



Metro Regional Bargaining Council Update

As we've said, our local associations are working together to ensure that all our members are on the same page as we work through not only a difficult legislative session, but challenging bargaining as well.

You've heard about school districts' ideas for budget cuts this year. In our MRBC emails so far, we've addressed furlough days; salary schedule changes, and shorter school weeks as districts' likely solutions to budget problems. We aren't saying districts ARE going to do any of these things nor that our locals will agree to them. But we are saying that these are the things districts are already considering. You know that because you've read and heard about it.

Districts may try to save money by CONTRACTING OUT (subcontracting or outsourcing) services to private industry. A few districts in Colorado did this many years ago with specific services provided to students by Education Support Professionals (ESP) members, such as food services and bus transportation. But in this distressed economy, districts may decide that this is a good idea for a variety of school employee jobs. The Westminster School Board (Adams County District 50) is considering whether to contract out food/nutrition services. Our local, the Westminster Education Association, led by President Melissa Walsh, is organizing members right now to prevent this from happening.

Other districts may have ideas about outsourcing in tough economic times, thinking they will save money and get labor costs off their backs for:

- student bus transportation (all students, some students, students with disabilities)
- facilities management and custodial services
- warehouse and supply functions, including purchasing
- school and district building maintenance, e.g., heating, plumbing, repairs, painting, landscaping
- school nurses
- substitute teachers
- teachers of special needs students, especially those who work with students who have severe disabilities
- accounting, payroll and billing, and other personnel/HR functions
- information technology services
 - security services

We need to be vigilant for districts' proposals on outsourcing. The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a think-tank similar to the Independence Institute, says, "Done correctly, privatization can and does save money and often improves the quality of services for school districts willing to implement this cutting-edge management technique. Best of all, the savings realized can be invested in efforts that more directly impact the classroom experience of our children."

Sound good? Only if you don't realize that private companies save money on employee costs because they do not offer the same caliber of wages, benefits, and working conditions our collective bargaining agreements have guaranteed for Association members.

The Legislature has already voted on cuts for the current school year (2009-10), taking back \$110M from districts and not funding increased student enrollment to the tune of \$20M. This was done early in the legislative session despite legislators getting hundreds of calls and emails from Association members, asking them to uphold Amendment 23. Maybe we did not speak loud enough? There's time for that this spring as the biggest budget cuts will be proposed soon, and we will need Association members to come to the Capitol for CEA Lobby Days to talk to Senators and Representatives about preserving and increasing, not cutting K-12 public school funding.

No local association is an island. All of us are stronger than any of us alone. Let that be our mantra.

This is fifth in a series of informational emails for members of the 14 local associations in the CEA Metro Regional Bargaining Council (MRBC).