

the

FMEA Observer



A letter from the president, Scott Shulimson

Dear FMEA Members,

2017 has already been full of both challenges and opportunities: a new administration is taking shape in Washington that is threatening public education, the district is offering a retirement incentive for the first time in six years, a devastating flood destroyed a local neighborhood prompting enormous generosity from teachers of FMEA, and through it all we continue to bargain for a new contract with a fair raise.

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Important Dates!

Bargaining
April 11



Spring Break!
April 14-23



School Board Meetings

April 11
April 25
May 9



As the Trump administration and new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, outline their agenda, it is clear public education is under attack once again. The Trump budget released this month would cut \$9B from education (a 13% cut), but adds \$1.4B to voucher and charter school programs that seek to privatize education. As feared, it appears that this administration will be a very strong supporter of private and charter schools over traditional public education.

With the coming attacks on public education, many teachers will find this a good time to retire, and the recently offered retirement incentive will make that possible for many. To date, only fourteen FMEA members have signed up for the incentive, but the deadline was pushed back to April 14th, and more are expected to opt in. Originally, longevity pay was not included, but after some back and forth between FMEA and the district, they have agreed to include it in the pay. This means the payout will be greater than was originally calculated for some of you.

I sincerely hope we can settle this round of bargaining in time for teachers to get any raise included in retirement incentive calculations. We have begun to make progress in bargaining recently, but the district still has not offered a raise that the FMEA Executive Board and Bargaining Team would feel comfortable bringing to the membership to vote on. In May, Governor Brown will release his May Budget Revision, and if state education funding is revised upward at that time, it will make a bargaining agreement easier to reach. The district currently has a very large reserve, but

extreme declining enrollment has created a structural deficit, and significant cuts will likely be needed in the coming years, regardless of what kind of raise FMEA gets.

As we ride the ups and downs of public education, true tragedy hit the Rock Springs community near Shirakawa, as flooding destroyed the homes of nearly 75 FMSD families. The support from our teachers has been great: Shirakawa teachers displayed tremendous commitment to their students with actions like driving them to and from school each day, our teachers donated nearly \$2000 of their own money, and FMEA donated the rest so that all of our affected students could receive a \$100 gift card. These donations hardly match the need, but luckily there has been an outpouring of support from San Jose and beyond, and these families appear to now be receiving enough to begin rebuilding what they lost.

Thank you for supporting these families in need, and thank you for all your commitment and professionalism that I see throughout the district. You make me proud to be the FMEA President!

Sincerely,
Scott Shulimson

Contract Issues

6.2.3

Unit members shall be surveyed by site administrators and shall indicate grade level and subject preferences by April 1. Site Administrators shall publish the results of the survey, including names, within five (5) days. A tentative master schedule, including names, shall be posted and distributed by April 15. Whenever practicable, the unit member will be notified prior to publication of the on-site assignment and may request a conference with the site administrator and/or the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.

6.4

Unit members shall not be administratively transferred more than once in a two (2) year period. Any unit member who is involuntarily assigned to a different grade level shall not be involuntarily assigned to a different grade level again for at least two (2) years without the consent of the unit member except when the assignment is caused by declining enrollment, elimination of programs, or compliance with law e.g., Office of Civil Rights requirements.



Grievances

- There are no current grievances.
- FMEA Executive Board has voted to withdraw a request to take a discipline-related grievance to arbitration.

Trading Post

Clean Home For Rent!

- 3 bedrooms, 1.5 bath, garage, 2 driveways, huge yard, 5 parking spaces in front of house.
- Newly remodeled kitchen and bathrooms, A/C, central heat, washer and dryer available, hardwood floors, and mature fruit trees.
- Located in the newer home area near Meadows Elementary School.

Contact the property manager, Ashley Martine, by phone at (408) 278-8400 or by email at FrontierAshley@outlook.com.

Submitted by Darlene Chan.

The Big Lie Behind Trump's Education Budget by Jeff Bryant

Public school supporters are angry at President Trump's budget proposal, which plans to cut funding to the Department of Education by 13 percent – taking that department's outlay down to the level it was ten years ago. But the target for their anger should not be just the extent of the cuts but also how the cuts are being pitched to the public.

Trump's education budget cuts are aimed principally at federal programs that serve poor kids, especially their access to afterschool programs and high-quality teachers.

At the same time, Trump's spending blueprint calls for pouring \$1.4 billion into school choice policies including a \$168 million increase for charter schools, \$250 million for a new school choice program focused on private schools, and a \$1 billion increase for parents to send their kids to private schools at taxpayer expense.

The way the Trump administration is spinning this combination of funding cuts and increases – and the way nearly every news outlet is reporting them – is that there is some sort of strategically important balance between funding programs for poor kids versus “school choice” schemes, as if the two are equivalents and just different means to the same ends. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Shortly after Trump unveiled the plan, his Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos was quick to echo the false equivalency.

“The president promised to invest in our underserved communities and our increased investment in choice programs will do just that,” she is quoted in a report for U.S. News & World Report.

Another ardent proponent of vouchers and charter schools, Jeanne Allen of the Center for Education Reform, praised the plan, calling it “a significant step forward” for “the needs of children and families instead of programs and districts.”

The message being spun out of Trump's education budget is that it takes money away from those awful “adult interests” – like, you know, teachers to actually teach the students and buildings so students have somewhere to go after school to play sports, get tutored, or engage in music and art projects – in order to steer money to “the kids” who will get a meager sum of money to search for learning opportunities in an education system that is increasingly bereft of teachers and buildings.

