

The following are the candidate responses to the questions pertaining to MESP. To see the missing questions and answers please visit our website at www.maranaesp.org and find the link to MEA's Voice Newsletter.

6. Do you believe it is important to involve school employees in policy decisions regarding contracts, working conditions, educational programs, and negotiated agreements? Please explain.

Amy Autret

School board members must remember that they are there to represent the district community. The community expects accountability and decisions from its Board that serves its best interests in all matters. Ultimately, this is why an atmosphere and spirit of collaboration is so necessary between the district's employees and the community. I believe that the community expects to involve district employees in those policy decisions that pertain to them.

Suzanne Hopkins

I believe that when making policy decisions on issues that directly affect their jobs, the best practice would be to include representatives of your most valuable resource: your employees. If they have input from the start, they are more likely to support the system and embrace adopted policies. Showing employees that you not only value their input but also take to heart they're concerns, vests them to policy decisions.

Joe Koellisch

Yes, it is very important. In fact it's essential that employees take ownership and be involved in making the decisions that affect their careers, but also the long term success of MUSD. If you give employees that ownership they will continue to work hard to keep the students on the path of achieving the highest standards.

Maribel Lopez

It is very important to get information from other sources. It gives us a family culture. Input provides all stakeholders ownership and understanding. We need to give everybody the tool and the understanding of why.

Kathryn Mikronis

Yes, depending on how "school employees" is defined. For example, certified teachers should have a say in contracts, educational programs and working conditions.

Dan Post

Yes. Any other way does not allow us to be successful. If you do not have input from all of the stakeholders, you cannot possibly arrive at the decisions that are mutually beneficial to all participants. This only works if everyone is focused on the mission of the organization.

Albert Siqueiros

It is absolutely important to involve school employees. Though the governing board is not statutorily required to negotiate with employees, it is important to maintain a meet and confer process where employees and the board's representative work toward maintaining a quality working environment. It is also important for the board and its representative to maintain an open-line of communication with employees that builds trust and confidence in the process. I would highly suggest the use of the Interest Based Bargaining approach that has a clearly defined process where the employee groups and the governing board's representative come together on common issues and goals.

Dean Spencer

The employees of this district must be able to have a voice and say about their work environment. Staff must feel comfortable with the conditions that they work in, the amount that they are paid, the programs taught. Part of having a healthy learning environment for children is being able to have employee satisfaction.

8. As a member of the MUSD Governing Board, what would your policy be concerning the involvement of the Marana Education Association and Marana Educational Support Professionals in decisions you will have to make?

Amy Autret

As I mentioned previously, School Board members must remember that their purpose is to represent the community. I believe that the community desires and expects to collaborate with and involve their highly valued and qualified district professionals in decisions before the Board. I believe that the Board would be remiss to not properly utilize the expertise of its resources where applicable.

Suzanne Hopkins

These two organizations represent the foundation of our school system. As representatives for teachers and support professionals, it's my opinion that there be communication and consideration given to the MEA and

MESP similar to that I would expect as a community member and parent. Group representation is a very effective way to bring the voices of the people to the governing board.

Joe Koellisch

MESP and MEA are the professional organizations that have greatly influenced the success of MUSD over the years. All employees should join not only for a voice in the process, but because it's the professional thing to do. MESP and MEA not only represent the voice of our employees, they ensure the continued spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and advocacy for professional rights and responsibility. They are partners in the work we do for our children. Their voices deserve to be heard by the Governing Board.

Maribel Lopez

This is critically important. Information needs to be delivered to all parties concerned. It is important that we all know we have a voice to share ideas, concerns, or issues. It takes all of us to come together to provide our children the best education they deserve.

Kathryn Mikronis

MEA should try to provide some sort of benefit to support professionals, so as to protect and retain quality support professionals. I see both the MEA and MESP as valuable assets and resources for the MUSD Governing Board members.

Dan Post

Do you have to ask? I am the one who initiated the transition from an adversarial, we/they situation to a partnership that is now referred to as the "Marana Model". I have worked very hard over the years to make sure that we maintain that relationship, as I know what it was like before.

