

President's Update 5-4 to 5-8-2020

Hi Everyone. I hope that you and your families are safe and well. Happy Mother's Day to the many moms in our association!

There are times when the job of MEA President makes me feel, as William James broached it, "menaced and negated in the Springs of my innermost self." One of the best facets of this job is representing talented colleagues who are dedicated to educating our children. I think back to what you have done for my two boys, and I am humbled and thankful. This job can be incredibly satisfying when the collective bargaining process works, when we problem solve with dignity and respect, and when democracy at its most personal level is effective. Often, unfortunately, there are problems that are created by forces larger and stronger than us. This is one of these times. So, to paraphrase Hunter S. Thompson, I have "the privilege of laying down a series of terrible bummers on the natives."

State Budget News

As late as January of 2020, the CA Department of Finance expected a surplus. There was talk in Sacramento that Governor Brown's *Rainy Day Fund* had too much money in it—that some of its cash should be allocated to local districts and other public entities. And then COVID-19 hit. A pandemic is "common amongst the people," its influences are universal, spreading beyond well-beyond biology. California's funding system was flawed prior to COVID-19. It is critically unbalanced, too reliant on income. So, as you have probably heard, with tax coffers dramatically reduced, we can expect funding for K-12 education to lower in kind. What we do know is that in late September MUSD protected its 2019-20 budget with a 3.0% COLA. In late December MUSD had to revise its estimated COLA to match the Governor's preliminary projection of a 2.29% COLA. The math yielded a deficit of \$368,000 for 2019-20, for a total of \$1.3 million projected two years into the future. The combination of a lower COLA and the failure of the local and state bonds led directly to March 15th RIFs of 4.8FTE for certificated employees. These layoffs, the District called "preemptive." The idea was to play it safe, and then by May 15th, after the Governor released his revised Budget, the District would be able to hire some or all of the RIFed employees back.

The Department of Finance usually does not issue bulletins prior to the Governor's May Revise. This week the CA DoF made the rare move of informing the State that from January to May of this year alone, tax coffers lost about \$19 billion dollars, and that the overall State budget is down about \$54 billion dollars. What does this mean? It means significantly less funding for K-12 schools. School Services recommends that local Districts budget at between -10 to -15% of last year's funding (you read that right, **minus 10 to 15%**). To give you some perspective, this reduction in funding represents an equivalent reduction that at least doubles the lowered amount of funding that MUSD experienced in during the recession of 2007-08. To add insult to injury, District expenses and inflation continue to rise.

Today, it would be irresponsible to speculate what the effects may be because we don't know how the funding will flesh out in actuality. It is my responsibility to keep you informed. This is what I am doing. My heart hurts writing this to you. And yes, I am frightened by the possibilities. Our district, like most others, spends about 90% of its money on salary and benefits. In the spirit of communicating "terrible bummers," Ed Code has a trigger that allows school districts a second round of RIFs in August if COLA is lower than 2.0%. You need to know this now.

The DoF's early release of the data was a strategic move. It sends an SOS to the State Legislature: this is not business as usual; you need to do something! We can also expect another round of Federal CARES augmentation. California is not alone in this mess, but how much or when the Feds decide to offer more money is unknown.

Keep these four things in mind as you prepare yourself for best and worst of possible scenarios:

1. The budget numbers will fluctuate and are subject to revision throughout 2020-21 due to changing revenue projections and variables in the Prop. 98 formula.
2. The DoF took the highly irregular step of releasing numbers in advance of the May Revise to demonstrate how dire the fiscal circumstances are.
3. These numbers will often be reflected differently in reports/media stories depending on the lens through which it's being written. (Some will include pension costs in their calculation, some will not. The same goes with factoring in current year and next budget year.)
4. This reporting and revising of numbers will continue over the next three to four months (recall that State will not count tax dollars until after July 15th)

Elementary Distance Learning

I mentioned that the job can be satisfying when the collective bargaining process works. Today through Tuesday, your principal will relay and discuss with you our District's response to the litany of concerns that our elementary teachers expressed. I have a theory about what happened, but I will save it for another day. The abbreviated version is that after listening to multiple concerns from multiple sites, I compiled a list of 10-11 concrete issues. I communicated all of them to the DO. Dr. Hays met with Donna Welch and the elementary principals on Thursday morning. By Thursday afternoon, Dr. Hays met with Dr. Lasure, Lisa McCarter, and me. The District addressed all of MEA's concerns. MEA believes that the District's response returns us to the spirit and the letter of our Distance Learning MOU—privileging the social and emotional well-being of our teachers and students. Your principal will share the result with you at your next staff meeting. Please let me or Lisa know if any of your concerns were not addressed.

The District acknowledges that the present system is unsustainable. We will work with them to make the necessary changes that are best for our students and conducive to the mental and

physical health of our members. Please, establish a workday for yourself, and shut it down when the day is over. We are all in agreement. If you need help, do not hesitate to ask for it from your MEA leaders or the district.

Teacher Appreciation

This week was National Teacher Appreciation Week. Next week we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Day!

Brian