

MASS SCHOOL SIZE CAUCUSES
MASS/MCASE Fall Conference 2016
September 20, 2016

Ed Camp Style Topic Discussion - Please choose 4-5 topics at the consensus of your group for discussion. Please list topics chosen under your class size caucus and take notes under each topic. There will be nothing to turn in, please just fill out the Google doc. Example discussion topics; Recruitment and Retention (Health Insurance, vacant positions), ESSA Implementation, great things happening in your school, school facilities, etc.

Class AA Caucus

Bus Drivers: Great Falls and Bozeman are experiencing bus driver shortages. We compared bus driver hourly rates. Great Falls is looking at bus GFPS system called Zonar that allows parents to track their kids' buses via an app.

Substitutes: The availability of qualified substitutes continues to be a concern. We discussed teacher attendance issues that exacerbate the problem. Teacher attendance incentives were discussed.

Title II Exempt Employees: Title 2, Chapter 18, Part 6 of MCA regarding leave time was discussed. This may affect the way districts have classified nurses, OTs, PTs and SLPs, and the requirements for vacation and sick leave. Changes may need to be made retroactively. See MTSBA Connect Digest from September 16, 2016.

TOE/TEAMS Deadlines: Can't start the TEAMS until start the TOE. AA districts hire throughout September so can't accurately complete the TOE until then and can't start TEAMS which makes the November 1 deadline very difficult. It was suggested that we write a letter to Superintendent Juneau as a group to discuss the need for an extension. Rob Watson will draft a letter asking for a November 15 deadline for AA districts.

Accreditation Rules Around Class Size: It was also suggested that districts look at content standards variances to address class size issues. This group will continue to keep this on our quarterly meeting agendas.

TRS Volunteer Rules: The TRS Fact Sheet #4 was reviewed. Bozeman has addressed this in the past and will communicate how they handled it in their district.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Missoula on November 4. We will be touring their art program. We also discussed meeting on the Day of Advocacy, March 13. Rob's assistant will send out a poll for mid-winter dates in Helena. Butte may be a site for a spring meeting.

Class A Caucus-

Our first topic was bacon.

Recruitment of teacher- Andy reported a 63% turnover in the last few years. John Rouse stated that Browning recruited 42 teachers this past summer and 30+ the summer before.

There was a discussion about teachers leaving at the last moment and the fact that OPI doesn't do anything.

A couple of us mentioned that we have added penalty clauses to our teaching contracts with financial penalties. Others reported that they have been told that these clauses are not enforceable.

Comments were made concerning the difficulty in finding special education teachers. Questions were raised concerning the 150 day rule regarding retirees. Randy pointed that they can sub for 45 days during that 150 day period as long as they don't sign any contract. Can't be a long time sub.

John Rouse suggested that we approach the state to change the 150 day rule. Leland supported the idea.

Our group agreed that recruiting bus drivers and substitutes is a problem.

Laurel is offering a stipend of \$1,000 at the end of the year for bus drivers.

Frenchtown pays training costs for bus drivers if they agree to work for one year.

We discussed the difficulty in finding and keeping paraeducators.

Next topic was building infrastructure

Randy mentioned difficulty getting contractors. Leland stated that their problem is not having commercial real estate to share the tax burden. Andy stated that Havre is looking at improvements. Lewistown passed two building reserve levies and continues to upgrade the buildings. Glendive and Polson continue to work to improve facilities.

Health insurance

Columbia Falls is going to a Cost Plus firm for the hospitalization costs.

He stated that Nine hospitals are now doing a cost plus approach.

One district reported a 22% increase in insurance.

We discussed the possibility of a bill that would allow schools to join the state pool. Randy talked about the last time they tried Ship proposal.

Discussed the possibility of having a permissive levy to offset cost of insurance increases. Randy is offering a high deductible plan.

Negotiations

Got into a discussion about negotiations. Most are being held up over language issues. Browning superintendent reported that the Browning classified workers are asking for an 18% increase over three years. Leland talked about the issue of retirement incentive language. Their district does a matching retirement option for a group of people. There is a grandfathered group of some 35 employees that are eligible for this. There is a different plan for new employees coming in.

Discussed the sick leave buyout amounts.

There is a lot of variation in what districts are offering. The number of discretionary days ranges widely as well. Dillon has unlimited sick leave.

Concussions

Randy talked about a doctor's statement that districts need to have a certified helmet fitter on staff.

Lawsuits

A kid put a Trump banner on the back of the bus and then he carried in front of the stand. A parent wants to sue the school district. The discussion shifted to streakers.

Andy said "Other than everything is great...and hello to the Dom."

Andy is our write in candidate for MASS prez.

- **Class B Caucus**

- Facilities - Boilers, Bonds, and Building Reserve funds
 - a. Look at square footage for building projects
 - b. AA bonds in state using state aid creating a decrease in direct state aid.
 - c. ADA issues for aging buildings
 - d. Legislative issues for facilities
 - i. Grant process not fair to districts
 - ii. Use a fair process to determine need for schools
 - iii. Education groups need to stay together MT-PEC
 - iv. Governors race and other elections will determine lead

- Recruitment and Retention
 - a. Counselors

- b. Paraprofessionals
 - c. District clerks
 - d. Custodial
 - e. Bus drivers
- Substitutes
 - a. 40/80 day TF
 - b. 135 day Poplar
 - c. 75/85 Deer Lodge
- SPED CoOp
 - a. Revenues 5,000 fees to schools DL
 - b. Baker/Forsyth 80% of costs
 - c. Same thing with other costs
 - d. OT/PT Mileage costs paid by one district for coop
 - e. Transportation of students
- Go guardian for student devices
- Title I and GF money to pay for devices
- Digital licenses for books
- Digital copyright for books are more current
- Benefits for administrators
 - a. Health Insurance
 - b. Life insurance
 - c. Montana Medical insurance
 - d. Day meals /IRS regulations

Class C Caucus

Recruitment and Retention.

