

Budget Woes...

Round 1: We are now experiencing our first round of budget woes. They went through the list. Several things that we expected would happen didn't, and several things that we didn't expect would happen did. Many of our colleagues are unhappy. We want all of you to know that we're with you through all of this, and that while we can't prevent any of it, we've been working to ensure our master contract is being followed to protect you all in the process.

Waiting is the hardest part: We all read through the lists and looked at the scoring. Those who saw that their positions wouldn't be cut, breathed a sigh of relief, and then prayed that our co-workers' positions wouldn't be cut either. Some of you vividly remember previous reductions in support staff (RIF) that were nearly as drastic, and by summer, many were rehired in other areas of the district. This is not to say that all will be rehired, but it is to say that there is hope. Waiting on word from HR is probably the worst part. First you wait until the end of the year, then you wait for that phone call in which they offer you the positions available. Seniority is considered in all departments, but the contract does not allow anyone to bump others from their positions. The positions available will be a direct result of student numbers and the needs within the district expected for 2014-15. This means that administration will not know what is needed until after that information comes in. This can take awhile and in the meantime, you wait.

It effects all of us: 2014-15 may bring some new challenges and our workload may increase because of staff reductions. This is a time for us all to support each other through teamwork and positive attitudes. Being bitter or resentful will only make things worse for all of us (we've all been there). When we find we are having difficulties performing our duties for lack of personnel, we need to express our concerns to our supervisors with positive (not sappy) attitude, letting them know we are willing to do our assigned tasks, but need suggestions on getting them done. We'll be appreciated for it and much better received. I'm not saying things will be all bluebirds and butterflies, but speaking our minds in a more positive and professional way will reap much better results.

Change is inevitable... words of encouragement for those in anticipation.



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WEST DES MOINES EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL
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Finishing 2013-14

What an amazing school year it's been! We've had extremes in several areas, the most obvious of those is the weather and the district budget cuts.



How wonderful it was that the community turned out at the school board meeting to fight for several of the special ed associate positions. It was a greatly reassuring that the community understands how essential support staff is to the success of the students. Unfortunately they weren't able to fight for all whose positions are being cut. We can hope, however, that those people will be placed in other positions.



Know your contract: As many of you know, we have recently finished negotiating with the district and have ratified our master contract. This is the agreement between West Des Moines Community Schools and all West Des Moines Educational Support Personnel. WDMESP's executive board works with district administration to maintain this contract. This is where to find information about wages, holidays, transfers, leaves, etc. The new contract will be given to each support staff in every department regardless if you are a member. Everyone is entitled to a copy. Copies are also available through the district intranet online and we have a copy on our website at wdmesp.wikispaces.com. If you have questions about its content, or need a hard copy, please let us know at the contact information listed in this newsletter.



Remember we're here for you! You can contact us by at the contact information below (email, phone, Facebook). Also on our website, we'll post budget and other updates as we get them. But if we miss something, don't hesitate to let us know; we're here to help. Also, don't forget: we're stronger in numbers and we can do so much more together!



YOU ARE ESSENTIAL!



West Des Moines Educational Support Personnel—You Are Essential!

Ph.: 515-240-2832 - wdm_esp@yahoo.com—Website: wdmesp.wikispaces.com
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New stuff

Meet our new board: Recently we held elections to fill open positions on our executive board. We needed to fill 3 at-large rep positions along with the positions of president and vice president. The at-large rep positions are elected yearly; both the vice president and president positions were open because our former president, Marlene Bright, and our former vice president Mark Marco, both retired this year. Becky Duchesneau ran unopposed to finish Marlene Bright's term for president which will end in August 2015. We will have elections again in 2015 to fill the positions of president and treasurer. The following is the executive board resulting from our 2014 elections:

- ◆ Becky Duchesneau—President until August 2015
- ◆ John Fry—Vice President until August 2016
- ◆ Wanda Borger-Secretary until August 2016
- ◆ Becky Duchesneau-Treasurer until August 2015
- ◆ Cathie Moratz-At-large rep until August 2015
- ◆ Terriane Scully-At-large rep until August 2015
- ◆ Susan Lykken-At-large rep until August 2015

You may contact any or all of these folks if you have questions via district email or the contact information listed below.

Support staff business directory: Doesn't it make sense to promote your business amongst your co-workers? We want to help you get the word out. If you have a business you want to promote, tell us about it. We'll put it in our newsletter, on our Facebook page and on our website.

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Opportunities to help

Representative training: Currently there are nearly 500 support staff employed by the district in several departments, buildings and shifts. Ideally we would like to have someone in every building for every shift in every department, but realistically, with our current membership numbers, we just don't see a way for that to happen. But we can train those interested in learning how to share the vision and purpose of WDMESP with others (This may even be as simple as just being able to tell co-workers who to contact when they need help). An informative meeting will be held for those interested. Please contact Becky Duchesneau at 515-240-2832 for details.

Meetings, meetings, meetings: This is a great opportunity for anyone who likes being in the loop! The recent round of retirements have created openings in our member representation at monthly school board meetings, board policy meetings, and ISEA meetings. Our goal is to have at least 2 members representing WDMESP at each meeting. Please contact Becky Duchesneau @ 515-240-2832 or email wdm_esp@yahoo.com for scheduling and details.

Membership committee: We could use a few people in this area. These are the folks that will contact new employees to welcome them to district employment and tell them a little about WDMESP. They also will keep track of employee contact lists and help coordinate communication with non-members. This can be a fun and interesting way to get to know your fellow co-workers! Contact Becky Duchesneau @ 515-240-2832 for details.

Heard it through the Grapevine

We need your eyes and ears: Ok folks, we're not doing the cloak and dagger thing, but we are working to improve communication. We need your help! Whether you're a member or not, we want you to feel free to let us know what's going on in your department/area. If you have praises for a co-worker—shout it out! If you have an idea to make things better—let it be known! If you see something that needs attention or have concerns about procedures or safety, then by all means (especially if you don't know who to inform) tell us and we'll make sure it goes to the right people. Call 515-240-2832, email wdm_esp@yahoo.com.

It's not us against them: There's just no point in that kind of thinking. Unfortunately it exists in many workplaces. We're all here for the same purpose and that is to provide a safe and proper learning environment where our students can succeed and go on to be the future leaders in our community. If relationships between support staff and management don't go well, we need to work to improve that situation. I realize this sounds a little like its coming from management, but it's just common sense.

Communication is key: Making assumptions about something will lead to hard feelings and failure. We can think all kinds of negative things about the intents and actions of another person, and then when its all over, we discover we were completely wrong and that the other person had no idea there was any problem. This happens all the time! We should always assume positive intent. Ask yourself, what is the true mission of that person? Their mission should be to ensure the success of the students. Therefore, we should try to receive direction and critique with that in mind. However, if we are certain there is personal friction (it happens), this should be discussed diplomatically with that person; then if nothing is resolved, it should be taken to their direct supervisor and so on up the line *without skipping anyone* in the line. This is an important step in maintaining good working relationship and avoids our being labeled as insubordinate.

