

## **Mesquite Education Association FR Questions - January 2017**

- 1. I used a sick day during staff development. I have been given a make-up assignment to complete in addition to being required to attend a 45-minute meeting after school. Is this common practice?**

A practice of this type is not unusual when the principal or supervisor deems what was missed to be important enough to warrant it being made up. In general, the time is not being made up, but rather the valuable training that was required as a progression to a campus initiative, on-going program, etc. The effort is generally made to accelerate the make-up in small segments after school or through assignments so that the imposition on time is minimal.

- 2. Why are some employees allowed to set a pre-conference date when they will be evaluated and others are not? Shouldn't this be a decision made by the district?**

T-TESS guidelines require that teachers be given a two-week window for the formal observation. Individual campuses may choose to get input from teachers about specific dates/times, but are not required to do so.

- 3. Why are employees with side businesses allowed to make, deliver, take orders, and charge for goods during a school workday? Is this not a conflict during a contract day?**

An employee should not be engaged in any business activity, directly or indirectly, that involves school time or interferes with or is in substantial conflict with the performance of school duties and obligations. (*Employee Handbook – Pg. 57*)

- 4. Why do bilingual teachers get a stipend but special education teachers do not?**

This particular assignment along with many others may very well warrant more compensation than what is provided. However, due to the wide range of unique duties and responsibilities associated with a variety of positions across the district, it would be very difficult to single one out over another for a stipend. Just as with salaries in general, we wish more could be provided, but the resources are limited and we have to operate within budgetary priorities and constraints. Bilingual stipends are primarily market driven (supply and demand) in an effort to attract and retain candidates who possess a distinctive skill in an acute shortage area.

**5. I know that teachers can be asked to stay later than the contracted day. Does that include assignments to be completed over a holiday break?**

Although principals make every effort to be cognizant of the importance of time away, it is within their scope of authority if such an assignment is deemed worthwhile and necessary to the success of a campus initiative or program that, in turn, proves to be beneficial to the students.

**6. In regards to the new one-year mandatory internship for Administrators, how can the district condone making people who have certifications and have completed an internship, complete another one? Is this saying that the degree previously earned is not sufficient? Will this limit the district when it comes to hiring from outside the district?**

The district has the authority to determine the criteria associated with any given position, and requiring the MISD internship program is in no way intended to demean another degree. This particular program is rather unique in that it has a rigorous, prescribed course of study that is geared toward the MISD and its operations as opposed to other internships that are somewhat generic. By completing the program, candidates are better prepared for assuming an administrative role within the district. Those who may be hired from outside the district will already have experience in the role which will suffice for the internship.

**7. Instead of coming back for seven days of staff development in August, could we work six days and then have a student holiday/parent teacher conference day in October around report card time?**

The simple answer is not without losing another student holiday during the school year or adding another school day on to the end of the school year. What makes this calendar so difficult is the start date – August 28. We cannot start before that date. There are only so many days between the end of August and the first week of June. It just doesn't give us much to work with.

**8. Why can we no longer speak with the help desk instead of leaving a message?**

The ability to take live calls is primarily affected by the volume of calls coming in. Our current staffing level does not allow us to take live calls during peak times, such as the beginning of the school year. Taking live calls is also negatively impacted by district-wide issues such as when the email system goes down. Over the past two years we have seen an approximate 20% decrease in the amount of time our helpdesk specialists are able to take live calls. We are currently evaluating staffing levels and options that would allow us to improve in this area.

- 9. I have worked for other districts that have a “buzz in” system. Is there a plan to better secure our campuses? In other districts, visitors had to push a button to enter a school building, similar to the one outside the Superintendent's office. Has MISD ever thought of doing this at our campuses?**

Last year we selected Hanby Elementary as a test site to evaluate the practicality of locking all outside doors. We have also studied the financial impact this would have on budgets. The decision to add door control to campus main entry points is still under review.

- 10. When students use chrome books in our collaborative learning environment, we are facing some challenges with technology. Videos in Google classroom will not play. The technology facilitator said to go to [jango.com](http://jango.com), but the students are unable use their passwords. Will someone help us fix this problem?**

Unfortunately, this question does not provide enough information for us to offer an accurate answer. Our network team is currently working on an issue with safeshare.tv that affects video playback in the classroom. We expect to have a solution for this issue very soon. If your classroom video issue is unrelated to safeshare.tv, please contact the helpdesk and provide details. This will allow Technical Services to assign this task to a technician and start working towards a solution.

- 11. Classroom technology repairs have long wait times, usually longer than six weeks. I have been informed by the help desk that they are under staffed and cannot possibly keep up with demand. When and how is this going to be addressed?**

Our measure for open classroom technology work orders starts from the date a work order is created until the date a work order is completed. Data shows the average time a classroom technology work order is open to be twelve days. In some circumstances, equipment picked up from the campus is sent to outside vendors for repair which results in additional time for equipment return. To minimize the impact outside services has on repair times our technicians will provide loaner equipment, when available, to the classroom. We are reviewing our stock of loaner equipment to determine if additional equipment is needed to better support the classroom.

- 12. Has or will the district consider adding soccer to middle school campuses?**

MISD Athletics receives yearly requests to investigate adding middle school soccer, baseball, and softball. From a facility, budget, staffing, and calendar standpoint, it would be difficult to increase the athletic offerings at our middle schools at this time.

**13. Has the district thought about hiring innovative technology teachers to teach full time in the computer lab in all schools so we can prepare our students for future jobs and careers?**

With the rapid increase of access to technology in classrooms and our society, it is the role of every educator to innovate and help prepare our students for their future. The computer lab is an extension of the classroom; technology should not be sequestered to a single place or event but should be a part of daily instruction. For assistance with ideas, planning, modeling, co-teaching and training, contact your campus instructional technology facilitator. Every instructional facilitator is a certified teacher who strives to help teachers innovate instruction in the classroom. To identify your campus instructional facilitator, visit our website at <https://sites.google.com/mesquiteisd.org/misditech> or find us on twitter @MISDitech. Please let us know how we can help.

**14. Does the district see the lack of high school and middle school male counselors as a concern and what will be done to remedy this?**

As with all positions, we look at and select the best candidate available regardless of gender. In hiring counselors, we consider a number of factors including: preparation for the role, strong professional references, and campus needs. We do want as diverse a population of counselors as possible, and that includes male counselors. Although male candidates are considerably fewer, we will continue to seek out and hire exceptional counselors with hopes of continuing to diversify our group of professionals with excellent men and women to help our students.