

MVEA Advocate

The Official Publication of the Moreno Valley Educators Association

Support State Budget Initiatives

By Harold Acord, Janet MacMillan, Connie Pruett, and Katherine Underwood

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Last February, the California state legislature passed a seventeen month budget signed by the governor that cut expenditures in education and other social services and increased revenue for the state by providing an increase in sales tax, vehicle registration fees and income tax. The budget requires that six initiatives pass in the special May election. These allow for the state to borrow additional funds from the lottery and transfer some from restricted categories to the general fund so that the state budget balances.

The State Council of CTA recommended a YES-vote on each of the propositions. Your representatives, Harold Acord, Janet MacMillan, Connie Pruett and Katherine Underwood are in strong support of the "yes" positions. If the propositions do not pass, the current state budget would have to be revised resulting in additional education cuts. The process would be long and contentious since some legislators have already taken a firm stand on voting against any new taxes.

Proposition 1A---Budget Stabilization Fund

Proposition 1B ---Protect Education Funding/Prop. 98 Restoration

Without impacting the state's minimum school funding guarantee, Proposition 1A directs the state to create a reserve account, except when the fund is full or there is an economic down-

turn. By stabilizing state spending, Prop 1A prevents the peaks and valleys in state spending and helps protect funding for vital programs like education, public safety and health care. Part of the funding in the rainy day reserve would be used to repay \$9 million dollars owed to public schools. **If Prop 1A and Prop 1B fail, there will be no mechanism to restore monies that the schools are owed under the Prop 98 requirement.**

Proposition 1C ---Lottery Modernization Act

Prop 1C will increase the performance and accountability of the state lottery and bring immediate funding to the state without raising taxes. Prop 1C will raise \$5 billion in new revenues to immediately help with this year's state budget deficit. Prop 1C takes education funding out of future lottery proceeds and places the money under the Prop 98 minimum school funding guarantee. **If Prop 1C fails, there will be a \$5 billion hole in the state budget, meaning schools and other programs could face additional cuts.**

Proposition 1D --- Children's Services Funding

Proposition 1E --- Mental Health Funding

These propositions temporarily redirect a portion of the unspent funds from the tobacco tax and the Mental Health Service Trust Fund to pay for children's health and social services. Existing pro-

grams supported through these funds would continue. **If 1D and 1E fail, there will be a hole of approximately \$830 million in the state budget, meaning deeper cuts for children's health programs and social services.**

Proposition 1F --- Restricts Elected Officials' Salaries

Prop 1F prohibits legislators, the governor and other state politicians from receiving pay raises whenever the state budget is running a deficit. **If Prop 1F passes, it will save the state money in difficult times and hold the legislators and the governor accountable.**

According to David Sanchez, the President of the California Teachers Association, "The repayment of some of the money cut from education will allow local school districts to restore student programs, reduce class sizes and rehire educators who have been laid off."

The failure of any or all of these propositions passing will very likely impact the District's budget deficit and employee jobs in Moreno Valley Unified School District.

For additional information on the initiatives, log on to CTA.org. You can also contact your CTA State Council representatives, Harold Acord, Janet MacMillan, Connie Pruett and Katherine Underwood.

Vote YES on Propositions 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E and 1F!

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We're on the web!
MVEAinfo.com

There's a New Fire Marshal in Town

Contributed by Carol Fus, Seneca Elementary School Teacher

If your school site has received a visit from Moreno Valley's new Fire Marshal, then we are sure that you have already "deforested" your classroom of student work, as well as teaching materials, so that they no longer exceed 20 % of each wall area. The threat from the Fire Marshal to fine you personally if he deems your classroom to be a fire hazard has been enough to strike fear and anger into most of us.

At last month's School Board meeting, Carol Fus, a Teacher at Seneca Elementary School voiced her concerns to the School Board members and public. Her speech is reprinted here:

"Local school classrooms are being decimated by the Fire Marshal under the auspices of keeping our school children safe. Schools in Moreno Valley Unified School District have been placed on notice that the percentage of paper on our classroom walls must be reduced substantially. No more colorful butcher paper for bulletin boards. Instead, bare walls are backdrops for teaching. Artwork and teaching materials may not exceed 20% of the surface of classroom walls (CA Fire Code, section 807.4.3.2). This defies logic. In every education course, emphasis is placed on the importance of environmental print. Students absorb information from the classroom walls. Language learners need to see vocabulary repeatedly. Interactive bulletin boards provide

fun learning.