Albert Siqueiros

It is my position that all stakeholders in the district should have an opportunity to participate in the decision making process through the board's established procedures. The MEA and MESP certainly are very important groups and represent a segment of our employees and, therefore, should have the ability to provide input.

Dean Spencer

The school board must be willing to hear from the organizations that are designed to represent the workers of our district. While we must be willing to listen and consider the input of these organizations, they should not be held in unduly high regard compared to the students and parents of the community.

9. Do you feel that educational support professionals are vital for the daily operation of the school district?

Amy Autret

Without a doubt the educational support professionals are absolutely essential to schools' daily operations. Who would safely transport our students, prepare their meals, keep up-to-date records, monitor students' health at school, or maintain the school grounds? All of these professionals deserve our gratitude, admiration, and respect.

Suzanne Hopkins

Absolutely! A school system without educational support staff would be the equivalent of a building with no foundation. A well-oiled machine cannot run solely by having someone pushing the button. Without the people who help provide transportation, food service, office support, health and wellbeing support, custodial and maintenance, safety and security, etc., the school system as we know it would crumble. Support professionals deserve to be recognized for all they do and respected as a vital part of running a school system.

Joe Koellisch

Our ESP feed our children, keeps them healthy, crosses them to safety, takes them back and forth to school and makes sure their needs are met among other selfless duties. They do so with pride for very little financial reward, but do so gladly and honorably.

Without our ESP schools would not function, they are indeed a vital part of our school district.

Maribel Lopez

I believe they are essential. Educational support professionals are vital in the day-to-day function. They are the heartbeat of the school. When a student first gets up in the morning and gets ready for school, the first person they see is the bus driver. When a parent walks into schools front offices, who are the first people they see? The secretaries with a smile saying "Welcome and how may I help you?" The support staff provides safe and clean schools. In schools, we have paraprofessionals supporting teachers and students.

Kathryn Mikronis

ABSOLUTELY! Without support professionals, teachers and other certified staff would have too much to do to be effective and efficient.

Dan Post

We are all partners in education, from the board to the grounds keeper. We just have different responsibilities. Some are more directly involved in delivering the product to the student, but all are essential.

Albert Siqueiros

Every employee is vital to the success of the school district. Each employee is a member of a team and their performance is critical in meeting the expected outcomes. Educational support professionals play a very significant role in this. The support they provide toward educating students is extremely important and I know first hand that schools can not survive without them. Often times they are the first to welcome our students in the morning and the last to see them off at the end of the day. In my previous term as a board member, I worked diligently toward insuring that MUSD made it a priority to support this group's efforts and to improve their working conditions. I certainly will continue to make this a priority.

Dean Spencer

Undoubtedly the support staff is the lifeblood of any school. Without the assistants, secretaries, and other non-teacher oriented positions, schools would be hampered in terms of capabilities. Support staff are vital in keeping a school district running smoothly, as the services they offer are invaluable.

10. Do you believe teachers and support professionals should be entitled to protection by due process against arbitrary and capricious transfers, dismissals, discipline, or placement on involuntary leave?

Amy Autret

I believe that some such decisions could be considered reasonable if the Board has acted in good faith in attempting to accomplish some legitimate school purpose. I also believe that all employees should be entitled to a type of due process if dissatisfied by an administrative recommendation or Governing Board action.

Suzanne Hopkins

Protection through due process against actions that a worker believes to be arbitrary and capricious is not an unreasonable expectation. Prior to the Board finalizing a decision, due process would show that there is good faith effort being put forth to consider both sides by all involved. Arizona right to work laws and exemptions written into the district's grievance policy (This policy does not apply to any administrative recommendation or Governing Board action, discussion, or consideration involving termination of employment) may, however, preclude this.

Joe Koellisch

Absolutely. Due process for teachers, support professionals and administrators is important because it's the cornerstone of high performance and accountability for all. It's about respect for our employees and the value we place on the work we do together.

