

President's Update 9-28 to 10-2

Needless to say, this has been a long and busy week for MEA. It is so important that we rely on one another, and acknowledge the superlative effort that we, as educators, have put forth during this crazy time. Thank you, teachers, counselors, SLPs, and nurses! A special note of appreciation to our two District nurses, Amanda and Yvonne for all of the information you supply us!

MEA is working to get as many questions answered as possible prior to any school reopening. Some decisions will be site-based. The State and County dictate much of what will happen. We can negotiate much of what will occur, but the sad truth is non-educators author many of the demands placed upon us. The rules keep changing and there are some questions that are unanswered at this point. It is frustrating, but we'll keep at it because the kids deserve a quality education and we have to keep everyone as safe as possible. I recommend that you read the attached *MUSD Safety Plan* for more information.

Negotiations

The MEA Bargaining Team met with the District's team on Tuesday. We powered through the multiplicity of elements concerning reopening. Both sides attempted to script the safest work conditions possible. Dr. Lasure and I ironed out some details and cleaned up some language during our Roundtable. After she returns the document to me, I will share it with the Bargaining Team, who will either recommend it to our Executive Board or decline to send it to MEA leadership. The Executive Board will vote whether or not to bring it to membership for a vote. I expect the voting to begin late next week. A couple of things: first, the District can send us back to sites on October 19th and 21st without an MEA vote and/or a vote of approval for the change in working conditions. Jake and I discussed the matter with CTA Legal. We discovered early last week that if we do not have an MOU, the District can rely on our CBA to govern work conditions.

There may be some folks who will vote no on the MOU because they do not feel it is safe to return regardless of MEA's efforts to negotiate safe working conditions. That's ok. Everyone should vote his/her conscience. I just want it known that your bargaining team gives its all to try to assure that we are as safe as possible. In a word, the task is daunting.

I am presently attempting to persuade the District to revisit the secondary blended schedule, work out elementary passing periods, and provide relief for SPED testing demands, among other things. I will keep you posted on these matters.

Survey

While there is a consensus that we should not return to sites using a waiver (about 80%), there is no supermajority in terms of when it is safe enough to return beyond the waiver. 46% of our members said that they would be willing to return after VC left the watchlist. Our members also have varied opinions on when exactly it will be safe enough to return to campus. The results of the survey are also attached.

The Reopening Process

Last, the MUSD School Board retains the authority to tell MUSD to pursue a waiver. The District followed the school board's directions as they are required by law to do. The waiver process forced MUSD to adequately prepare for a reopening—this is the upside. The problem is not an abuse of power

or an abjuration of legal or democratic processes. A school board represents its community. A majority of the community wanted a return. Fair enough.

The District consulted TK-5 instructors about reopening via a waiver. 70% replied that they did not feel safe. The majority voted this way for a variety of reasons. They did not just question the timing and safety. All educators voiced their individual and collective concerns because they care about our students' academic, social, and emotional wellness. But to question the reopening via waiver in the forum the school board created, as many teachers did, became conflated with tired anti-teacher, anti-union rhetoric. This is a shame, because we really do trust the process as well as the experts and our representatives to make informed and ethical decisions. The irony is now it is MEA's responsibility (in collaboration with MUSD's Negotiating Team) to actually script safe and effective working conditions.

If you listen closely, the teachers and parents were really saying the same thing: **we want everyone to be safe and we want the kids to have the best education possible under these most incredible of circumstances.** Teachers know that the community should have their say, and, that as State and essential employees, taxpayers fund our salaries. As much as teachers did not appreciate a police officer lecturing us about how to do our jobs (I don't have the training or audacity to tell him how to do his), we respect the will of the community. MEA is their partner. I sincerely hope that if there has been any damage done to our relationship that we can quickly repair it. The stakes are too high. The only way we can keep everyone safe is by doing this together.

Brian