



MCS D-MCEA Bargaining Update: Aug. 27, 2014

On Primary Election Day, Parties Spar over Lesson Plans, “Corrective Action” Plans, and the District’s Budget Plans

STUART FL — Tuesday’s bargaining session was cut short as many teachers and other District personnel left to attend Curriculum Nights at Martin County’s elementary schools. But from 4-6pm the School Board meeting room was packed with both teachers and action. Numerous fiscal and non-fiscal issues remain on the table.

The first non-fiscal item that generated much discussion was the District’s most recent lesson plans proposal. Several members of the District’s negotiations team referred to the need to have more standards-driven lesson plans to ensure fidelity to the Common Core (or the Florida Standards, or whatever it is this week). But the MCEA team is concerned that the District’s proposal loses sight of the true purpose of lesson plans: to help teachers teach better lessons. With its requirement of lengthy and repetitious recitations of standards by chapter and verse, the District proposal would massively increase workload, causing lesson plans to balloon up to dozens of pages, with no clear benefit to classroom instruction.

The District’s desire for a “Corrective Action Plan” (CAP) on which teachers would be placed when their supervisor deems necessary also remains a sticking point. The CAP came in response to MCEA’s reluctance to remove the requirement that a teacher be “struggling” (i.e., in receipt of a score of “Unsatisfactory,” or two consecutive scores of “Needs Improvement”) in order to be placed on a Teacher Improvement Plan. Kim Sabol, the District’s chief negotiator, referred to the removal of the old Professional Development Plan from the Contract several years ago as a “mistake,” and cited the need for the District to provide some sort of recourse for teachers who could benefit from structured assistance, but do not meet the contractual definition of “struggling,” aside from discipline. MCEA does not disagree with the District’s position in this regard, but would prefer to see such a process developed collaboratively over the course of the year through a committee process, rather than rushed through as one of very many issues outstanding in negotiations.

MCEA made counterproposals to the District’s original severe budget cut proposals to extend the length of service requirement for the 15% retirement supplement to 30 years, and slash health insurance benefits for retirees. MCEA is disappointed that the District is seeking once again to save money on the backs of teachers. The District has made clear its intent to have all of the benefit cuts imposed by the Board if MCEA does not come up with satisfactory counterproposals. Your MCEA Bargaining Team

will do everything in its power to prevent that from happening. Terminal sick leave payouts, health insurance benefits, and all of the other benefit cuts we’re facing are critically important for teachers. MCEA will not allow the District to resort to impasse to finish these negotiations until every other avenue has been exhausted.

MCEA’s counterproposal on the 15% retirement supplement is to have “reduced” supplements for shorter lengths of service rather than no supplements at all, namely, a 10% supplement for 20 years of service, and a 5% supplement for 10 years of service. Sabol claimed at previous negotiation sessions that, out of all of the benefit cuts the District proposed, the Board had the “least appetite” for preserving the 15% retirement supplement. The MCEA team believes its counterproposal is a reasonable compromise that still keeps some of the promise that the District made to teachers many years ago.

MCEA also counter-proposed that future retirees would, upon becoming eligible for Medicare, switch from receiving a contribution to District health insurance plan to a “Medicare Gap” plan, which would cover the portions of medical care not covered by Medicare just as well as the District’s health insurance plan would, but would cost the District 50-75% less to provide to retirees. The MCEA team believes this is a common-sense way to save money that will have a negligible impact on future retirees.

No salary proposal has been offered by the District so far in this round of negotiations. At several previous sessions, the MCEA team has argued that it is difficult to accept such severe reductions in benefits without seeing what the District will offer in response. On July 23, Sabol replied that “message the Board wants me to communicate to you is that you should *trust them*.” MCEA has done more than its part to show the “trust,” now it’s up to the Board to give teachers something to “verify.” That’s exactly what we will be looking for at the next bargaining session. All of the financial data will be in, and the Board will have the cost-savings it required in order to provide a salary increase. It’s time for the District to put their money where their mouth is — literally. Join us at the next session!

What:	MCS D-MCEA Negotiations — Session Eight
When:	September 23, 2014, 4:00 PM
Where:	School Board Meeting Room 500 E Ocean Boulevard, Stuart, FL 34994