



MVEA ADVOCATE



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Moreno Valley Educators Association is an

organization of professionals which serves as a powerful **voice** communicating the needs of Educators and students to the district, parents, and community in order to establish a **positive** school environment and build **quality educational programs**. The Association will continue to **protect the rights** of Educators, and thereby students, **by promoting equity and human rights**.

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MVEA Gives Input to Board

By Janet MacMillan, MVEA President

It has been a month of countless meetings with District administrators and School Board members to consider issues created by the State's budget situation. MVEA has successfully maintained all Contract provisions and reduced the number of educators laid off from 254 to 21.1. Class size reduction continues, as does the current staffing of art and home economics programs. Thanks to all of you who helped achieve this by attending School Board meetings wearing the MVEA blue. A special thanks to those of you who spoke so eloquently about your programs, including your students who were excellent examples of public education in Moreno Valley.

As your President, I have had the honor of representing you at CAMM, with the Superintendent, and at the School Board meetings. Most recently I spoke at the March 11th meeting. Here I share my remarks with you:

"MVEA members strive to 'establish a positive school environment and build quality educational programs.' These goals are shared among all of us in the District. Pursuant to this mission, the Association has a history of collaborating with the District.

So it was a shock to find programs listed for reduction or elimination by Superintendent Lagrosa, when these issues were never a topic of review at subject advisory, curriculum council, categorical facilitators, EL specialist or other district wide meetings. Nor were they addressed at MVEA leadership meetings with Human Resources, Educational Services, or the Superintendent. There is no data to support the reduction or elimination of art or home economics. As a matter of fact, staff at several of the middle and high schools reported today that class size in these electives is at full capacity. Our students need access to these programs both as a motivator to remain in school, and to meet the A through G requirements for entrance into Cal State or UC campuses.

The EL Specialist position presents another scenario since the District had committed to working on refocusing that position through the consult process as per **Government Code 3543.2**. The task was nearly completed when it was halted by the positions being placed on the RIF list. All EL students, regardless of the size of the categorical budget at their sites, deserve equal access to a high quality program. The EL Specialist position served as a common denominator to ensure consistency of the EL program. The sites should have the opportunity to implement the EL Specialist position as determined by the consult and to evaluate the effectiveness of the position before deciding to eliminate it.

MVEA has worked in partnership with AMVMP, CSEA, and District leadership to identify over \$10 million in savings for the 2008-2009 academic year. However, the CAMM and JFMC committees have been working with projections, rather than real figures. The Democratic State legislators are opposed to across the board cuts to education and even the Governor has mentioned placing ways to increase State revenues into discussions on the State budget. MVEA will be at the table with AMVMP, CSEA and District level administrators to identify areas for deeper cuts, just as we have been in the past, if there is a worst case scenario and when there is actual data from which to make decisions.

It is time now to focus our attention on what our students need - electives, a consistent EL program, Counselors and PE teachers. MVEA's position is that no RIFs are justified at this time. I urge staff and community members to communicate to their legislative representatives the need for education to be the highest priority in the state's budget. Our students deserve the best."

RIFs: Only the Beginning...How WE ALL Can Make a Difference BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!

By Ann Adler, MVEA Executive Director

In Moreno Valley, the number of RIFs, also known as lay-offs, decreased from 254.1 to 21.1; 11 after reassignments. While the loss of even one person weakens us all, your voices, your attendance at Board meetings dressed in blue, and the persistent and time consuming work of your leaders has made ALL the difference! That is the power of the collective!

The message is: “We have helped reduce money by staying away from programs and people (finding \$10.3 million of the over \$11 million that the District says it needs to meet the Governor’s proposed cuts to education.) We will do no more until we have real data such as the May Revise and final budget.”

MVUSD is set to make it through the 2008-09 school year unless the “hit” to public education turns out to be worse than anticipated. For now though, there is no way to predict what the Legislature will do, and there is no reason to accept major contractual and/or structural changes unless data shows us that more must be done. I cannot say enough good things about your leadership: Janet MacMillan, Harold Acord, Connie Pruet, Katherine Underwood, Vida Swilley, and Bill Payne, who have painstakingly represented you well at both the CAMM and the JFMC Budget committees. Between your attendance at School Board meetings, and the diligence of your leadership, you have made a great difference, preserving class size reduction and reducing the original number of RIFs by 233 persons!

The District is now expected to spend down some of its reserves, including money currently set aside for early debt payment and other post employment benefits costs, because of the fiscal crisis. This is predicated, however, on the *proposed* cuts materializing as per the Governor’s January budget. MVEA believes that the spending of some of the reserves, in this case, is warranted and will not hurt either the debt payment process or the other post employment benefit “set aside” money which is an accounting procedure. This “spending down” can be sustained to a point, but is a dangerous practice unless over time, the District can find new revenue. Right now, the only State projections they have for the 2008-09 school year are grim at best (-2.4% COLA and -6.5% to all categorical funds.) The three year projection required by the county shows a destructive fiscal forecast for the District. If this trend continues, the county may give the District a “qualified” grade, and tell them to modify their budget before they receive a “negative” grade and possible State intervention. This is pretty much true for most districts right now.