I believe this enforcement is punitive both to teachers and to students. Teachers work to create cheerful, positive learning environments for their students. When we are forced to remove so much of our wall coverage, we are deprived of the ability to individualize our classrooms.



I know the Fire Marshal is enforcing the law. However, I believe that this law is another example of how our society has created legislation that replaces human judgment with predetermined laws designed to protect us against ourselves. In 1994, Philip Howard wrote a great book on just this topic. In The Death of Common Sense, he discusses how this law came to be. A Fire Chief visited an elementary school in New York dressed as Officer MacGruff. He saw paper Halloween decorations and student work on the walls. Within days, all the art was removed and, "The school, according to one observer, now looked 'about as inviting as a bomb shelter.'"

Since this book was published, public education has changed. Teachers no longer have time for art projects or holiday celebrations because of the emphasis on academic standards. Instead, the fun in school must stem from the lessons the teachers create. When they are not permitted to use much of their wall space to support these lessons, one more hurdle has been set up.

All I ask for is equal application of the law for all, with a modicum of common sense. If the schools in neighboring districts are permitted to use their walls to provide quality instruction, I believe Moreno Valley teachers should also be permitted to do so. According to "Topical Fire Research Series," Vol. 8, Issue 1, of August 2007, "The causes for fires in kindergarten or elementary schools mostly involve cooking (27%), incendiary or suspicious activity (25%), and heating (12%)." They are also started more often in assembly areas (29%), kitchens (12%), and bathrooms (13%). Consequently, common sense dictates that the Fire Marshal should focus on these areas instead of classroom walls. Otherwise, where will it end? Soon we will be asked to eliminate writing paper and it won't be long before the Fire Marshal realizes that all of our books also contain flammable paper. We will be reduced to the schools of our ancestors with nothing in them except chalk and slates."

Standing Up for Our Colleagues

By Cathy Fulgenzi, Director of Communication

Thousands of teachers, parents, students and community members Stood Up For Schools on Pink Friday, March 13th, the deadline for teacher layoff notices from school districts. According to the CTA website, 27,886 layoff notices - or pink slips - were issued to educators in California.

More than 260 pink slips were received by MVEA's members. Many of those affected met with the CTA lawyer at the Moreno Valley Conference Center to learn more about the paperwork that would need to be filled out to protect their rights at the upcoming layoff hearings scheduled for the end of this month.

Meanwhile, on all four

corners of Alessandro and Frederick streets, fellow staff members, parents, students and community members showed their support by wearing pink and waving signs to make the public



aware of how the state budget cuts were affecting MVUSD. The group rallied around the pink slipped educators as they came out of the Conference Center, clapping and cheering their sup-

port during this difficult time.

Visit the website www.standupforschools.org for more information on what you can do to help our students and fellow educators in their time of need. From this website, you can get sample letters to write to the editor of your local newspaper, email your Legislator, print signs and fliers, and write/read blog posts.

Remember to wear PINK on bargaining days and also on Fridays to support MVEA's efforts towards minimizing the number of pink slips affecting our members, as well as to support those who have received pink slips. Those dates are April 13, 21 and 28.

MVEA Site Rep Elections in May

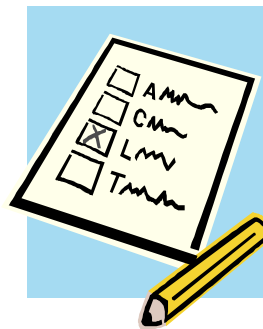
By Cathy Fulgenzi, Director of Communication

Would you like to get more involved with MVEA as your Site's Representative? Here is your chance!

What do Site Representatives do?

- ◇ Attend the monthly Representative Council meetings where they represent the views and input of the active membership of the faculty in discussion and votes.
- ◇ Serve as the on-going liaison between the Representative Council and the MVEA members at the site.
- ◇ Conduct frequent and regular "10 Minute" meetings and/or polls of their members.

- ◇ Distribute written communications and publications from MVEA to its members.
- ◇ Arrange for the election of representatives to their site restructuring, and election/selection of budget and discipline review committees.
- ◇ Provide representation for the site's MVEA members when issues arise.
- ◇ Attend the September Fall Leadership Conference which provides training and support for all Site Representatives.



