

President's Message 8-26 to 8-30-2019

While the dust settles on the first two weeks of school, I thought that I would again share with you what the MEA President does. While I do not think of myself as all that important, I do take my job seriously. I really do try to represent you well. I do have to give credit where credit is due. Your MEA Leadership team, everyone from Site Rep to VP, is a dedicated core of educational professionals that selflessly give time and effort to our association. Thank you for all that you do for MEA!

I have to admit that the transition from being a classroom teacher and a coach to being a TOSA was not easy. For almost 25 years, a bell schedule dictated my existential rhythm. I always knew where I needed to be and when I should be there. I also knew exactly what I was doing every day because, like all classroom instructors, I was a bit of a control freak. I believed, and still believe, the best equation for quality instruction is preparation + organization + content knowledge. The job as President can be incredibly satisfying when I am helpful or when I can be of service. It can also be stressful, and, at times, endless. The job is full of curveballs and tough decisions.

The biggest adjustment, however, is not the pressure or the physical and emotional demands. I am a big boy with fairly broad shoulders. The biggest change is the amount of time I spend doing my job in isolation. I used to work with some of my closest life-long friends, and surrounded by high school kids. The most interesting thing about being a teacher to me was that I got to meet 150-180 of new people each year. As President, I spend a lot of time in my car. I go from site to site. I work alone in my office. I am on call 24/7. Most of my day, I am alone. Thank goodness for music and Jake Anderson. So, if I seem a little chatty, it's not because I like hearing the sound of my own voice. I just may not have heard it for several hours.

One thing that has not changed is that I still teach (in terms of transmitting information) and learn on a daily basis. As I've settled into this position, here's what a typical day looks like for me. I try not to bother anyone prior to 8am or after 5pm. Around 7:00am, I check my computer/phone for emails/messages from the prior evening. I respond to the correspondences as I drink my coffee. I try to communicate with my Rep Council each morning on *Remind* to let them know what's happening and where I'll be. After getting ready for my day, I head out to either or both MEA offices. I call I-12 at MHS "MEA West." The office in Simi that we share with Amanda Hogan and SEA, I call "MEA East." I usually have scheduled meetings with District officials, School Board Trustees, and/or members interspersed throughout the day. Today, for example, I have a meeting with a teacher during lunch at MHS. The year has a groove as well. In August and September, I spend a ton of time working on membership—getting new teachers enrolled and processing their CTA applications. Today, I need to get CTA packets to a couple of late hires. I also have to communicate with the Site Rep to follow-up with the new teacher. My day heats up in the again at 3:01pm and sometimes keeps going well into the evening.

In the past three years, I have taken crash courses in ED Code, health care, SPED, Elementary Education, counseling, worker's compensation, and labor law to name a few. I wouldn't describe the job as one that I enjoy. I do get immense satisfaction from providing service to the people and the profession that has given so much to me, my family, and, for over 20 years, my community. The service piece is what keeps me going. It motivates me to keep learning, to compile as much data as I can so that

I can make the most informed decisions for MEA. These decisions matter—they impact real human beings and families.

The most difficult part of being President is when I cannot help a member solve his/her problem. Although it is no fun disappointing a member, I realized last year that part of my job involves *transference*. Consciously or unconsciously the member needs someone to understand how he/she feels. By redirecting the energy towards me or even blaming me, I become a surrogate. The emotional outburst usually begins a healing process, so I have learned to accept transference as a part of the job. My intent is always to aid and protect my members. There are times when I just cannot do enough. Members certainly let me know when they feel that I haven't done enough . . .

As MEA moves forward together, I think it is vital that we acknowledge that in the last decade public education has experienced a sea change in many facets, including but not limited to how it is funded, increased costs of health care benefits, the expanded expectations of the classroom teacher, and the administration of discipline. In short, teacher's jobs are more difficult. We have joined the rest of the American workforce in the era of doing more with less, what economists call "minimal manning."

In Moorpark, we are not immune from the larger forces that affect the nation. Throughout the United States teacher salaries have fallen behind increases in the cost of living. In addition, according to an August 30th *Wall Street Journal* article, America's middle class' earnings declined 32% in the last decade. Our District righted its own financial ship, the State has recently increased its funding of public education; however, the reality is that Eastern Ventura County school districts have fewer students and are generally losers in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) due to the composition of its student body. District resources are finite. Close to 90% of MUSD \$65 million budget goes to employee compensation (salaries and benefits). The reason why class sizes are larger than they were a decade ago, for example, is because the State funds its public schools at recession levels.

In the face of this reality, MEA is as influential as ever. So allow me to end this communication with a short admonition. We all feel the added pressure, the increased weight of our jobs. We are a unified district, and we must remain so in more than just name if we are to maintain our collective power. One compunction is to blame or begrudge others under the guise of equity. I assure you that MEA leadership has never agreed to move resources from one active group at the expense of another. While you may not always agree with the explanation, there will be a rationale behind why a particular decision was made either by the District, MEA, or in concert. Your leadership does listen to you, but we need to hear your voice to make the change that you want to see happen. If you have an issue, talk to me or your site representative about it. Come to a Representative Council meeting, and voice your concern. I would like nothing more than be able to be of service to you.

Brian