The questions become: What will the Legislature do? Will public education cuts be minimized to preserve the future for our students? From where would funds come by which to balance the budget in the future?

These questions cannot be answered yet because the Legislature will make the final determination. That means **there is still something ALL of us can do**, and if we don’t do it, then we should not complain about future pay cuts, step and column freezes, RIFS, etc., because we will have brought them on ourselves.

What can we do? WRITE, E-MAIL, AND VISIT YOUR CONGRESS PEOPLE AND SENATORS! Do that **today, tomorrow, the next day**, and **the next day**, and then **again** and **again!!** Ask them to spare public education from the major cuts, because if you don’t, and they don’t, it means that once there is a State budget, MVEA will have to look seriously at the onerous proposals by the District **BECAUSE THERE WILL BE NO OTHER WAY.**

Clear enough? I hope so. MVEA has told the District that when there is a State budget, we will step up to the plate if that budget is dire. Now is the time to make sure the budget is not a disaster for public education. Collectively speaking, we can change this around. We minimized the RIFs by working together. **An injury to one WILL be an injury to all** unless **WE ALL write, e-mail, and visit our legislators.** Write your letters to make it better. Do nothing to receive nothing. **The choice is OURS! Together we can...**



Write to Your Legislators and the Governor Today!



SAMPLE LETTER

Below are some ideas and information for inclusion in letters to your state legislators and the Governor regarding the current budget crisis. Please feel free to include those that work for you in your letter or write your own comments...

Select 1

- As an Educator, parent and concerned voter, I urge you to reject the Governor's proposal to cut \$4.8 billion from public education.
- As an Educator in Moreno Valley Unified School District for ___ years, I am appalled at the State's proposed reductions for public education.
- As a voter in your precinct, I am asking you to balance the state's budget without destroying public education for our students.

Select 1 or 2

- The proposed cuts total nearly \$5 billion less for our public schools. That's the same as laying off 107,000 teachers, or shutting down every school in the state nearly a month early, or increasing the number of students in every classroom by up to 35 percent.
- This budget proposal is a giant step backward for our public schools and would decimate the minimum school funding law approved by California voters. Our students didn't create this budget crisis, and their education shouldn't be ransomed to solve it.
- California voters believe our students and public schools should be a top priority and strongly support our minimum school funding guarantee, Proposition 98. Voters passed Proposition 98 almost 20 years ago to create stable minimum funding for our public schools and they strongly reaffirmed their support for the minimum funding law in 2005.
- Our students and schools have been making progress, with reading scores up 25 percent and math scores increasing 17 percent in the last four years. If we want this progress to continue, now is certainly not the time to be cutting funding to our public schools.
- A state budget proposal that looks at cuts alone is not a real solution. The most pressing challenge is to enact a balanced budget that continues the momentum of educational improvement that has been built since the late 1990s. This budget does not do that, and anything less is unacceptable. Acting boldly on behalf of California means boldly investing in our public schools, not shortchanging our children and the future of our State.

Select 1

- In the Moreno Valley Unified School District where I work... [Select from below.]
 - \$11 million has been cut from curricular and program needs.
 - the District has had to balance a budget that takes teachers, counselors, materials, supplies and textbooks away from our students.
 - we are a Program Improvement District working hard to help our students, and yet the District has had to reduce the budget by \$11 million because of the drastic proposed cuts to education for 2008-09. How can the state expect us to do better with substantially fewer resources?

Select 1

- Please find other ways to balance the budget other than on the backs of our kids.
- Please do not jeopardize the future of California and hurt our students. Either cut other programs or find ways to raise revenue.

Sincerely,

*** *****



Bargaining: How You Can Help “Hold the Line!”

By Harold Acord, MVEA Bargaining Chair

As your Bargaining Chair

and Chair of the Bargaining Support Committee, I must report how inspired I have felt at the three most recent School Board meetings to see that “sea of blue” in the Boardroom. Before each meeting, MVEA members have met for refreshments, prizes and camaraderie in the upper parking lot at the District Office. It has been amazing to see how many of our members have attended and made their voices heard for budget decisions based on facts, not rumors.

MVEA has also sunshined its bargaining objectives with the District as required by law. The District will sunshine their objectives at the March 18, 2008, School Board meeting. It is MVEA’s hope that they will not reflect their onerous proposals from last year.

Our power as a union is in our voice. Our voice is made strong when as many members as possible attend the School Board meetings so that our unity can be seen. Your Site Reps will be sharing information with you about bargaining, attending School Board meetings, and wearing blue on bargaining dates. Help MVEA and its members “Hold the Line!” and protect our Contract language.

