

**Mesquite Education Association**  
**FR Questions - September 2017**

- 1. Due to the close proximity of the new Frasier Middle School, West Mesquite High School, and Seabourn, how is the traffic going to be controlled on Peachtree Road and the surrounding areas/streets? Peachtree Road is a two lane street that is already congested due to the current two schools.**

We are currently working with the city who is studying the situation.

- 2. I am following up on a question from last year. Has any more consideration been given to the idea of teachers paying some sort of fee or deposit so that we can have a mini-refrigerator in our classrooms?**

We have done some research and the expense to getting all our schools up to enough electrical power would be cost prohibitive. These refrigerators pull power that would cause circuit breakers to trip.

- 3. I keep hearing that the district is rezoning attendance lines. Is there a way for employees and/or Mesquite residents to have a voice in these decisions?**

The school district is not rezoning any of the elementary school attendance zones. The feeder pattern of schools is being developed to become a pure feeder pattern. The School Board was presented a plan at the September Board Meeting. A community meeting was held at the PDC on Monday, September 18. Information can be found on the Mesquite ISD website.

- 4. When will info (proposed projects, possible additional staff, etc.) regarding the upcoming 2018 bond election be released for all employees to see?**

The future bond election has not been decided. The Board is still gathering information on the building needs of the district. Bond elections are to raise I & S funds to pay for facilities, buses and other capital needs.

- 5. With the new feeder patterns, will teachers still be allowed to transfer their own children to a different campus or will they have to attend their feeder schools?**

According to FD(REGULATION), a nonresident full-time professional employee (i.e., Ch. 21 contract employee) may request his or her child in kindergarten through grade 12 be admitted into the District schools by filing the Out-of-District Professional Employee Transfer Application to the Administrative Services Dept. A resident employee of any status may request his or her child in kindergarten through grade 12 be admitted into the requested campus through the same process. The transfer approval or denial will be based on availability of space, availability of instructional staff, and the student's compliance with state requirements for attendance and the Student Code of Conduct up to the point of enrollment. There is no plan to change the above criteria upon approval of the new feeder patterns.

- 6. With the passing of HB 21 SECTION 14. Subchapter C, Chapter 42, Education Code, Sec. 42.1561. ALLOTMENT FOR STUDENT WITH DYSLEXIA OR RELATED DISORDER, how and when will MISD use these funds? I suggest using it to hire more MTA teachers.**

The legislature has allotted this as a grant for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years. There will be an application process to receive the funds and there are only certain allocations the money can be used for. At

this time, allocations have not been released, but we are doubtful that funding existing programs or salaries will be allowed. The goal of the grant is to implement new, innovative dyslexia programs.

- 7. Creating the elementary campus schedule, especially for MTI, SF, MTA, ESL, Speech & working around grade levels that departmentalize is a nightmare every year. Any suggestions how to make this process better & easier? Some principals make the entire schedule for everyone. Is that a possible solution?**

Creating a workable master schedule is a daunting task! Each campus has the responsibility of creating a master schedule that best meets the needs of the students on that campus with allocated personnel. The schedule must meet the legislative requirements and the constraints of personnel units that may have to be shared between campuses. Any specific questions should be directed to your campus principal.

- 8. Why are Quest, college week, drug awareness, and R-time lessons not already included in the weekly curriculum? There's already not enough time to get through our curriculum currently but when we add additional lessons to the current curriculum it's impossible to get through everything. I understand the need for these lessons but I don't understand why they haven't been written into a part of the weekly curriculum. For example, if we have college/quest lessons they should already be in some part of the weekly curriculum such as social studies; not additional lessons on top of reading, writing, english, math, science, social studies, social skills and health.**

We certainly understand the enormity of the TEKS and the time required to implement them, and because of that we try to provide a good working scope and sequence to help teachers plan. Each content provides curriculum resources for teachers to meet the needs of learners within the classroom. Several of the items you referenced are campus initiatives that are not included in district curriculum because they are not being implemented district wide. The FutureQuest lessons are provided by the curriculum department but can be taught during any content area. There are 7 lessons each year that can be worked in where teachers have time and see relevance. If you are struggling to find time to fit these lessons in, contact the curriculum area that you feel would be the best fit and see if they could give you some suggestions. Social-emotional learning should be included in lessons throughout the year as we work toward educating the whole child.