Even competent education reporters are falling for this spin, writing that education policy is experiencing a “sea change in focus from fixing the failing schools to helping the students in the failing schools.”

However, there's evidence that federally funded efforts like

afterschool programs and class size reduction tend to lead to better academic results for low-income children, while the case for using school choice programs to address the education needs of poor kids is pretty weak.

School voucher programs, like the ones Trump and DeVos seem intent on funding, are particularly ineffective ways to address the education problems of poor kids. Indeed, these programs seem to not serve the interests of poor kids at all.

Studies of voucher programs in Wisconsin, Indiana, Arizona, and Nevada have found that most of the money from the programs goes to parents wealthy enough to already have their children enrolled in private schools.

Voucher programs rarely provide enough money to enable poor minority children to get access to the best private schools. And a new comprehensive study of vouchers finds evidence that vouchers don't significantly improve student achievement. What they do pose is greater likelihood that students who are the most costly and difficult to educate – low-income kids and children with special needs – will be turned away or pushed out by private schools that are not obligated to serve all students.

Charter schools, another program the Trump budget wants to ramp up funding for, also don't have a great track record for improving the education attainment of low-income students.

Perhaps the best case made for using charter schools to target the needs of low-income students comes from a study on the impact of charters in urban school systems conducted by research outfit CREDO in 2015. The study indeed found evidence of some positive impact of charters in these communities. But as my colleague at The Progressive Julian Vasquez Heilig points out, the measures of improvement, in standard deviations, are .008 for Latino students and .05 for African American students in charter schools.

“These numbers are larger than zero,” Heilig writes on his personal blog, “but you need a magnifying glass to see them. Contrast that outcome with policies such as pre-K and class size reduction which are far more unequivocal measures of success than charter schools. They have 400 percent to 1000 percent more statistical impact than charters.”

Indeed, choice programs in all their forms, at least in how they are being promoted by the Trump administration and its supporters, seem more interested in diverting money away from public schools than they are intent on delivering some sort of education relief to the struggles of poor families.

In the meantime, the negative, direct impact of Trump's proposed budget cuts on students, especially those living in low-income communities, will be all too real.

Board Briefs

January 10th

- There was a public hearing for the Voices Charter School petition renewal.
- The Board approved a Memorandum Of Understanding that added a 7th and 8th grade to Cornerstone Charter School to be affiliated with Alpha Charter School.

January 24th

- The Board passed a resolution establishing this as a "safe haven school district... committed to ensuring safe and inclusive learning environment for all students regardless of race, immigration status, religion, and sexual orientation."
- The Yale National Initiative participants shared their presentation.

February 14th

- The Board approved the 2017-8 and 2018-9 instructional calendars.
- The Board was updated on the actions of the Franklin-McKinley Children's Initiative.

February 28th

- Global Learner students were recognized, and Employee Spirit Awards were awarded.
- The Board was presented with an update on the Elementary PE and SEAL programs.

March 14th

- The district's Second Interim Budget Report was released. It shows a projected total ending balance of \$19.6M. That amount is projected to go down by approximately \$5M per year in the coming years due to declining enrollment.
- The Board has formally requested a waiver from the state to receive ADA and instructional minutes credit for McKinley and Shirakawa for February 22nd when they had to close early due to flooding.

FMEA Spring Calendar

April 8th FMEA Basketball Tourney @ Sylvandale

April 11th Bargaining

April 11th School Board @ 8pm

April 14th- April 23rd Spring Break

April 25th School Board @ 7pm

April 28th FMEA Literacy Fair @ Board Room

May 1st Rep Council

May 6th Bargaining

May 9th School Board @ 8pm

May 22nd Bargaining

May 19th FMEA End of Year Party @ Mt Hamilton

May 23rd School Board @ 7pm

June 5th Rep Council

June 6th Bargaining

June 13th School Board @ 7pm

June 16th Last Day Of School!!!

June 30th Final Day To Notify District If You Are Not Returning Next Year

August 15th First Teacher Day

August 22nd First Student Day



Other Bits and Pieces

Opportunities

- **CTA State Council:** There is an election coming up for a CTA State Council seat in our region. The three-year term begins in June. Alternates are also needed. If you are interested in running, contact Scott Shulimson.
- **FMEA Bargaining Team:** If you're interested in joining this important team, contact Scott Shulimson.

FMEA Student Events

- The FMEA Basketball Tourney is April 8th. We have a number of sites participating, but it would great to see students from all sites get to play!
- The FMEA Literacy Fair is April 28th. Submissions must be received by April 7th. Pony to Kristi Billings at Franklin.
- The FMEA Track Meet is May 6th at Sylvandale. It's time to start figuring out who your site's Coordinating Teacher will be for the track meet.

FMEA On Facebook

Join the FMEA Facebook Group! It's easy - just search "FMEA" on Facebook and request to join.



FMEA Text List

FMEA is moving towards using text message blasts. Text "@fmeamember" to number "81010" to sign up for FMEA text message alerts

Until next time!

Please email any articles, suggestions, and advertisements for the next issue of The Observer to hondita@gmail.com

The Observer is a publication of FMEA/CTA/NEA. Ideas presented by the editors are those of the editors and not of FMEA/CTA/NEA. Articles submitted by individuals solely represent the views of those individuals and not of FMEA/CTA/NEA.

Important Contacts



New FMEA Site: fmea.mobi

FMEA Contacts

| Name | Position | School Site | Email & Phone Number |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---|
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