



MINNESOTA SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

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Memo

To: Rochester Paraprofessionals
From: Don Gilbertson
Date: March 16, 2011
Re: Status of Bargaining

The bad news – no new contract any time soon

The MSEA bargaining committee has been valiantly working on behalf of the membership toward completion of the bargaining process for the next employee contract. There have been delays after delays due supposedly to scheduling of district staff involved in the bargaining process with the several groups currently working without an Agreement. These excuses and explanations should not be news to you as it what we heard two years ago.

In the last go around the district had begun bargaining with high priced lawyers from the metro and then things kind of went into suspended animation while the new superintendent got on board and the district needed a new chief negotiator. As the expression goes history repeats itself. We now find ourselves in a similar scenario, except that this time it might be worse:

- ❶ The last time there was a new superintendent. -- Currently, there is an interim superintendent and the search for a new superintendent has barely begun.
- ❷ The last time there was a school board that appeared to be attempting to work together. -- The recent turnover in the school board seems to have created some indecision or even division in terms of policy, direction and budgetary considerations.
- ❸ The last time the district appointed a new chief negotiator after the negotiations had continued for quite a while. -- This time the chief negotiator is leaving district employment after negotiations have been ongoing for almost a year.
- ❹ In what seems like the biggest insult, we now learn that the school board is requesting 5% reductions, this has not been presented to MSEA yet; but we have been advised that these reductions have been asked of all groups currently working without a contract.

- ⑤ There is more than enough unreserved funds available to take care of the current budget situation. Some might call unreserved funds a rainy day fund. Folks; it is raining!
- ⑥ The teachers have been asked to divert \$1.8 million of staff development funding to assist the budget difficulties. -- They are thinking about giving the district \$900,000. After all they are not negotiating their next contract.

The good news – no new contract anytime soon

As you know MSEA had previously accepted a district request to participate in Interest Based Bargaining. Our last scheduled meeting was cancelled due to yet another of Minnesota cruelties; the last blizzard.

At least two other groups that are bargaining toward a new labor agreement have filled for mediation assistance with the Bureau of Mediation Services.

MSEA negotiators are waiting for the district to regroup and offer dates for the scheduling of MSEA bargaining. The last news to the union was that there might be some notice sent out next week to the unions on how the district would like to proceed with the exit of the HR Director and Chief Spokesperson for the district in negotiations.

It is a bitter situation for all to be asked to give wages or benefits back. It is not as if people are overpaid or underworked. MSEA pitched in the last contract and took wage freezes. Now the district wants additional reductions?

It is unlikely there will be any resolution to the various contract negotiations that are currently going on with the various district employee groups. So the good news is that everyone still has the contract protections provided and there will be no reductions in salary and benefits while negotiations are in process.

Please understand that:

- 1 This is not Wisconsin, we will not lose our right to bargain collectively.
- 2 The current Agreement remains enforce.