

State Legislature Reduces Proposed Cuts in Education Funding

The special legislative session to address the structural budget deficit is over and severe cuts to vital services, including education, have been averted. Even near-term cuts to school funding have been minimized.

The proposal to freeze Thornton funding for two years was modified with an agreement to accelerate funding of the "Geographic Cost of Education Index" (GCEI) - which targets additional aid to counties with higher costs of living, like Montgomery. The end result is that the loss in state funding to MCPS should be small enough that the county council should be able to fully fund the school broad budget for next year, including teacher salaries.

The special Annapolis session was not without its drama. If revenue to fill a \$1.7 billion deficit was not found, draconian cuts would have ensued. In the state senate, the revenue bill passed with no additional votes to spare. The package included making the personal income tax more progressive, as well as an increase in the sales, cigarette income, and titling tax.

Focus Shifts to County Exec & County Council

Superintendent Weast is set to release the school budget on December 13th. He will be including full funding for negotiated contracts. County Executive Ike Leggett will release his proposed budget on

SHORT TAKES

NEA Seeks Volunteers to Assist at Summer 2008 Convention in DC

The NEA convention is coming to Washington, D.C. next summer and volunteers are needed to work between June 30 and July 6. Volunteers receive \$40 for transportation each day worked, and lunch or dinner is provided. You need not work every day. Interested?

Download the volunteer form from the MCEA website

(www.mcea.nea.org) or contact LeeAnn Kaye at 301-598-5480 or lakayeneaconvention@comcast.net.

MCEA Workshop Scheduled for Dec. 6: *Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Educators*

A workshop focused on: legal tips for teachers in a digital age; personal life choices and employment rights; and what to do when assaulted or threatened are just some of the topics that will be addressed by MSTA legal counsel at this upcoming workshop. It will be held at MCEA Conference Center, Dec. 6 from 4:15 – 6:00 pm. **RSVP by contacting Kiwana Williams, 301-294-6232 or kwilliams@mcea.nea.org.**

March 20th, and the County Council has until the end of May to take action. MCEA will continue to urge the County Executive and County Council to honor negotiated contracts. MCEA members should take every opportunity to urge their elected County Council representatives to do so as well.

TEACHER TIPS

(While MCEA does not want to encourage excessive consumerism and wanton spending, the activities below have proven to be successful activities to teach important concepts.)

Writing “Checks” for Holidays (grades 3-5)

Create a shopping activity with your students, again, using catalogs. Give the students a spending limit and a packet of ‘checks.’ You can photocopy one of yours with the account number and name blanked out and the name of the school typed in. (You can also print void over the check). Then teach them how to write a check. They really feel like big shots! Start with a set balance in their ‘accounts’ and they have to keep subtracting from the ongoing balance as they spend. Not only is it good math practice, but it gives you a lot of insight into the individual students.

These tips were gathered from “Works4me” an NEA on-line program. For additional tips, e-mail to lyris@list.nea.org. Then in the message block, type: *subscribe Works4me (with no punctuation)*

ON THE JOB

Complaints and Allegations

What happens when there is a complaint or an allegation against a teacher is an area that is best handled by using common sense. When that fails, Board of Education **Regulation KLA-RA, Section IV A** describes the procedure to be implemented.

If a parent chooses *not* to discuss a classroom concern or complaint with their child’s teacher and goes right to the principal, the response should be simple: a recommendation to meet and discuss it with the teacher.

Regulation KLA-RA, Section IV A. states “*The complaint from a member of the public should be resolved with the parties most directly involved as amicably, expeditiously, and satisfactorily as possible.*” Attempts to solve most problems should take place at the most basic level, teacher to parent, with direct communication. There are some situations, of course, where that might not be appropriate: a history of tension or animus between the parties, school policy being the root of the problem, not the teacher, etc.

If an allegation is made against a teacher it should be understood that that is exactly what it is, an allegation – not a fact. Anyone may legally make allegations as long as the allegations aren’t knowingly false and made for the sole purpose of disparaging the individual.

Article 15, Section D 7 of the negotiated agreement describes teachers’ rights in this complaint process. According to **Article 15,**

complaints about, or material derogatory to, a unit member’s conduct, service, character or personality may not be placed in his/her personnel file unless first, it’s been investigated, and second, proven to be true. And finally, the material must be shared with the unit member involved.

A process exists to allow recourse for parents and students to pursue concerns. At the same time, protections are in place so teachers will not unfairly be victims of irresponsible attacks.

CTL CORNER

On November 15th, the MCEA/MCPS Councils on Teaching and Learning sponsored a **Forum on K-12 Math Curriculum and Instruction**. Invited attendees included 38 teachers from K-12 who provide math instruction, along with curriculum specialists and supervisors from the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs (OCIP).

Teachers on the Councils on Teaching and Learning have raised concerns about pacing (acceleration); sequencing; assessments; assessment windows; reassessment; curriculum alignment with MSAs, HSAs, SATs, etc.; spiraling structure; defining *successful* completion of a course; interventions and supports; and, best practices.

The purpose of the Forum was to have participants provide as much detail about specific challenges as possible; and to gather potential solutions to address the challenges in order to improve the overall math curriculum.

OCIP is now processing the feedback from the Forum, and will be following up with the Councils on changes to be made.