

President's Message March 2 to March 6

Site Visits

At our Rep Council meeting I passed out sign-ups for Spring site visits. The timing works out well because I can talk to folks about our salary proposal along with whatever else our members want to discuss.

Election Results

The election went pro forma. The vote didn't involve money, and candidates ran against air, so the turnout was light, particularly at the upper levels. 155 people voted. Here are the results:

High School At-Large: Kristin Swenson 125
Middle School At-Large: Rosana Meisterling: 123
Elementary East: Ellen Bailey 144 (1 write-in for President)
Elementary West: Eusebia Grajeda 133
Secretary/Treasurer: Kim Lemons 151 (1 write-in)
Vice President: Lisa McCarter 155
President: Brian Friefeld 149

Along these lines, I made it clear to Rep Council that I was 50/50 about running again as President at the onset of this year, and would have gladly stepped aside if a responsible candidate advanced. I decided to run again after our Executive Board agreed to serve again as a team for two more years. As I have stated, I don't think the MEA President should serve too many consecutive terms, and I would like nothing better to be able to train the incoming President as I ride into the sunset.

In the next year or so, MEA leadership must identify the next generation of officers to assume these vital positions. MEA truly needs all of our members to help identify new leaders as we transition. A couple of suggestions/observations:

1. We need greater representation from the Eastern part of the association
2. 4th and 5th grade is underrepresented at all levels of MEA leadership
3. It may be time for the next President to come from the lower levels (Richard was secondary and so am I). If I serve my 5 years, we will have had 18 consecutive years of male, secondary Presidents.
4. Erin Handley will replace Cynthia Kahle as MS Rep on Bargaining next year. We will need to find a new SPED Rep on Bargaining starting in June. Ellen Bailey has expressed the desire to step down from Exec Board next year, so MEA will also need to find a replacement for her as At-Large Rep for Elementary East.

For what it's worth, I did not get involved with MEA because I was a "die hard" union guy. That was never the point. I took on leadership roles—Bargaining Team, Vice President, and President-- because I was asked to do so by more experienced teacher/leaders. As I become more active in our association, I began to see representation as a service to our members and my day-to-day job as an advocate for Moorpark's students, its schools, and public education in general. I sincerely hope that in the next two years that, if asked, you find a way to accept the mantle and challenges of leadership.

I know that your jobs have gotten harder as your class sizes have increased. Still, what MEA does matter for our members and our profession. And please, let's not give into the gullibility and cynicism that seems to course through the veins of our political culture at-large. Without a belief in truth, there is no trust; without trust there is no faith; without faith there can be no community. The truth is that each individual educator is the engine that drives our association. No member is farther than a phone call, a trip to the MEA website, or an email from the decision-making process. Let's not lose sight of the decent people who dedicate their time and effort to stewarding MEA and the good work that they do.

Measure A

Man, did Dr. Hays work hard to get the bond passed. I want to thank her for her efforts despite the disappointing results. At the State level, 2020's Prop 13 failed. It looks like LVUSD's bond will be defeated. In Riverside County, all five of its bond measures for facility upgrades went down in flames. Tuesday was not so "super" for public school funding. Let's get behind School and Communities First. It is a way to increase money for our schools without touching homeowners' property or income.

Coronavirus

The situation is constantly changing. The District gets new information daily from the County Department of Health. Here's what we know today: teachers will get paid if school is cancelled and State law requires that schools deliver curriculum to the students for the District to receive ADA. The details—the "how" and the "what" is yet to be defined. The District assures me that each grade level and/or subject matter will define the curriculum and the expectations. Last, please trust that the District will prioritize teacher and student safety. I will update MEA Reps as often as I can on this matter.

I am off to Goleta to get more information about the State budget and upcoming legislation. Hope you have a great weekend!

Brian