In Solidarity,
Harold Acord
MVEA Bargaining Chair



Member vs. Member Meetings Are a No - No!

By Connie Pruett, MVEA Vice-President



If you are asked to represent a member at a meeting with the principal, and it turns out to be a meeting with the principal and another teacher...RUN...run as fast as you can to the nearest exit! If two teachers (employees) “have to have at it,” the principal (employer) gets to be the mediator, NOT you. You cannot pick and choose whose side you are going to be on because as Site Rep you represent all members. The best scenario is for the members to resolve the situation themselves, but when they can’t, the principal has to step up to the plate and work with both parties to find a fair and equitable solution to the problem. Remember the Union Code of Conduct:

UNION CODE OF CONDUCT

I will not criticize any union colleague except to the individual directly.

If any union colleague is being criticized in my presence, I will confront the criticism and ask that it stop.

I will not participate in any conversations with administration that criticize, or negatively speculate about any union colleague.

I will settle my difference with colleagues within my union.

I will engage in debate, offer others every opportunity for debate and respect minority viewpoints, but I will observe and support the majority mandate of my union.

Grievance Report

By Harold Acord, MVEA Director of Contract Maintenance

Presently, there are many outstanding grievances regarding class size and other issues throughout the District. Many of our members have been over in class size for more than twenty days and have yet to be paid for it, even though the appropriate paperwork has been filled out and is at the District Office. MVEA is tracking each of these individual cases and working with the District to bring all of these grievances to closure.

In addition to class size, there are other grievances that are outstanding. At Moreno Valley High School the District is refusing to pay Department Chair money for the Reading Department. This is a blatant breach of Contract language. Midland Elementary and Moreno Valley High School both are both dealing with air-conditioning systems that are not in working order.

Another grievance in process is one regarding a member who has been placed on a pay scale not found anywhere in the Contract which is much lower than the current pay scale. MVEA is working toward back pay for this employee.

MVEA continues to stand firm in processing these grievances so that our Contract is upheld.

In Solidarity,
Harold Acord
MVEA Director of Contract Maintenance

Site Safety Survey: Fill It Out!

The District Safety Committee is currently gathering information relating to site safety issues. A short survey has been developed, and all classified, certificated, and administrative staff at every site have been asked to complete this important survey.

The survey is online at the District's Share Point website and is completely anonymous. The Committee is encouraging everyone to take time to complete the comment boxes since more information can be gathered as to why people feel the way they do regarding each item.

If you cannot access the survey online, your principal has hard copies available. Please make sure to fill out your survey as soon as possible so that you will have input into site safety concerns.

Auto and Home Insurance Exclusively for Moreno Valley Educators

Did you know that being a CTA/MVEA member gives you special rates and benefits on your auto and home insurance?

California Casualty, ranked #1 by the Department of Insurance for 2007, offers auto discounts for good drivers, good students and mature drivers.

Coverage up to \$3,000 for loss of educational materials and equipment used on school premises or activities off campus.

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The MVEAdvocate is published ten times a year by the Moreno Valley Educators Association. MVEA is associated with the California Teachers Association (CTA) and the National Educators Association (NEA). MVEA is a member of the National Council of Urban Educators. Locally, MVEA is a member of the Moreno Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Moreno Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. All unsigned articles reflect the official position of MVEA.

Comments, suggestions, and inquiries should be sent to: Cathy Fulgenzi, Editor (cfulgenzi@MVEAinfo.com)

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Important Dates:



March 24 - April 6: Spring Break!

April 7: School resumes



April 9: MVEA Exec. Board Mtg. @ 4 p.m.

April 15: MVUSD Board Meeting @ 7 p.m. (Board Room)

April 16: MVEA Rep. Council Mtg. @ 4 p.m. (Moreno Valley Conference & Recreation Center)

April 22: Earth Day



April 23: Administrative Professionals Day

April 29: MVUSD Board Meeting @ 7 p.m. (Board Room)

Reading Across America ... and MVUSD

On Monday, March 3rd, we celebrated "Read Across America Day," otherwise known as Dr. Seuss' birthday, in Moreno Valley. Students from the Middle and High Schools walked to nearby Elementary Schools and read to students.

At Armada, students were treated to readings by Vista Del Lago Seniors. They arrived with painted faces and were wearing "Cat in the Hat" hats. The Seniors not only read, they also played games with the students. The teachers at Armada said, "It was the best celebration of Dr. Seuss' birthday ever!" Thank you Vista Del Lago!

Serrano students enjoyed readings from some of our School Board Members, along with special guests from the community. All in all, it was an exciting day here in Moreno Valley.

A little known fact: The Cat in the Hat, which turned 50 in March, came about when Life magazine published a report that said children were having trouble learning to read because the material was too boring.