Opening up the licensure process for candidates to help make it easier.

Teaching is harder in class C schools due to multiple preps, etc...

Some out of state educators may not be the quality that we want, even if they are licensed.

We need regional teaching programs so we can keep kids in our region.

The University system is currently keeping about half of the money earmarked for student loan forgiveness.

There is a bill for loan forgiveness targeting rural schools that will be introduced in the next session - could be important.

Ability to let the person retire and come back and teach with retirement would be beneficial to small schools.

Possibility of getting student teachers in our schools by paying for student teaching semester and housing.

Need to make sure our University personnel are communicating regularly with regional superintendents so they understand our needs.

Make sure we think out of the box in getting teachers.

MREA - There is no one silver bullet to solve this, we need to put all ideas forward to help get teachers. Campaigning and advertising would help.

Insurance

There is a feeling that the schools should be able to permissive levy for insurance.

Legislators are wary of the permissive levy because of potential for abuse.

MREA was asked if they could help us get moving forward on a permissive levy for health insurance.

Miscellaneous

Extended contracts for certain personnel were discussed. Stipends or extended contracts for MBI Team members, or other training.

Benefits to people other than money are important, place, maternity leave, benefits, etc...

The all groups in one room format did not work well at all. Hard to hear.

Creative contract to be able to send people to conferences or development that is in the best interests of the school.

Set aside money for development that is at their discretion.

Set aside for moving expenses.

Some offer signing bonuses.

Pay for both teacher and a spouse to come for an interview.

Pay scale that allows them to catch up to years of service when coming in at a lower number of years by giving two years per year until they are caught up.

Number of usernames and passwords from OPI is ridiculous - can we please go to one per district or school.

It is pointless to send the county superintendent teaching licenses - just another hoop to jump through for no reason.

Discussion about resignation penalties in contracts.

There was a thank you to the group for getting back on list serves.

K-8 Caucus

The eleven members of the K-8 caucus combined some issues for discussion. The following bullet points represent the comments and discussion in these areas.

Recruitment and retention

- Recruitment and retention does not pose as big of a problem for us right now but there is a concern that with rising insurance costs, we will not be able to keep our teachers as they will be taking home less money as insurance costs rise.
- Is it possible for MEA-MFT to incentivize teacher recruitment efforts and preparation programs?
- MREA is exploring housing options for districts in remote areas.
- Senator Tester has championed loan forgiveness language for rural schools.

- There are difficulties with hiring specialists.
- Most in the group feel that being close to bigger cities helps in their recruitment efforts.
- Some schools benefit from hosting student teachers.
- “People do not want to leave the valleys they grew up in.” philosophy among new candidates
- Building from within has limited success as well as the hiring from out of state.
- The question was asked if it is a perception problem with the profession? Do we market ourselves correctly?
- It’s not a money problem. Contract terms and compensation is among the best in most areas of the state.
- What can legislature do for loan forgiveness?
- Rise 4 Montana are addressing many of these issues
- We should partner with the Department of Commerce to find possible solutions to our outreach efforts.
- Ease of transition for professional licensure is an obstacle.
- Alternative pathways should be supported for educators with experience,
- If requiring Montana Law then make the class focus on Montana rather than a one week review of Montana.
- People wanting to come to the profession after they retire are meeting too many roadblocks and we are missing a potential resource.
- Caution** We must hire educators. Not just anyone.
- How could our professional organizations deliver required law and budget credits without going through the university system?
- There is an underlying thought that higher ed. is not supporting Public educators or their professional organizations.
- This also influences coaches, sponsors and club leader positions
- Is anyone requiring non-tenured staff to coach at least three activities?.
- One school does with the blessing from MEA-MFT
- One concern is it takes away from concentrating on the classroom
- This is not a problem in Wyoming because the profession supports resource extraction which produces funding to support education.

ESSA

- The fed. is still struggling with the process and definitions- waiting for something concrete.
- It should be something we already collect. Don’t add anything new.
- At the next meeting the state will be giving us their recommendation. We anticipate having some input but not direct control.
- What data areas do we want to collect?
- Will the exception clause have any meaning for our state?

School Facilities

- Follow the Wyoming model- bulk purchasing with acting districts.
- Formula funding creates more for larger ANB

- More funding is going to high school districts over the K-8 districts.
- If smaller districts are not writing grants, they can't be upset for not receiving more funding.
- Concern for not having standards for new building construction. Recommendations for specific membership numbers.
- Needing preschool recommendations for facility conversion and construction.
- Some bonding efforts have been doubled but still not enough.
- Quality School Grant tied to the new funding formula- how does Intercap loans play into this?
- Can we consider longer funding terms to reduce the annual pinch felt by communities?

Native American Leaders Caucus

No supts in attendance