The By-Laws and Standing Rules of MVEA outline procedures for determining site reps. Elections must take place in May of each year with results reported to the MVEA office by May 31, 2009. You current site reps will arrange for the election with information from the elections committee on the number of reps and alternates required at your site. See your site reps or contact the MVEA Secretary, Peggy Murphy, or the elections chair, Cindy Schyling, for additional information.

Let's Make a Deal...

that benefits the students, the District, and its employees

By Harold Acord-Bargaining Chair, and Katherine Underwood-Bargaining Team Member

On March 19, 2009, you received a memo from the District called "Certificated Negotiations Update." This communication was written by the District without consultation by MVEA. There was no collaboration with MVEA prior to the District's email. Therefore the positions in the District Update were District positions only. MVEA would like to share its perspective with you on the memo.

The following information from the District's memo is accurate:

The two teams met for negotiations on March 13 and 17, 2009 at which time the MVEA and District teams discussed numerous options for balancing the budget.

Some cost-saving measures can be implemented by the District, but wages and hours must be negotiated.

Further, while the District's budget was reduced by \$8,612,447 during the 2008-2009 school year, by working together with MVEA and CSEA, the District avoided current year cuts and layoffs in large part by sweeping \$8 million in categorical program reserves into the General Fund.

The District chose to move forward with possible layoffs prior to the statutory deadline of March 15 while continuing to bargain.

On March 12, 2009, the Superintendent presented to the Governing Board a plan for balancing the budget for 2009-2010.

As the District says, this plan included cuts that could be made **unilaterally by the District – without the agreement of MVEA, CSEA or any other party**, including: elimination of class-size reduction (27:1), cuts of Administrative/District Office positions, elimination of on-campus suspension program, bus driver reduction in hours, and use of reserves leaving an additional \$1.7 million in savings needed to balance the budget which could come from establishing a 30:1 ratio (rather than 27:1).

Per the memo, on March 12, the Board approved reduction in force of the following management personnel: 9 K-5 Assistant Principals, 1 Middle School Assistant Principal, 1 District Office Director and 1 District Office Coordinator.

While not approved by the Board on March 12, 2009, it is accurate to say that the Superintendent announced that all 139 management (certificated and classified) and confidential employees would be given notice that their work year and/or salary may be reduced for the 2009-2010 school year.

MVEA, during negotiations, repeatedly has asked hypothetically, what would come off the RIF list if the association agreed to something equivalent to a 3% pay cut. On March 17, the District clarified that class-size reduction and the on-campus suspension programs could be left intact if each employee unit – management, certificated, and classified -- took a 3 percent across-the-board salary reduction.

During negotiations on March 17, 2009, the MVEA and District bargaining teams considered many different combinations of program changes and reductions in compensation that could balance the budget. The parties did not reach consensus on any option or plan.

The District omitted the following information:

MVEA and CSEA have worked with the District for months to identify the \$8 million “sweep” money for 08-09 and the \$11.3 million of cuts that are away from the classroom and our students and employees for the 09-10 district-projected \$23 million deficit. The District claims to have used category three categorical fund balances to fund the deficit. The Association believes that the district should “sweep” all available category three categorical balances before asking employees to pay increased out of pocket money in these difficult economic times.

MVEA believes that the District should allocate all non- legally restricted fund ending balances (unspent tax payer dollars provided to pay for programs to support education) toward closing the deficit.

The Superintendent said at the March 12 School Board meeting that the District would look at all options. **The District has not considered ALL options, only salary/furlough reductions.**

Wages and furloughs are not the only options for solving the budget deficit. MVEA continues to suggest other options such as using money set aside for an early debt payment called Certificates of Participation to reduce the deficit. Right now this money (\$3 million) is sitting while employees face lay-offs and the District has a deficit.

Another MVEA suggestion is to use a small amount of money from the \$14 million workers comp fund to help reduce the deficit.

MVEA also suggests the District look at the Federal Stimulus package as a way to help balance the budget.

At the last negotiations session, the District and the Association team members created a list of options to help close the gap. Twenty different options were produced. Fourteen were management options, all of which required some form of pay cut or furlough days. The MVEA options included spending down reserves, categorical ending balances and decreasing selected work years that are over 184 days. None of the options presented by either party were “acceptable” to the other party.

The Association believes that any pay cuts or furlough days should take place **only** if the District has done everything possible to fill the budget deficit by reallocating reserves and ending balances in categorical funds to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The concept of decreasing management positions was finally brought forth by Cabinet when the School Board sent District administration back to make the cuts more equitable. Prior to that there were very few proposed management reductions by the District.