- 9. BLACKOUT DAYS:**

**With the introduction of MISD blackout days, the district has selected certain calendar days based on common absentee trends. The stated purpose was to ensure coverage and address the lack of substitute teachers available, as well as on-campus staff having to split classes or provide additional coverage. Why then, would non-school days such as staff development days be included? If a teacher takes off one of these days, substitute coverage is not needed. The district is not having to spend extra for a sub or a personal day. If the intended purpose in creating blackout days is for coverage needs, including non-school days (no students), it seems contrary to the stated purpose.**

Although the primary purpose is to help alleviate the substitute shortage and imposition on other teachers, there are other days where “all hands on deck” are needed including first and last instructional days, days before and after holidays, testing days, etc. Staff development days are included due to the vital training provided to support campus and district programs and initiatives. This time is given in order for teachers and staff members to plan and work together, and this is the expectation. Missing this training could be detrimental to the team and student success. Therefore, they have been given a priority along with the other designated days.

**Explain to us how we will lose pay for personal days taken during blackout dates? How is this legal? What amount is deducted? How is this figured?**

A person who uses a discretionary day (day that a person has control over and simply chooses to be off as opposed to a non-discretionary day) on a blackout date, will lose their daily rate of pay for that date – annual salary divided by the total number of contract days. Limiting discretionary days is done through district policy and under advisement of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) legal team. It should be noted that this practice has been in place for a number of years in many area districts, but we just recently adopted for the reason outlined in the above response.

**How can the district legally not allow an employee to use a state day for an absence? For example, not using a day during district blackout days, or on a Friday if a campus already has too many absent employees?**

Please see the response above. Discretionary days or days that a person has control over and simply chooses to be off (vacation/travel, shopping, rest day, etc.), can be regulated. Non-discretionary days or days that a person has no control over (personal illness, illness of a child/family member, unexpected emergency, etc.) are a different story and do not fall under the limitations. However, substantiation may be required as deemed necessary.

**If an employee takes a blackout day or any day that is not approved, will said employee be docked the daily rate and a personal day?**

The employee will be docked the daily rate, but not charged with a personal day – not both.

**10. Why can't we wear jeans more often to work? I don't think our kids care if we are in a skirt or suit vs jeans. Plus, tennis shoes are much more comfortable for being on our feet all day.**

The allowance of jeans has been extended to basically every Friday. This is approximately 20% of the school year which is pretty lenient. The Professional Dress Committee that was convened to review the guidelines this past year, reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the professional dress standards. As stated in the general guidelines, in order to achieve the professional status desired by educators, it is essential that all involved dress accordingly on a consistent basis. Research has proven that there is a direct correlation between appropriate dress and how others perceive the individual as well as the organization. In addition, professional attire can be a useful tool in classroom management, in that it can project an image of respect and authority and help to establish a sense of formality. Therefore, a business casual style has been deemed to remain appropriate.

**11. What is the district policy concerning age-appropriate children accompanying their parents to school on work days in order to help prepare our classrooms for the beginning of the year?**

There is no specific written policy regarding the issue, but the practice could be distracting, and should not be occurring on a regular basis. Something of this nature might be allowed on certain occasions depending on the circumstances, but even so, should only be for a brief time until other arrangements can be made. The decision is left to the discretion of the principal according to the circumstances, but should not interfere with the performance of or completion of duties.

**12. With the relaxing of dress code for female staff, is there a chance that we can see the same for male staff?**

In general, the male dress code is simpler, but the Professional Dress Committee did review this past year and addressed certain aspects including removing some specifics pertaining to hair length, when beards are to be grown, and references to belts/turtlenecks.

**13. TEACHER TRANSFERS:**

**Has consideration been given to changing the seniority policy for teachers who want to transfer to another campus? Making a teacher lose their seniority when they want to take an opportunity at another campus limits our teachers and deters them from personal growth in the district.**

This policy is reviewed periodically, but there are no plans at this time to adjust the forfeiture of district seniority on a voluntary move out of fairness to those on a given campus who may have been there a long time. There are some other factors that could be considered in overriding seniority including certifications/licensures, extra duties, professional backgrounds, etc.

**What are the plans for 6th grade teachers moving to middle school next year? Will they have to interview for positions on the middle school campuses or just move up to the feeder school? If a teacher has been on campus longer than most of the teachers on the campus but is in a 6th grade position at this time, do they still have to be the one to move to the middle school or will the newer teachers have to be the one to leave?**

It has been our experience in the past that these situations are generally solved through regular attrition (resignations, retirements, etc.). However, we are working on a process for those who may be affected that would provide some options (i.e. transfer list, in-district transfer fair for elementary/middle schools involved, dates/deadlines to return to home campus should openings occur, etc.) We will be working through campus principals to provide additional information as the process evolves.