Maribel Lopez

Yes, I do believe they should be entitled. Due process of law is a basic tenet of our American democratic society and systems from both the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These amendments say that no state (or jurisdiction thereof) shall deprive a person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Due process means that before being deprived of one's job, a person receive adequate notice of the impending action and the reasons for it, have a meaningful opportunity to present a defense, including evidence and reasons why he/she should not be dismissed.

Kathryn Mikronis

YES!!!!

Dan Post

Yes.

Albert Siqueiros

Due process is a right bestowed on all of us by the Constitution of the United States. I certainly believe that employees should be protected against arbitrary and capricious actions in all cases. To this end it is important that MUSD maintain procedures and policies that follow a fair and equitable method of making transfers, imposing discipline, dismissing employees, or placing employees on involuntary leave.

Dean Spencer

The concept of due process is a fundamental of the American system of government. Without doubt, the right of teachers be protected is necessary. However, in cases of extreme situations where time is a factor, the district must have the ability to act decisively. The district has a responsibility to all of the citizens to do everything within its power to avoid any potential lawsuits or reduce the fall out caused by irresponsible actions.

11. With the current state budget deficit, if monies had to be cut from the MUSD budget, what would you be willing to sacrifice?

Amy Autret

My budget priorities are those items that directly touch or involve a student in their core curriculum education. This would include improving student-teacher ratios, educational programs, some student services, and certainly competitive salaries for our teachers and support staff. I should also make it known that I am a great friend in particular to the fine arts. I was actively involved in band and was the high school drum major at Amphi High School. Our band program was always being threatened, so I know what it feels like to be on the other side of those cuts. I will always put the kids first.

Suzanne Hopkins

This is the number one challenge facing many schools today; we can't simply wield a wayward sword at the problem. Without currently having insight into the District's budgetary constraints, cost-effectiveness of programs and personnel information, I can't answer this question by listing specifics. However, from a business perspective, I would look into innovative ways to maximize resources while cutting cost. Discretionary spending is always open to review. Additionally, I would examine non-performing, non-mandated programs as well as the possibility of meeting the requirements for mandated, less valuable programs at lower costs.

Joe Koellisch

We can not sacrifice what is best for children. That means investing in people first before programs. It also means keeping those programs that have a direct and immediate impact on students like art, music, drama, head-start and the culinary program just to name a few.

Maribel Lopez – no response

Kathryn Mikronis

I personally feel that before cuts to the budget be discussed that all avenues of revenue development be explored. I recommend that the schools verify that all eligible children for free or reduced lunch apply for services and utilize those benefits to increase federal money. MUSD should be applying for more grant monies as well. I would also like to suggest that MUSD lobby our state legislature to expand the school tax credit to other programs and services offered by MUSD. Finally, if budget cuts must be made I think we need to examine line by line the budget and determine what sacrifices can be done to minimize the impact on staff and students. Creativity and thinking outside the box will be extremely helpful during this process.

Dan Post

I can't answer that question. This will be a team decision. Everyone will be asked to do their part in finding the areas where we can save money. The overriding goal will be to keep the cuts away from the classroom.

There are difficult and challenging times ahead of us. It is important that someone with my experience and knowledge be elected to help guide our district through to better times. I understand the needs, concerns, and responsibilities of the employees. I have and will be supportive of them as we work together to become World Class.

Albert Siqueiros

I don't see this as an issue of having to sacrifice something, but rather an opportunity to look closely at our budgeting process.

Does our current process allow for effective evaluation of programs? Are we utilizing strategies that allow us to forecast our budget needs beyond next year? It seems that rather than having to look at making sacrifices when budget deficits exist, we should have established fiscal practices that allow us to maintain effective programs even during lean years. I would work with the board to establish these systems and processes so that we are not forced into making these types of decisions. This is what fiscal responsibility is all about!

Dean Spencer

When budget cuts affect the ability of our district to function, any cuts must come from the top of the ladder. It is irresponsible and wrong to focus cuts in areas in which teachers, students, or classrooms will be directly impacted if it can be helped.