

President's Message 9-2 to 9-6

Hi everyone. I hope you had a great start to the school year. As things normalize, here's an update of what's going on District-wide and in our association.

Membership

As always, we hope to sign up all new certificated employees. We welcome 13 new certificated staff. As of this writing, we've signed up 9 of the 13. Our Site Reps and I are working on the rest. If you see a new teacher, please welcome them and/or encourage them to join our association.

Class Size

The number one complaint and to an equal or greater extent, the primary frustration of all stakeholders in MUSD is class size. When I came into the District as an English Teacher in 1995, my 9th grade English classes were capped at 20:1 and the target class size at MHS was 32:1. Years later the target was 34:1. Now it is 37:1. I have seen and felt the change. As she did last year, Bargaining Chair, Lisa McCarter, placed class size at the top of her negotiating agenda for 2019-20. I spoke with all School Board members last year and have begun meeting with the trustees this year. I also addressed the issue in public at a school board meeting last year. We will continue this dialogue with the District. Class size is an issue that is not easily solved at the local level, and the solutions may be as painful as the problem itself. I want to be clear about one thing: in the past MEA sacrificed compensation for lower student-teacher ratios. This is no longer true. Our total compensation package is competitive with other like districts and our class sizes are generally lower than most surrounding districts. My point is that MUSD is in the same boat as other public schools and is governed by winds and currents that we must tack but ultimately may not be able to control.

Teacher Personal Necessity Days

This issue is still unsettled; however, I want to make sure that all members understand that MUSD uses contract language to govern teacher absences. In brief, this is what the contract says. You may use up to seven (7) of your ten (10) absences for *personal business/discretionary leave* (PB). A teacher does not have to verify the purpose of the absence "except that the unit member" must "identify the type of leave requested." In brief, you can label up to 7 days PB without any repercussions. So, for example, you can have 7 PBs and, say, three illnesses, or 7 illnesses and 3 PBs. You also can use earned (10) and accumulated sick leave days for reasons of *personal necessity* (PN). Events that qualify for PN are death or serious illness of immediate or close friends, accidents/property damage involving member or immediate family, and court appearances as a litigant. A member cannot use PN for vacations, recreation, social events (such as weddings and graduations), political activities, and job interviews or second jobs. Lisa McCarter, Jake Anderson, and I will work with Dr. Lasure to clarify the present contract language. When in doubt, contact your Site Rep, me, or the Personnel Office.

My concern is that the District may have changed past practice, altered its auditing of teacher absences, and/or teachers have been misinformed about how to label his/her timesheets. This issue is on-going.

My advice is that do not use more than 7 PBs. Label your timesheets at your discretion, and stay off social media in general, but especially on the days that you are not at work.

Bargaining

Bargaining met with the District's team on Thursday of this week. We reviewed MEA's request to bargain, which included class size, salary and benefits, and, since 2019-20 is a contract year, all contract language. The District will offer its First Interim Budget at next week's School Board meeting. We will have a better idea of MUSD finances at that point. We will start formulating a more specific offer in October.

American Fidelity

MEA has no skin in any financial game involving member investment. I am eminently unqualified to offer investment advice, and, for the record, I, personally, do not have my money with American Fidelity, The Standard, or any 403B with CSTRS.

I just want to make sure that you are informed about American Fidelity (AF) and the products that it offers. First, MEA has no issue with American Fidelity or its products; however, one common misconception is that AF is sponsored or affiliated by MUSD. It is not. AF and a few other brokerages have District approval. AF is the only investment company that traffics MUSD. Because of MUSD's history with AF, our Business Officers are comfortable with processing the forms and are familiar with frequently asked questions about AF. This does not make AF a better company or product for our members; it makes it more convenient. AF is not your only choice for investments or extra insurance coverage.

This year The Standard, which is a CTA affiliated insurance and investment company, will have a more pronounced presence in the District. Their representative will present at our October 3rd Rep Council. For the record, CSTRS also has investment offers that cost the investor less money on a yearly basis than typical managed accounts, such as AF.

Records/Accounts

The unfortunate passing of one of our beloved members and subsequent meetings with her family prompts me to remind you to please update all your pertinent insurance, STRS, and CTA/NEA records. This means checking to see if your beneficiaries are correct, that you have selected a STRS Option if you are 55 years or older, and that all of your emergency contacts are up to date. Please, do this for your family. Jake Anderson will hold a retirement information session at the DO on Thursday, Oct 24th. This event is to inform you about how STRS works and tips for planning your retirement. It's never too early to start thinking and planning for your future. Details will be sent soon.

Have a great weekend!

Brian

