

# Happy 2014!!

We hope you all got plenty of rest during your holiday break. We're now at the top of the school year roller coaster and its all downhill from here!



Now that school is back in session, we've got some challenges ahead of us. With that in mind, we have devoted this month's newsletter to address some of the concerns related to the upcoming budget cuts and the upcoming contract negotiations. We want everyone to be informed. When we get new information, we'll share it on our website



[wdmesp.wikispaces.com](http://wdmesp.wikispaces.com). This site is not just for members, anyone can access it. Here, along with budget information updates, we will be providing meeting minutes and information about upcoming contract negotiations. This information will also be made available to members via email.



**Applying for Jobs in the District:** Jan 2014, changes have been made to the district website job application site. If you want to apply for anything you'll need to submit your application on the website as if you are a first-time applicant and you must include job experience information. After that, you'll be able to create a profile.

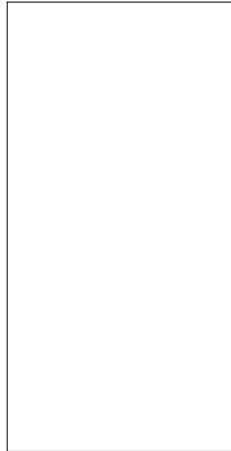


**NEA Member Insurance:** Please check to make sure you have a updated beneficiary designated for your complimentary life insurance that NEA provides its members. You can find that at [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com). The amount of insurance depends on if it occurred while working. In most cases the amount is relatively low, but every little bit helps during such times. You can get a detailed description of the benefit at [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com). There is also a copy on our website.



## YOU ARE ESSENTIAL!

This month's newsletter addresses the upcoming budget concerns. Be sure to take a look!



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WEST DES MOINES EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL  
YOU ARE ESSENTIAL!

## We can weather any storm

Normally our newsletters would be more upbeat, but circumstances are what they are and we want you to be prepared. We also want you to know the facts. With preparation and knowledge, we know we can weather any storm.

**No fear.** Folks, we don't want people to be full of fear and paranoia, AND this is not a time to lose faith in our employer or go about with a lot of trash-talking...after all, they are our employer, we need to respect them and their duties to the district (families, students, staff, etc.). I can't speak for everyone, but compared to other districts I believe we have a fairly good deal here. Certainly a better package than we had years ago.

**Don't give anyone reason to want to let you go!** I cannot emphasize this more. Carry a good, can-do attitude. We need to prove how essential we know we are and make it difficult for the district to consider cutting any one of us.

**We're already working...**Please know that we're already working in your behalf but we want to encourage you to contact us if you have any questions about your contract or even about the upcoming cuts. We'd much rather have you informed. Fear and lack of knowledge are the biggest factors in disagreements between staff and management. When we discuss things reasonably, things are much better for all parties involved.

**Remember we're here for you!** You can contact us by email at the contact information in this newsletter. Also on our website, we'll post budget news updates as we get them. Don't forget: we're stronger in numbers and you *are* essential!!



## Budget Woes

Many of you know about the upcoming budget concerns and that because of several factors, such as the loss of funding sources, the district has to cut \$6 million from the budget over the next 2 years. The fund from which the cuts will come is the general fund and, as many of you learned in the budget discussion meetings, this is also the fund from which nearly all salaries are paid (including ours).

### Scoring for prioritizing

In the budget information meetings we learned that the priority for these cuts will be determined using a scoring system. This is important because it will help us understand why choices will be made. When we look at the evaluation table they provided in the meetings, we can see that maintaining compliance with state & federal mandates, and the contracts for both teachers and ESP's are in the "must" category and will not be considered for scoring. This means that if they decide to cut personnel, it must be done according to the guidelines in those contracts. This also means that everyone's positions (teachers and ESP's) are still subject to the scoring process for prioritizing.

**Suggestions requested:** The district has requested suggestions for ways we could cut costs. All suggestions will be considered. Don't underestimate your ideas; it could be something as simple as limiting photocopies. Any efforts that can be made to cut costs may make it easier to avoid deeper cuts in areas that are important to us. You can pass along any suggestions to us at the contact information below.

**WDMESP** West Des Moines Educational Support Personnel—You Are Essential!!

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## More on the Budget

**What this means for you:** None of us really knows when we'll begin to see changes in this regard. History would suggest that the departments hardest hit by such cuts would be programs like music, art, drama and languages, associates and some areas in operations. In times past employees have been expected to do more with fewer people. Many other things, such as benefits, can be affected as well. You might be thinking, "Doesn't our contract protect us from having to pay for our benefits?" Well, for this contract year, it does, but we have another contract negotiation right around the corner and with this budget thing looming over their heads, it's not likely that the district is going to want to allow us much of anything in the way of wage increases. Our biggest concern is that we don't lose anything we already have. They may try to impose employee contributions to insurance and other benefits. Believe me; this has been tried during the past few years.

**Other possibilities:** We've talked about the possibility of cuts in personnel; did you ever think about the possibility of outsourcing? This is something the district has already used for some time for grounds-keeping. The reason outsourcing is attractive to employers is they don't have to worry about benefits. Benefits are a big deal because, like salaries, they come out of the general fund and costs the district until an employee either is terminated or has passed away (retirement still costs something). WDMESP has been actively opposing its use, but it is still a very real possibility.

## What to do in the meantime...

Obviously the effects of this has yet to be seen. One thing we need to do is to make sure that we are worth our wage and-then-some. We need to be the best we can be at what we do. We need to do our jobs without complaining but if there's a problem, we need to present it in a calm and professional manner. We need to be sure the quality of our work is such that no one could possibly find anything wrong with it. We need to be so good at what we do that they cringe at the idea of getting rid of any one of us! Realistically we can't guarantee this will prevent staff cuts, but rest assured, it will make it more difficult to make that choice.

**Know your contract.** Get it out and read it so you know whether you're being treated fairly within the contract provisions. If don't have a copy of the contract, you can find a pdf copy online in a couple places: First, on the district intranet site, second on the WDMESP website at [wdmesp.wikispaces.com](http://wdmesp.wikispaces.com) and if that doesn't work, you can request a copy from information listed in this newsletter.

**Support WDMESP.** I know that sounds like a plug, but think about some of the things I mentioned earlier. What do you suppose would have happened if WDMESP hadn't been there to negotiate for you? I know for a fact the raises you've been getting wouldn't have been nearly as high. I also know for a fact that you would be paying toward the insurance you currently get for free. In addition, some of you wouldn't be getting benefits because of your varied hours. We're already dealing with outsourcing; how much more could happen? We've seen things like this with other districts (like Detroit). If it can happen there, it can happen here. This is probably a time when WDMESP is going to be most important to you, especially with new contract negotiations around the corner.