MVEA is committed to ensuring there is a long range plan that includes 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-2011. Both the Association and the District agree that any settlement would be a multiple-year agreement.



MVEA is determined to minimize RIFs and out of pocket expenses while balancing the budget and will continue to bargain to do so.

Both teams will meet again on April 13, 21 and 28, 2009.

Please **wear PINK** on those days and also on Fridays to support our Bargaining Team and those who have been Pink Slipped.

The Whole World (Wide Web) is Watching

By Michael D. Simpson, National Education Association (NEA) Office of General Counsel

Nowadays, thanks to advances in technology, you don't even need a major publisher to get fired; just post your racy photos, sexually graphic writings, or wild party stories on a personal Web blog such as MySpace or Facebook. You'll be amazed by how quickly tech-savvy students can disseminate your postings to their friends and your employer.

Here's a roundup of some of the recent horror stories:

- A band director from Broward County, Florida, was dismissed after school officials viewed his MySpace profile that included his musings about sex, drugs, and depression.
- A Colorado English teacher lost her job after composing and posting sexually explicit poetry on her MySpace site. Police were even called in to investigate.
- A Nashville teacher was removed from teaching after posting "racy pictures" of herself, along with candid photos of her students, on her MySpace profile.
- A Florida middle school teacher was terminated because of "offensive" and "unacceptable" photos and information on his MySpace page.

In October 2007, reporters for The Columbus Dispatch conducted an investigation of MySpace profiles posted by Ohio teachers. The newspaper quoted one 25-year-old teacher bragging that she's "an aggressive freak in bed," "sexy," and "an outstanding kisser." Another teacher wrote on her page that she had recently "gotten drunk," "taken drugs," and "gone skinny-dipping."

In the wake of these reports, the Ohio Education Association urged all OEA members to remove any personal profiles they may have posted on MySpace or Facebook. The Association also warned members that such profiles "can be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings," which could "affect not only a teacher's current job but his/her teaching license" as well.

But what about free speech? Don't school employees have the right, on their own time, to blog about their private lives without fear of losing their jobs? Probably not. It's the general rule that school employees can be disciplined for off-duty conduct if the school district can show that the conduct had an adverse impact on the school or the teacher's ability to teach. And it wouldn't be too difficult to make that showing if the teacher's blog

includes sexually explicit or other inappropriate content and is widely viewed by students.

As to a possible free speech claim, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that it was not a violation of the First Amendment for the City of San Diego to fire a police officer for posting a sexually explicit video of himself on the Internet. The unanimous Court said that such speech was "detrimental to the mission and functions of the employer."

And last year, a U.S. District Court ruled that a Connecticut school district's decision to fire a probationary teacher because of his postings to his MySpace page did not violate the teacher's First Amendments rights. The court called the online exchanges between the teacher and his students "inappropriate" and added that "such conduct could very well disrupt the learning atmosphere of the school."

There's an old lawyer's saw that goes something like this: Never put in writing anything that you wouldn't want read in open court or by your mother. Maybe it's time for an updated adage: **Never put in electronic form anything that you wouldn't want viewed by a million people, including your colleagues, students, and supervisors — and your mother.**

Solutions to Help You Manage Debt

In light of the current economic situation and the worsening of the economic crisis, many National Education Association (NEA) members are wondering what to do and where they can find help. A great place to begin is <http://www.debtadvice.org/nea/>. From there, members can search on the NEA Member Benefits and NFCC web-sites for solutions that

best fit their particular financial situation.

By going to <http://www.nfcc.org/>, a menu of options can be accessed including:

- NFCC Homeowner Crisis Resource Center
- Free consumer video, "Avoiding Foreclosure"
- Find a Counselor Now: Find an

NFCC Agency Near You

- Consumer Debt Advice
- A Newsroom with updated information

In addition, NEA Member Benefits offers a wide variety of information at www.neamb.com then click on the Tools & Tips link and go to the section that is most pertinent to your needs.

