

September 11, 2020

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

MJUSD AND MTA

Introduction

Negotiations of an MOU between the District and the MTA (Modoc Teachers Association) to address COVID-19 and potential impacts on working conditions continue. There have been four sessions to date, the first of which was in early August.

Distance Learning

The District believes that distance learning has imposed an additional workload on staff that has these students on their roster. This is why the District proposed compensation to staff members for having to learn distance learning delivery methods, prepare distance learning lessons, and deliver instruction via digital means. The initial District proposal was to obtain prior permission from the site administrator before performing distance learning work outside of the professional 7 ¾ hour workday and completed at the school site. The MTA was not in favor of this concept. The MTA counter to this was to strike administrator approval, add four days of school business leave to prepare for distance learning activities, and be allowed to timecard an unlimited amount of hours put in by staff preparing for distance learning going back to August 12, 2020. The District countered this with a maximum of two hours per week for distance learning activities outside the 7 ¾ hour workday and completed at the site. This would expire on October 2, 2020, unless both parties agreed to extend. The District agreed to four workdays spent on-site preparing for distance learning and charging school business seeing this as a professional development opportunity. The MTA counter was for unit members to be able to timecard up to ten hours per week for distance learning activities and again that it would be retroactive to August 12, 2020. There would be no validation of time claimed by staff for distance learning. The MTA also struck the October 2, 2020 termination clause.

The District believes DL has placed additional work on staff and that there should be compensation. However, this compensation must have oversight. As District employees are aware, every dollar the District spends requires backup. There has already been timecard(s) submitted to the District that required correction due to inaccurate data being submitted for remuneration.

The District arrived at the two hours per week number after speaking with several members of the teaching staff at various sites. While some do more and some do less, two hours per week seemed appropriate. The District is not in favor of any timecard turned in for work done outside of the allotted time frame as it opens the District up to financial penalties via a STRS audit.

Live Instruction for Distance Learners

The second significant issue of disagreement is the placing a maximum amount of live instruction per day for distance learners, specifically 30 minutes for grades TK-K, 45 minutes for first through third grades, 90 minutes for third through fifth grades (yes this is a conflict), and 120 minutes for grades six through twelve. Also, at the middle and high school levels, priority for instructional minutes will be given to core teaching subjects.

The District does not want any instructor limited by time. The District trusts it's teaching staff to prepare professional lessons and deliver those lessons as the instructor sees fit. The District also believes while reading, writing, and arithmetic are critical to student success, there are students who need a break, who struggle with academics, who need to vent. The best place to do this is via the art studio, the music room, learning a new language, etc. The District does not agree that electives can be kicked to the curb from time to time if the core teachers decide they need more time. All classes offered in the District have value to a certain subset of students.

Summary

The District believes that compensation for staff working with distance learners is appropriate, but the time must be validated. Teachers should use their professional judgement to develop and deliver appropriate lessons for distance learners.

The District remains hopeful there will soon be a resolution.