07 rates.) As of May 15, the district offer is still \$1.88 million towards medical benefits or \$950.00/ member.

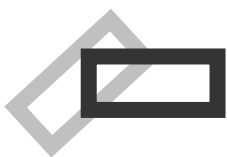
We need the district to bring their best and final compensation proposal to the bargaining table on June 6. The district needs to determine what they can do and present a proposal with the rationale for why it is the best they can do. If they value and respect our members, they won't low-ball us and then proceed to string out negotiations like they did last time. Remember when they said they only could afford 2%? We received over 10% in the end. Nobody wants to bargain for 18 months again. A lot of our members are looking for a real sign from the district that they are willing to address the serious teacher compensation issue the district faces.

Does the district have the will to compensate all their employees at the average? Aren't we worth average? Does the district think they are compensating MDEA members adequately?

We have a window of opportunity now to change the direction of our district to a new path where our students and community gain. Will the District take advantage of this opportunity?

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Mike Noce, President
Mt. Diablo Education Association





FROM YOUR VICE – PRESIDENT ...

Tom Blanks

Q: What do mandatory summer meetings, classroom observations, and students committing assault on teachers have in common? Where can you read more about these pressing issues?

A: They are each covered in the contract that was negotiated and voted upon by you (or your predecessors) then approved by this or a former school board.

Every member of our bargaining unit has received **a copy of the existing contract**. It is also posted on our website, Mtdiabloeducationassoc.org. It may not be the most likely text for a movie of the week screenplay, but it is a determining factor in your professional life. Together with Board Policy, State Education Code, and Federal Law it is the established means for determining what you are required to do and what you are prohibited from doing. (Sometimes with stringent consequences applied.). Both the District Administration and the Association have agreed to follow these articles. It is in **your best interest to read and understand it, to reach out to your site rep for assistance in applying it, and to advance your question to union leadership when you still seek further clarification**. My best teachers over the years provided reassurance that the only sincerely poor question was the one not asked. Please be willing to ask. It is the essence of modeling what you would want from your students.

It is **our contract**. It is **only as strong as our diligence to understand and insist on it**. It is not about personalities, but **about shared agreements**, which have been arrived at and now deserve to be practiced until they are changed.

Review the documents.

Ask to see it in writing. Before complying with an administrator's request that you are ambivalent about, ask to see it in writing.

Call the site rep, the union, for that second (and perhaps most important) opinion.

Supplemental Life Insurance Change

The launch of the new partnership with The Standard, CTA's new carrier for its endorsed voluntary and district paid Life and Disability Plans, is getting closer with the September 1, 2007 effective date. Some members who have voluntary coverage or Supplemental Life Insurance through their district paid coverage are required to complete a new Payroll Deduction Authorization form to ensure their employer makes the necessary payroll deductions for premium payments that will begin going to The Standard on September 1, 2007.

Mt. Diablo Unified School District has required a new Payroll Deduction Authorization form. The Standard has written to currently insured voluntary participants to advise them of the need to complete this new form by May 1, 2007. If you have received the mailing but have not completed the form, please take a minute to do so. If you have not received the form, and you are currently insured, please call The Standard toll-free at 1-800-522-0406. If you need another copy of the Payroll Deduction Authorization form, you can get one from MyCTA (<https://www.cta.org/mycta/services/benefits/PartnershipStandard.htm>).

From Bad to Worst

(A Virtual Career Tour of MDUSD)

By Mark York, Executive Director

As most of you are aware, MDUSD has been vying for last place in our 2-district comparison array with the tiny John Swett Unified School District in Crockett,. Just the other day, John Swett's teachers settled for a 6% retroactive raise for 2006-07 and a COLA minus 1% formula for the remaining two years of their contract. They were also able to maintain their health benefits at the current level as part of the settlement. I guess I don't have to tell you where that leaves us.

What does this mean to you as a MDUSD teacher? You have a world of opportunities to work in surrounding districts that actually value your skills, and any of which will provide you with a compensation package far in excess of what you earn as a MDUSD teacher. If you're a new teacher in MDUSD, don't be intimidated by your lack of permanent status. Surrounding districts are lining up to hire you. If you're going to invest your time and talents in a school district employer, make a smart choice, and choose one that invests in teachers for the long term.

