

President's Update Friday Morning, December 4th

COVID Working Conditions

Dear Members,

I hope you and your families are safe and well.

Unless there is a significant outbreak on our campus and/or the County or the State orders us home, our working conditions will stay status quo into Winter Break. There are only two ways that there will be significant change. The first is if the Governor or VCPH demand school closures. On Thursday, he had this opportunity, and declined to do so. He reiterated that schools that opened prior to the Purple level and/or had waivers could stay open. This is what the Governor offered pertaining to MUSD:

- Schools that are currently operating under elementary school waiver can continue to provide instruction on school sites
- Schools that reopened while their county was in a less restrictive tier can continue to provide instruction on school sites

The other way for sites to close is if our School Board changes its mind. My hunch is the only way the School Board will close campuses is if a significant number of students or teachers get sick on campus. As of this morning, there has been no recorded *on-site* infections of a student or staff. The virus continues to spread in our community. It has and will reach into our classrooms because, no matter how well we do our jobs, we cannot script movement outside of the confines of the schoolhouse gates. Thank you, all members, for vigilantly enforcing social distancing and safety protocols under these unthinkable conditions.

I have provided all Site Reps with VCOE/VCPH documents that explain COVID and contacting tracing protocols as well as detail possible "scenarios." If you have not received them, please ask your Site Rep for them. In addition, MUSD provides statistics of COVID-related information on its website. In general, the County-approved, District-appointed contract tracing expert (our outstanding nurses), in collaboration with your principal, conduct contact tracing. It is an uncomfortable and, at times nerve-wracking, process; however, I am 100% certain that our nurses and principals place everyone's safety first when making their determination.

In addition, MEA continues to work on the matters of small hybrid cohorts and student and family travel and gathering with the District. Safety is always paramount during these discussions. The problem is that we cannot tell Moorpark families not to travel or gather, nor can we tell parents that they cannot send their kids to school. For example, The US Supreme Court recently ruled that places of worship are exempt from COVID restrictions. Governor Newsom's new restrictions do not include churches, mosques, or temples. We can script on campus; we cannot do so off of them.

Negotiations

We begin bargaining non-COVID related items on December 10th. We'll once again try to reach an agreement with the District about Counseling contract language. Jake and I meet with the

MUSD Business on Wednesday to get a preview of the District's First Interim budget. We expect to hear some pretty dire news, which could get worse if Congress does not extend the CARES Act or pass a new bill.

It looks like the State will offer a 2.31% COLA increase with a catch. MUSD may get it, but if we do, it won't be until the end of the year. MUSD can budget for it, but Jake expects them to use the delay in funding as a way to claim more economic injury. Reminder: this is a potential LCFF increase in funding for the District, not necessarily for our pay scale.

Along these lines, the reason why the District offered an "early tell" bonus of \$1000 is purely because they want to lower their costs (salary and benefits make up about 90% of the MUSDs expenses) and reduce potential layoff notices. LVUSD and CVUSD offer this incentive yearly. I expect MUSD to continue to offer the "early tell" bonus beyond 2021. I do not expect any "golden handshake" or buyout in the near future. We have a brand-new CBO, and MUSD cannot legally offer buyouts within five years of the last one.

Possible Changes in Scheduling for Second Semester

MEA will not get involved in methodological debates for its members. Ed Code is clear on this matter. MUSD can enforce School Board policy and Ed Code; the principal, as educational leader may provide his/her vision and base expectations on California State TPEs, but the teacher has the final say concerning grading in his/her classroom. This is MEA's position.

While I am not going to tell individual, tenured teachers how they should grade in his/her class, the research is unequivocal. Distance and Hybrid models are inferior pedagogical systems. It is incredibly difficult to teach two sets of students simultaneously. Regardless, teachers must comprehensively address the academic, social and emotional needs of his/her students. Nationwide, students who would otherwise be completely capable of turning in all assignments have shut down partially or completely. Looking at this phenomenon through a metaphorical lens, perhaps we can designate all students learning from a distance and during a pandemic as in need of 504 accommodations. Technology mediates the vast majority of learning. Distance learning further exacerbates societal inequities. The virus also ushers relative levels of depression, anxiety, alienation, frustration, and anger, which we could label as a deficit, disorder, or impediments to learning. As teachers, we need to acknowledge that we teach and learners learn during a pandemic. We have to be flexible and adaptive.

There is also the equally compelling element of class integrity and student accountability. Teachers need the relative autonomy to establish his/her expectations and to enforce them.

I suggest that any committee or task force that the MUSD shepherds concerning second semester scheduling seriously consider class time that explicitly addresses the social and emotional needs of our students. I also suggest that we do so without adding to our teacher's already overflowing plates. Perhaps, we figure in office hours, conferences, remediation, or explicit time for social and emotional well-being during instructional minutes. This potentially affords students and teachers the time to discuss missing assignments and course expectations. It can be an opportunity for positive teacher and student interaction, and, if necessary, for a teacher to assess

whether the student needs psychological support. It is a Tier II RTI intervention as well as an element of differentiation. This also fits snugly into the PBIS model.

MEA will certainly work with the District to support the well-being of our students. I ask that the District support the well-being of our members as well.

Have a great weekend!

Brian