**Mesquite Education Association**

**FR Questions – January 2019**

1. **What is the district doing in regards to the frequent interruptions in our internet? The district is pushing us to go more technology based, but when your entire lesson is built around technology and the internet goes down, we're left scrambling to figure something else out.**

We can assume this question directly relates to the two recent outages, both involving our ISP on their end. We are working with our ISP to prevent future occurrences. The network has an uptime of 98.87% since the beginning of school. There are four instances totaling 44.08 hours of limited external resources. 43.5 of which were out of our control. Any issues concerning a specific app or device needs to be reported to the Help Desk.

1. **Why are some teachers excluded from receiving the holiday bonus?**

No teacher employed by Mesquite ISD was left out of the one-time pay.  If a teacher did not receive the holiday bonus, they need to notify their Principal.

1. **When a student-run (890) club raises money and is forced to order a case of drinks from Dr. Pepper (ex: $4.50 for a case of Deja Blue), where does that money go? How much money goes towards Dr. Pepper's profits?**

All of the money goes to pay Dr. Pepper. That is the price for the drinks.

1. **Why does the district post jobs for and then hire groundskeepers during the winter when there is little grounds-keeping to be done? Shouldn't these jobs be posted and hired right before spring saving the district money?**

The grounds keepers work year round doing many projects to maintain the appearance of the district. They are often involved in other projects during the winter months.

1. **I was told the "inside" rooms at my school would not receive the easy locks for a quick lockdown if needed. At my campus, we have students in these smaller rooms throughout the day. Will we be able to get the new locks for our rooms too?**

The classrooms that were given the one push locks are all classrooms.  If there is a concern regarding a classroom, the principal may speak with facilities. All schools are secure from the front door.

1. **How long should a student be in ISIP before the offense is documented in skyward?**

There is no law, policy, or regulation concerning the timeline for inputting discipline consequences into the student data management system.

1. **It is really difficult to keep a class of 30-35 quiet while 5-10 are taking a test during Finals week in December. Is there any way we can eliminate exemptions in the fall since the kids have to be here anyway?**

The exemption policy was recently reviewed by the Administrative Services Regulations Committee. This policy is an attendance incentive offered to students. There is research to support this as a very effective way to reward students for maintaining a solid grade and consistently attending classes. If monitoring students during semester exams is an issue, please talk with your building principal about creative ways to group students needing to take exams.

1. **Is there anything that the district can do to keep students from being able to Google answers or use programs such as Quizlett to find answers online and cheat on Edgenuity and other online assignments?**

The most effective deterrent to this behavior by students is active teacher monitoring in the classroom. In addition, the district has piloted an Edgenuity Lock Down browser at all campuses this last semester. With the browser test concluded, the browser is available for any Edgenuity only Windows computer. Please use this link to request to be added to the group for Lock Down browser users or to request a generic Chromebook student logon for Edgenuity only: <http://bit.do/MISD_LockDown>.

1. **Are teachers & all other staff allowed to bring their own children with them while they are working Professional Learning Days and/or during other MISD work days, due to their children not being in school for the day?**

Generally, children being on campus during staff development days is discouraged for a whole assortment of reasons. However, with some exceptions, a principal has the discretion to work with a teacher as needed.

1. **Why do our administrators get pulled off campus so frequently? We need them on campus helping with discipline and administration. Can the information that they are getting at these meetings be sent in an email?**

When we have meetings for principals and assistant principals generally multiple sessions are offered in order to avoid this very situation.

1. **Why is there a lack of diversity in leadership in the Technical Services Department?**

As is true with many of our job postings, large numbers of people apply of all races and ethnicities. Leadership positions draw an even larger group of applicants because of the status of the job and the increased level of pay. It is impossible to interview every applicant for every job that’s posted. In the Tech Services department applicants are screened and interviewed based on their level of experience, specialized skills, and knowledge they have as it relates to the specific job.

1. **When will the hiring process start for the new middle school and how will teachers be selected?**

There are several things that must take place before teacher selections are made for middle school #10 (i.e. choose a name for the new school, select a school mascot, select a new principal, etc.). Plans are in place to open the new middle school in the fall of 2020. After the new principal is named, he or she will work with our personnel department with hiring teachers and other staff members in the spring of 2020. Teachers whose jobs are affected by reduced enrollment at schools as a result of the opening of the new middle school will be considered first in moving to the new school. Others will be required to get on the transfer list if they are interested in transferring to the new middle school.

1. **What is the reason for discontinuing the TASC card for tax-exempt health savings? The TaxSaver Plan FSA card is not as user friendly, requires more paperwork, and will freeze use of the card while waiting on paperwork.**

With the implementation of the new benefits enrollment system to TBX (The Benefits Expert), TASC was no longer a preferred insurance vendor. If we had continued with the TASC, plan participants would have seen a 400% rate increase on the debit card feature per month. TaxSaver TPA is helping Mesquite ISD plan and plan participants remain compliant with IRS regulations, and because TRS ActiveCare health plan would not share claims information with TaxSaver in order to true-up the claims process and help ensure plan compliance, TaxSaver has to have itemized receipts for expenses incurred by the debit card. The flexible spending plan is governed by IRS rules, and as long as eligible expenses are being submitted for reimbursement, plan participants should not expect to have their account locked. TaxSaver will always send an email to the employee if there is a question or concern regarding a claim. It is very important that plan participants read all emails sent to them from TaxSaver and respond to them in a timely manner so as not to further delay the processing of their claim.

1. **Is there any way of getting out of the TaxSaver health savings plan before next year's insurance sign-up? The current vendor is not customer friendly and makes it nearly impossible to have claims paid. The district should switch back to what we had, or seek other vendors to replace this plan.**

The TaxSaver Plan is governed by Section 125 guidelines (guidelines can be found on the MISD website under Benefits). The dollars that are deducted from your paycheck are pre-taxed. The only way to make changes to this coverage outside of a benefits annual enrollment opportunity is by completing paperwork in the Benefits Office within 31 days of a Section 125 qualifying event (i.e. birth, marriage, divorce). Please note, the Benefits Department and Benefits Committee review benefits plans each year and make decisions based on what is best for the district and its employees as a whole. The flexible spending plan is governed by IRS rules and regulations. As stated in the previous question, the new third party administrator is trying to help Mesquite ISD and its plan participants remain compliant by properly documenting your pre-taxed dollars that are being used.

1. **Why is the new unreimbursed medical account company, TaxSaver, difficult about paying medical claims? Each time we use our card to pay a medical bill, they ask for more documentation. They even froze our card at one point not letting us use the card.**

TaxSaver is helping the district and its plan participants remain compliant with IRS regulations. For assistance with a claim or card issue, TaxSaver customer service will be happy to assist you. If you feel you need further assistance, please contact our Benefits Department. They will research your claim further for you. The flexible spending account is to be used for eligible expenses within a dedicated plan year. Services rendered in prior years are not eligible for reimbursement. All claims must be submitted with appropriate documentation to substantiate the claim. For a list of eligible expenses, you can visit the IRS website at <https://www.irs.gov/> or [www.taxsaverplan.com](http://www.taxsaverplan.com).

1. **Is it possible to get to the upper levels of a pay grade? If so, how?**

MISD did a salary study a few years ago with the help of TASB in an effort to provide us with an equitable compensation plan for all areas of employment. Yes, it is possible to get to the upper levels of pay, however, a number of things are considered when determining where a person is placed on a pay scale. Tenure alone is not the only deciding factor. Many other things are taken into consideration such as duties and responsibilities, job demands, time requirements, and the number of people supervised to name a few. All of these factors play an important part in making those decisions.