Let's begin our "virtual tour" of your career in MDUSD, and base that tour on an average teacher's circumstances:

This is bad:

As a first year teacher in MDUSD with a BA and a credential, and requiring some level of medical insurance through CalPers, you earned (on average) \$5,804.00 less, than the average teacher in any of the other 22 unified districts where you might have chosen to go to work. Could you have used that extra \$5,804.00?

But it gets worse:

If you stay in MDUSD for five years and earn 45 additional units, at the end of that time you'll be making \$5,938.00 less per year, on average, than you would have earned in your choice of the remaining 22 comparison districts. Even if it hadn't gotten worse each year you stayed in Mt. Diablo and you had remained behind by only the \$5,804.00 you didn't earn your first year, by the end of your 5th year teaching in Mt. Diablo, you would have earned 5 X \$5,804 or \$29,020.00 less, on average, than if you had chosen to work somewhere else. That \$29,020.00 could have paid for a pretty nice new car!

And worse:

By year 10 and 60 units beyond your BA and credential, you will be down, on average, \$7,163.00 per year. The \$29,020.00 you didn't earn as a MDUSD teacher between years 1 and 5, will now have grown to \$58,040.00 in lost earnings; and that's if you had remained only \$5,938.00 behind the average compensation you could have earned elsewhere. Unfortunately, things continue to get worse for you each year you work for MDUSD. \$58,040.00 is a lot of money to forfeit as a result of making a bad employment decision 10 years ago! That's a down payment on a house!

And even worse:

By year twelve, if you've continued to be diligent about earning professional growth units toward salary advancement, and have managed to amass 75 additional units beyond your college degree and credential,

you will be earning, on average, only \$6,455.00 less per year, than you would have earned in a surrounding district. This drop in the amount you're behind what you could have earned anywhere else is as a reward for your loyalty to MDUSD, but you will have to add another \$13,000.00, or so, to the \$58,040.00 you lost in compensation for the first 10 years you worked for MDUSD, to calculate the total that loyalty has cost you, on average, in lost earnings, \$71,040.00, had you made a decision to work somewhere else.

If you somehow manage to survive in MDUSD long enough to make it to the top of the current schedule, (28 years) you will be making, on average, \$7,032.00 less per year, than if you'd made your escape at a more prudent time. If things hadn't continued to get worse after year 12, and you had remained only \$6,455.00 behind the average compensation you'd have earned working elsewhere, the \$71,040.00 you were behind then would have increased by \$6,455.00 during each of the ensuing 16 years. The total in lost compensation for years 13-28 would be \$103,280.00, which, when added to the \$71,040.00 you had already lost by year 12, gives you a career total of lost compensation of \$174,320.00, all because you made that fateful decision back when you were a first year teacher of choosing to work for MDUSD.

\$174,320.00 is a large chunk of change! Those lost earnings could have paid for a beautiful retirement home in many parts of the country, or a pretty nice R.V., if you like that sort of thing...

(Even if you're ready to retire after your 28-year virtual career, keep in mind that, as of July 1, 2007, MDUSD teachers will have to work 31 years) to reach the top of our salary schedule – If you'd chosen to work elsewhere, the average years to the top of the salary schedule is only 24 years!

Let's stop our virtual tour here and get back to reality.

Whether the School Board and District leadership want to acknowledge it or not, teachers who are considering coming to work for MDUSD only care about one thing: how the money they will take home as a MDUSD teacher compares with the take home pay they would earn in a surrounding district. All other comparisons are meaningless to them, and are the Board's way of marginalizing the core teacher attraction and retention

CHAPTER Election Results

Vice President (2 year term)

Tom Blanks	625 *
<i>Write In</i>	
Arlene Sanders	1
Kathy Wells	1
Tim Dolormier	1
Jo Carson	1

Treasurer (2 year term)

Susan Seeley	633 *
<i>Write In</i>	
Eric Wood	1
Chris Cook	1

Executive Board Delegates (1 year term)

High School

Amber Lineweaver	108 *
Dave Moniz	96 *

Middle School

Josephine Carson	80 *
Lory Quam	81 *

Elementary School

Rita Goldman	411 *
Dawn Laudenslager	408 *
Elaine Murphy	399 *
Joy Barden	396 *

Write In

Arlene Sanders	1
Deborah Bullard	1

State Council Alternate (3 year term)

Elaine Murphy	342
Josephine Carson	459 *
Deborah Bullard	351 *
Mitchell Broxton	329
Pam Howes	344 *

* = Elected

crisis MDUSD currently faces. The same is true for teachers who are already working for MDUSD. When they can get a substantial raise and better treatment for doing the same work in a surrounding district, they can and are leaving MDUSD.