**14. Why aren't bilingual clerical aides paid a stipend? With so many Spanish speaking parents in our district and as much translating as they do, they should be compensated.**

Each person who works in either a professional or paraprofessional position brings special skills to their particular job and, therefore, we have been reluctant to single out any for additional compensation unless it involves a critical shortage area. We agree that bilingual skills are extremely valuable, but supply and demand often dictates whether or not a stipend is warranted. Our salary studies indicate that we are competitive with most area districts and, thus far, have been able to secure an adequate number of qualified candidates for bilingual assistants.

**15. What are the requirements for a teacher that is bilingual certified to be eligible for the Bilingual stipend?**

The person must be Bilingual certified and actually teaching in a Bilingual classroom.

**16. Why is it necessary for classroom teachers to eat lunch in the cafeteria the entire first week of school?**

This is at the discretion of the principal with the reasons being to provide adequate supervision and direction while the cafeteria procedures are being established.

- 17. May we please have specific guidelines for the 150 hours we have to submit for the Standard Certificate Renewal? If I have a Lifetime Teaching Certificate, am I still required to submit hours? If so, what may I count? Does campus staff development count? All eight days in August and the rest of the year? Or just certain ones? Please clarify.**

Lifetime certificate holders are not required to submit the 150 hours. Those who hold a Standard Certificate must renew every 5 years by earning a minimum number of CPE hours through an approved CPE provider {TAC 232.13}. Written documentation of all CPE required activities must be maintained {TAC 232.23(a)}. Please refer to the following for specific information:

Go to the TEA website at [www.tea.texas.gov](http://www.tea.texas.gov)

Click on Texas Educator tab

Go to the section: Preparation and continuing Education and click on Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

- 18. Why are auxiliary employees not allowed to participate in jeans days? With the current donation drive for Dickinson ISD, most people are being awarded with jeans passes for donating. Auxiliary employees are always asked to give but are never given any of the "perks" everyone else, admin. included, receive.**

Jean days do not extend to those who are provided with school uniforms due to the uniforms being somewhat relaxed/casual and designed to accommodate the daily work and routines associated with the particular position. However, this may be something that could be considered in the future.

- 19. Why doesn't Mesquite ISD have mandatory protected teacher work/planning days during the beginning of the year? This year we returned eight days prior to the students returning and most MISD schools gave teachers only one work/planning day. Other districts have protected work/planning days that administration isn't allowed to plan meetings or professional development. When there is not sufficient time to prepare, professional development is inadequate. Please consider a minimum of 2 or 3 protected workdays for teachers at the beginning of the school year. When in-service is scheduled for eight days, there's really no excuse to not have multiple protected teacher workdays.**

The state no longer mandates protected teacher work/planning days. With regard to professional learning days at the beginning of the year, principals are given discretion in scheduling those days for their staffs. Requiring specific days or a specific number of days to be used for work/planning would limit principal's flexibility in scheduling speakers or planning other campus activities. Only one of the days at the beginning of the year is designated as a district day (either elementary or secondary). If you are concerned that you are not given enough individual or team work/planning time prior for the first day of school, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with your principal.

- 20. What can we do as a district to combat the unprofessional and unethical emails that are being circulated using the district server?**

All MISD employees are required to adhere to the district's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) at all times. Violation of the AUP will result in disciplinary action including denial of access to district technology network services, change of employment status, and termination. Employees who become aware of AUP violations should report those immediately to their direct supervisor so that action can be taken.

## **21. What is the best way to split roles in a co-teach classroom?**

Co-teaching is a service delivery option in which two educators, a general educator and a special educator, share instructional and related responsibilities. In effective co-teaching teams, the two educators are colleagues who jointly make instructional decisions and share responsibility and accountability. Many factors may affect how equally these roles are shared, including knowledge of subject area and the number of subject areas in which the special educator is co-teaching.

There are six different approaches used in co-teaching: one teach, one observe; station teaching; parallel teaching; alternative teaching; team teaching; and one teach, one assist. According to Dr. Marilyn Friend, the most effective of these arrangements is station teaching, and the least effective is one teach, one assist. Depending on the instructional approach being used, the roles of the two co-teachers will vary.

Region 10 offers a workshop called Inclusion Co-Teach 2017 on September 26 and October 31 which covers the roles of co-teaching partners as well as the approaches used in co-teaching. This training would be highly beneficial for co-teachers wishing to learn more about how to best implement this model. Registration information is available on the Region 10 website, or you can contact the special education department for registration information.