**Mesquite Education Association**

**FR Questions – January 2020**

1. **What can we do to bring in more substitutes to our district? Could we possibly require other personnel (besides classroom teachers) to cover classes? If so, that teachers are not constantly having to cover others' absences.**

Many of our subs have been able to find higher paying jobs with better benefits elsewhere due to the current state of our economy. We typically see an influx of sub applicants when the economy takes a down swing. Principals and assistant principals (with principal approval) have been given the authority to select staff members to cover classes on their respective campuses. It is our hope that all staff members are willing to help out in times of great need however that is not always the case on many campuses.

1. **If the district is already short on subs, why do we have department trainings during school hours on a Friday?**

As a district, we do not make it a point to schedule trainings on Fridays. We encourage campuses to follow this same practice as well.

1. **Has MISD thought about doing monetary incentives for substitutes to work on Mondays and Fridays?**

We are currently working on an incentive proposal for our substitute teachers. If approved, it will be implemented in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year.

1. **Would the District be willing to put a satellite office on the south side of town to serve campuses that are not close to the Administration building on Towne Crossing for Purchasing/Business office needs?**

If approved, it will be implemented in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year.

1. **What are the rules for school employees to post pictures of students on personal social media accounts?**

School district employees **should not** post pictures of students on their personal social media pages. If anyone is doing this it should cease immediately.

1. **Is there a way that we can have Skyward send automatic messages to parents and students when a zero is entered for an assignment or the grade falls below a 70 for high school campuses?**

Parents currently have the option to set up preferences in Family Access that allow them to receive alerts for missing assignments and/or grades within a particular range. Parents would still need to go to Family Access to view grades.

1. **Why is it when a counselor, administrator or para is asked or volunteers to cover a class they are not compensated the same as teachers are?**

This decision is left to the discretion of the campus principal.

1. **Some campus principals call mandatory meetings before or after school on certain days, and they also call mandatory meetings for only STARR testing grades. Is this allowed?**

Yes, principals can call meetings before or after school. Teachers are on salary, not hourly employees.

1. **Are principals allowed to take our planning period to plan as a team or to go over scores?**

Planning and reviewing data to plan for instruction are legitimate uses of conference time.

1. **Are principals allowed to use our only planning periods to watch the tardy station?**

Principals may require teachers, on an intermittent basis, duties during their conference time.

1. **Since we implemented the blackout days, has it helped with getting substitutes on our campuses?**

Our Blackout Policy has helped to some extent however we would like to see more consistency on all of our campuses in implementing this policy. At the end of the 2017-2018 school year we had over 1800 fewer absences than we did the previous year after implementation of our Blackout Policy. The number of absences on Blackout days increased slightly in 2018-2019 as well as this school year. In order to see a significant decline in employee absences, all stakeholders must work together in doing their part in following our Blackout Policy.

1. **What is the district doing to fix our technology/internet issues?**

Our Internet provider, Zayo, continues to provide our Mesquite ISD with better than 99% uptime on internet services. Our most recent district wide internet outage on 1/8/2020 which lasted 2 hours and 45minutes, affected half of the District. On 12/10/2019, our server room experienced a power surge that caused all of the district servers to go off line. This outage also affected some of the internet services and lasted on average 4 hours for most services and up to 6 hours for a few services. Over the past year we had three other district wide internet issues with a combined total of 36 outage hours. We do understand the importance of keeping all internet and other network services available and will continue to study and implement ways to improve. Last year we doubled our bandwidth capability by adding a second connection path to Zayo. This additional bandwidth and connection will allow for continued internet service in the event one connection goes offline. We also improved throughput on our internet content filters by purchasing and installing separate encryption/decryption hardware. This will reduce the load on the content filter hardware and allow for faster connections to the internet.

1. **Is MISD violating Texas Education Code, Section 21.404, by taking away a teachers conference time with required PLC Meetings?**

Principals may require teachers, on an intermittent basis, duties during their conference time.

1. **Is my school violating Texas Education Code 21.405 by making it mandatory for me to eat lunch with my students on certain occasions?**

Principals may require teachers, on an intermittent basis, duties during their conference time.

1. **Is planning school-wide events during my conference period, and making participation mandatory a violation of Texas Education Code 21.404?**

Principals may require teachers, on an intermittent basis, duties during their conference time.

1. **Is the district looking in to ways to fix the intermittent internet problems, particularly Google, in a more long-term way? What steps are being taken to keep this from continually occurring?**

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1. **Has the district thought about adding minutes to the school day so we could add an extra week to summer?**

Adding minutes to the school day to lengthen the summer break has not been considered because teachers are required to work 187 days -- regardless of the number of days that students attend school. Therefore, adding time to the school day would not lengthen the summer for teachers or allow them to work fewer days in the school year. Extending the school day may also cause scheduling conflicts for after-school extracurricular activities.

1. **Can you tell me how many state and local days 220 paras and 226 paras get?**

Paraprofessionals who work 220 and 226 days are entitled to 5 state personal days, 1 local personal day and 2 local sick days each year. This information is also provided each month on your pay stub.

1. **Why is so much emphasis put on DCP's?**

Checkpoints are about changing instruction to meet students’ needs. The correlation between the district checkpoints and state assessment results for the past two years have been highly correlated. The District-level Data Analysis Team (DAT) meetings for campuses after checkpoints provide additional support and resources as needed. Checkpoints are used for the following reasons: to assure the scope and sequence of the curriculum is being followed; to give objective, valid, and timely data that can be used to adjust instruction and focus interventions; to help campuses identify what works well so that strategies can be more widely replicated to improve student success; to inform the principal of who needs intervention and support, first for teachers, then for students; to measure value added; and, to keep everyone focused on what is important – student learning. The Checkpoint calendar is created well in advance of campus calendars. If there are conflicts, the dates the checkpoints are given can be shifted a few days either way to meet campus needs.

1. **What are the rules for students doing re-coop hours for classes missed?**

When students have not been in attendance for 90 percent of the days a class is offered, MISD has procedures in place for students to regain their credit as specified in Local Policy FEC. Students may complete additional assignments, attend tutorial sessions on Saturdays or before and after school, or maintain attendance standards for the rest of the semester. The attendance committee meets to determine the best plan of action for students and reconvenes at a later date to consider restoring credit for those students who have earned a passing grade and have fulfilled the requirements established by the attendance committee. Students are not permitted to do recoup/tutoring hours during the school day.

1. **What can be done about the sewage issues on a campus?**

In the past month we have been on 2 calls for drinking fountains at West upstairs A hall and downstairs A. Both times they have been unstopped and are being monitored daily for any more issues. The sewer has been cleaned out to those fountains.

1. **MEA: Can you explain why certain positions received a 1,000.00 extra in the new pay scale and what determined who received the extra money?**

The money that our district received as a result of HB-3 legislation came with a variety of restrictions as to how it could be used. The guidelines were followed as described by TEA.

1. **What are the solutions to an extremely cold and uncomfortable work environment?**

The hallways do not have conditioned air. During extreme cold days we have been working with Cenergistics to start the heat earlier in the mornings so the campuses can be comfortable when school starts.