Educators of the Month: Marie White and Lacey Williams

Marie White was MVEA's Educator of the Month for February. Marie came to Armada Elementary School six years ago with ten years of experience as a social worker. Marie's change in career was motivated by a desire to help and make a difference for families. She has achieved this in her fourth and fifth grade classes by focusing on students who struggle with reading. Marie's extensive knowledge of reading development skills and computer assisted instruction have prepared her to use the Read 180 program to create a safe and nurturing environment so that students gain confidence and learn basic skills. Marie has incorporated her own instructional strategies so well into the Read 180 program that she mentors other teachers at Armada and nearby colleges on effective implementation of reading curricula.

Marie is generous with her time and talents. She is a sponsor for Friday Night Live, a club that develops leadership in students by advising them as they design school wide activities to get kids involved in a fun way. She also organized Black History month activities. The staff at Armada recognizes Marie as a leader. Her ability to listen actively and speak well to issues helps to bring consensus to the decision-making process.

Marie lives in Moreno Valley with her husband and three children. In her spare time, she is an active sports mom.



Lacey Williams was recognized in March by MVEA as the Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Month. Lacey has earned both her BA and MA from the University of California, Riverside, and is currently applying for admission to several Ph.D programs. She originally worked her way through school as a swimming teacher, followed by several years as an instructional assistant in Riverside Unified School District. Lacey student taught at Box Springs Elementary School and decided to remain in Moreno Valley. She has been teaching at Ramona Elementary School since 2007.

Lacey became a teacher to make a difference in children's lives. She is motivated by the belief that all children can learn, that teachers learn from students, and students learn from one another. Lacey's principal, Sandy Bunting, describes Lacey as being unwavering in her ability to motivate students. She does so by integrating her organiza-

tional skills with enthusiasm for the curriculum and sensitivity to student needs. She provides a variety of stimulating and educational activities for her students.

Lacey is a good example of the talents that younger staff members bring to the classroom. Lacey is well-versed in technology and utilizes PowerPoint, Moviemaker and pod casts to ensure that students are actively involved with learning. The end result is that her class is prepared to do well on the California Standards Tests.

The staff at Ramona appreciates Lacey's positive attitude despite the fact that, like other new teachers, she is not assured of a position with our District next year. Her focus still remains on her students' progress, however. Lacey teaches Read 180. She focuses her contributions at Professional Learning Committee meetings on how her class is closing the achievement gap.

Lacey is an athlete. In her spare time, she works out swimming, biking and running.

Congratulations, Marie White and Lacey Williams on being great examples of Moreno Valley's Educators!



**The Official Publication
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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.***

Important Dates:

- **April 8** Executive Board meeting @ 4:00
- **April 12** Easter
- **April 13** Bargaining-Wear PINK!
- **April 14** School Board meeting @ 7:00
- **April 15** Rep. Council meeting @ 4:00
- **April 21** Bargaining-Wear PINK!
- **April 22** Administrative Professionals Day
- **April 28** Bargaining-Wear PINK!
School Board meeting @ 7:00



April 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <i>Spring Break</i>	2 <i>Spring Break</i>	3 <i>Spring Break</i>	4 <i>Spring Break</i>
5 <i>Spring Break</i>	6	7	8 <i>Exec. Board 4 pm</i>	9	10 <i>Wear PINK!</i>	11
12 <i>Easter</i>	13 <i>Wear PINK!</i>	14 <i>School Board 7pm</i>	15 <i>Rep Council 4 pm</i>	16	17 <i>Wear PINK!</i>	18
19	20	21 <i>Wear PINK!</i>	22 <i>Administrative Professionals Day</i>	26	27 <i>Wear PINK!</i>	28
26	27	28 <i>School Board 7pm</i>	29	30		

MVEA Executive Board:

President	Janet MacMillan	Co-Director of Elementary	Andrea Chouinard
Vice-President	Connie Pruett	Co-Director of Elementary	Tim Hampton
Secretary	Peggy Murphy	Director of Middle School	Mike Sorter
Treasurer	Tom Weir	Director of High School	Juanita Quiroz
Executive Director	Ann Adler	CTA State Council Rep. to the Board	Katherine Underwood
Director of Contract Maintenance	Harold Acord	CTA State Council Members	Harold Acord, Janet MacMillan, Connie Pruett, Katherine Underwood
Director of Communication	Cathy Fulgenzi	CTA Board Rep. District O	Mikki Cichocki
Director of Human Rights	Danny Alvarez	NEA Director District 11	Patty Taylor
Director of Instruction & Prof. Dev.	Sharon Orme		
Director of Member Services	José Alcalá		
Director of Political Action	Heather Gardner		