

## MEA President's 2023-24 Welcome and Update

Welcome back returning members, and a special welcome to all our new certificated staff! The last of Baby Boomers and the first wave of the Xers hired during the mid-1990s are riding off into the sunset creating an outstanding number of retirees this past school year. In 2022-23, we saw a turnover of about 20% of MUSD's certificated workforce. This year, we've seen a similar number. MEA's membership is changing for sure.

As a reminder, the Moorpark Educators Association (MEA) is the exclusive representative for the certificated bargaining unit members in MUSD. Our members include TK-12 teachers, counselors, speech/language therapists, and school nurses. Membership in our association affords certificated employees an additional layer of job protection in these challenging and contentious times. Our power is the individual and collective voice of all of our members.

In addition to the warm welcome, I want to take this opportunity to ask you to become more involved in MEA. Involvement can be simply trying to become more informed about the issues and events that affect you on your campus, in the district, or at the State level. It can be taking the time to talk to your site representative once a month or even once a quarter just to get a pulse of what's going on. Maybe attend a Representative Council meeting to listen to what MEA leadership talks about when we get together.

At the beginning of each year, MEA leadership disseminates a **Reference Guide** (enclosed) that lists all of our officers, including your Site's Representative and your site's Executive Board Member, and their contact information. Please either print it out or make the electronic version accessible. At least twice a month, I publish a **President's Update**. I really want our members to know what's happening. If you miss an Update, want to take a look at our contract or prior agreements with MUSD, or have questions about member benefits, please visit MEA's website at **Moorparkeducators.com**. MEA also has a **Remind** account, where I try to transmit important information in real time. You can always reach out to me if you have a question or concern.

The more information that you have, the stronger you are. Becoming more active can help you understand how and why decisions are made. Maybe this year you can get more involved with MEA. It's more important than ever that we work together to promote what we do in our own classrooms and protect our careers in public education.

### **Bargaining Update**

We were unable to negotiate an opening day pay increase with MUSD over the Summer months because the State of California delayed the due date for the submission of its income taxes. We'll resume talking about compensation as soon as we can. Any agreement that we reach involving compensation will involve pay retroactive to the start of the 2023-24 school year.

MUSD issued its projected 2023-24 budget in mid-June. There are key indicators that help us figure out, for example, what percentage to ask for in negotiations and the relative health of the MUSD's budget. In general terms, we *cannot* negotiate the amount of money that MUSD receives; we *can* negotiate how the District allocates its unrestricted money, and in turn, maximize what we can ask in terms of pay increases.

## The Good News:

- MUSD is financially healthy.
- The overall percentage of District money allocated to compensation decreased generally due to decline in student enrollment and staffing, changes in health care for new employees, and the way that the ACA has changed health care obligations to part-time (mostly CSEA) employees.
- The 8.22% COLA designated for 2023-24 is the largest COLA ever offered by the State. Last year's COLA was augmented by another 6% or so. Remember, COLA never equals our actual increase in salary, and we are not sure that the COLA will still be 8.22% (fingers crossed it will be).
- LCFF revenues are up about \$4 million for MUSD in 2023-24.
- MUSD's Insurance Premiums are lower than anticipated
- MUSD has its 3% Mandated Cash Reserve covered with about \$3 million in excess for this coming year
- STRS % stay status quo
- HCB rise in cost not so bad in comparison to other districts
- More kids will attend TK (Districts for some stupid reason do not receive ADA for TK)

## We also have to be cautious due to the following factors:

- Inflation, uncertainty, and rising costs of everything, including HCB
- PERS obligation rising
- The Arts Grant is almost fully funded but down \$200 million statewide.
- Statewide ELOP grant money is down \$1.5 billion.
- Enrollment is down about 50 for next year (as of late June). Districts can use a 3-year average for ADA, but we're not gaining \$ here.
- MUSD is projecting "managed" deficits in '24-25 and '25-26 (different from structured deficit).
- COLA is scheduled to be high 3s in '24-25 and low 3s in '25-26.

Our negotiating team will price out the cost of a pay raise for certificated staff and then compare it to the cash stores and projected expenditures for 2023-24 and beyond.

We'll be able to ballpark a raise based on the basic numbers, and then discuss different ways that we can augment the raise.

For the 2023-24 bargaining cycle, I am going to ask our members to *consider* increasing our monthly health care benefit contributions, *if* we can see a marked increase in pay for all members. Remember, the cash pool for our comprehensive compensation package is finite. *Opportunity cost* accompanies every decision that we make when it comes to how much salary we make, our health care benefits, and work hours and calendar. **Please be assured that the MEA Bargaining Team makes no decisions without input from our members, and there can be no change in our contract without a vote by our membership.** At the very least, changing the health care first dynamic of our compensation package is worthy of a discussion.

Let me be one of the first to wish you a great 2023-24 school year. As always, I am available by phone at 805 422 4680 or email at [mrpkea@gmail.com](mailto:mrpkea@gmail.com).

Best,

Brian Friefeld, President of Moorpark Educators Association