You may have seen a recent flyer MDEA distributed, graphically depicting the percent of MDUSD's budget expended on teachers' salaries 5 years ago, (48.02%) and the percent projected to be expended on teachers' salaries for the 2006-07 school year (44.83%.) This 3.19% drop in budget priority for teachers represents an \$8.6 million loss in additional compensation the district could have been allocating toward teacher compensation this year, if the budget priority for MDEA bargaining unit salaries had been maintained at the same level as during 2001-02.

The district's pie keeps getting bigger, and MDEA's portion of that pie keeps getting smaller.

So how does the School Board address the teacher attraction and retention crisis?

The answer is making teachers' compensation a higher priority in the district's budget. Money follows values! Teachers are simply less valued here in MDUSD than they are in surrounding districts, and that's why they are continuing to leave! Don't let this "virtual tour" become your actual reality as a career teacher in MDUSD. Support MDEA in demanding that the School Board reprioritize the district's budget and compensate MDUSD teachers at least at the average. You're worth it!!

What Teaching and Unions Share

The 38th Annual W.H.O. awards were held in Berkeley on Saturday, May 19, 2007. Begun 38 years ago, W.H.O. is an acronym for We Honor Ours. The process includes recommendation letters from the local (usually brought to the Executive Board) which are then submitted to a panel of Alcosta Board members. From their decisions, a few nominees may be forwarded for consideration to the state level C.T.A.

This year's honorees from our local include:

Dave Moniz, high school science teacher, multi-sport coach, 35-year M.D.E.A. veteran, site rep, Executive Board member, and spokesperson for our Bargaining Team, **received the Chapter W.H.O. Award.**

Tom Blanks, teacher in alternative education for much of his 37 years as a M.D.E.A. member, currently serving as Vice President and Political Action Chair, **was nominated for and presented with the Theodore Bass Memorial Teacher-In-Politics Award** by Alcosta.

Mike Noce, who has been increasing his commitment as a member of and a leader in C.T.A. for 25 years, presently serving teachers in concurrent capacities as Political Action Chair for Alcosta and on the Legislative Committee at State Council, in addition to full-time President of M.D.E.A., **was honored with the State W.H.O. Award.**

It is an honor to be nominated and a privilege to be selected. The entire process celebrates what is best about our profession, dedicated to improving the standing of others, and our union, committed to providing support to each participant. We arrive, as members of a profession and a union, learn our part(s) (even as we are doing it/them), endeavor to help others excel, and in the process move the organization and the community forward.



Dave Moniz, M.D.E.A Bargaining Team spokesperson accepts the Chapter W.H.O. award. Pictured with Dave are Alcosta Chair, Greg Bonaccorsi and Dean Vogel, C.T.A. Vice President Elect.

Teachers of the Year

Sandy Johnson-Shaw, a biology teacher in the Health and Bioscience Academy at Mt. Diablo High, is one of the five semi-finalists for 2007 Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year. Sandy has been teaching at Mt. Diablo High since 1985. In addition to the dedication and outstanding support of students on a daily basis, Sandy developed a course that combines anatomy, physiology, and biotechnology with job-shadowing at John Muir Medical Center. Well done, Sandy!

A committee of staff and parents selected two District teachers as nominees for 2007 Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year and recognized eight others for their outstanding service to students.

Shauna Hawes, 5th grade teacher at Hidden Valley, was also nominated by the committee. Congratulations Shauna!

Commendations also go to the following teachers who were recognized by the committee for their excellence:

Luz Beard, Shore Acres Elementary;
Sandy Conley, Delta View Elementary;
Angela LaTorre, Valley View Middle;
Aileen Lee, CVHS;
Ann McCabe, Hidden Valley Elementary;
Heather Nivas, MDHS;
Laurie Rogers, Shore Acres Elementary; and
Ellen Terminello, Valley Verde Elementary.



M.D.E.A. wishes to recognize the many dedicated teachers and unit members beyond those listed here, who work to encourage, inspire and transform the lives of our youth. Thank you each for all you do with excellence everyday!



Full Care For All For Life For Less

- View the video. OneCareNOW.org.
- Sign the petition online to Support SB840 (Kuehl)
- Volunteer to help at the Walnut Creek OneCareNow Campaign Day (July 22 at the Farmers Market). Email Anita Johnson at anitapjohnson@hotmail.com