

Mesquite Education Association FR Questions - September 2018

1. Can the district please let us override the AC for an hour or two?

During this time of tight budgets, we hired Cenergistic to help conserve energy and save money. The system is set up so to meet the general needs of the campus but additional cooling time can be scheduled by the office at your school.

2. Will Vanston be getting another new addition, and if so, when will that occur (given the information we have available at this time)?

Vanston will be receiving some classrooms and a gym. We are planning on it being open in the Fall of 2020.

3. Would it be possible to enter employees' "real" names into Outlook instead of the name the employee wishes to be called? It's extremely difficult to find employees in Outlook who use another first name. In Skyward, the employee's name is his/her official first name. Better yet, can Outlook be set to look up an employee using the last name?

These names are entered into Munis by the personnel department. Personnel staff enters both the real name and the display name in Munis which starts an automated process whereby the email system gets the username. Individual names can be changed at a later date if needed. Depending on what needs to be changed these changes could involve the personnel department, the payroll department and technical services. Both first names and last names are currently searchable in Outlook. If you need instructions on how to search please reach out to the helpdesk. They are always glad to provide assistance.

4. Why is it we were sent computers and printers for our new units on campus, but no set-up cords and dongles?

As far as we know technical services has provided cords and dongles for all new computers. If some are missing for your campus, please contact the helpdesk and provide the details.

5. What are they going to do about the horrific traffic problem caused by the opening of Frasier?

Prior to the start of large construction projects, including new schools, the City requires the owner to hire a traffic engineering firm to perform a Traffic Impact Analysis and develop a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) prior to the issuance of a building permit. TMPs are based on the engineer's assumptions and circumstances may change prior to the completion of the project. After the project opens, the City conducts traffic observations to evaluate compliance with the TMP and determine if modifications are needed. The District's Risk Management Department coordinates with the City regarding this matter. However, the District is not permitted to make modifications to the TMP without the City's approval. The City recently conducted aerial studies at Frasier and they have completed evaluating the data. The City's Traffic Engineering Manager is hosting a meeting with our Risk Management staff during the week of September 17th to go over the Frasier traffic study and any recommended modifications to improve traffic. The question regarding the possibility of parents picking up their students on the other side of Frasier and out Stadium Drive will be addressed during our meeting with the City.

6. What does the timeframe look like for starting to build the new middle school? With Terry Middle School already well over 1400 kids, does the district plan to move the schedule up?

We are presently working diligently to get it open in the Fall of 2020.

- 7. Campus technology work orders seem to be taking longer this year to be addressed than in the past. Response times have typically been very fast, but not so this year. While we can appreciate that the beginning of the school year is a busy time for those processing work orders, has the process or the system for addressing them changed?**

Because of summer projects and the opening of new campuses, the technical services team is further behind on work orders than in recent years. This primarily affected wireless networking and audio/visual work orders. In the past couple of weeks our focus has shifted to work orders and many of our technicians are working overtime to catch up with the demands. We are seeing progress each day and will stay on task until the campus needs are met.

- 8. Why at the start of each school year when there is so much to do are we not allowed to work over time or receive comp time?**

Each school budget has 40 hours of overtime that is in it each year. The principal makes the decision on when it will be used.

- 9. Is MISD board aware of Greg Abbott's proposal and are they considering a pay increase for teachers?**

MISD is aware, but pay attention to the time and intent of the initiative which is referring to potential earning where they pay "talented" teachers an additional amount to keep them in the classroom. The Governor's proposal is only an idea with no funds attached to it yet. It will be interesting to see this item surface in the next legislative session starting in January with some funding attached to it.

- 10. Transportation in the district has always seemed to run like a well-oiled machine. New feeder patterns have certainly provided a challenge for the department. What plans are in the works to get the buses running back on schedule?**

The issues with bus schedules running behind is primarily due to the shortage of bus drivers, which is a considerable problem in our region at this time. The Bus Job Fair and new bonus structure will hopefully reduce the shortage.

- 11. Can the district have a central location/phone number to assist parents with Skyward?**

Parents with Skyward issues are advised to contact their home campuses for assistance. Since campuses have the relationships with parents and access to their students' data, these problems are best addressed at the campus level. Information Systems has created click sheets that address most issues faced by parents and District staff with regard to Skyward.

- 12. Why are food service managers that work 40 hours no longer eligible to work concessions?**

Administrative Services is working with Business Services to ensure compliance with Fair Labor Standards when considering federal and local budget constraints for paying concession workers.

- 13. Is having a Pre-K/Kindergarten graduation against District policy or is it up to each individual campus?**

This is addressed in district regulation FMH: Schools may recognize students in awards and honors ceremonies at every grade level; however, caps and gowns are only to be worn by graduating seniors. MISD recognizes only one graduation ceremony – the commencement exercise at the culmination of a student's academic career, after the student has met all graduation requirements outlined by the state of Texas.

14. Title I money is being used for an Instructional Specialist on each campus for K-2 reading. What are the positions required qualifications and why were the positions filled without a public posting?

Instructional specialist positions are specific to the needs of the campus. The professional pay scale for this position is the same as that of a classroom teacher. Because the job class is the same when a position becomes available a posting is not required.

15. What are the duty responsibilities for Title 1 teachers and can they be given duties during their conference period which also serves as their PLC period?

Title 1 funding pays for a variety of positions on respective campuses. The positions are chosen to meet the needs identified on the campus needs assessment. In regard to a conference period, Texas Education Code, Section 21.404 says: each **classroom** teacher is entitled to at least 450 minutes within each two-week period for instructional preparation, including parent-teacher conferences, evaluating students' work, and planning. Due to the various job titles and responsibilities, the issue of a conference period should be discussed with the building principal.

16. Do schools have to purchase replacement calculators out of their own budget?

Unfortunately, the cost to replace calculators does rely on the campus. The district purchased new calculators for the high schools 4 years ago and the used ones were then sent to the middle schools. We realize that some of them may no longer be working or may not be in the best condition. Any that are not used on a regular basis should be stored in a cool location with the batteries removed to preserve them. The math department is currently researching the availability of using an online calculator application such as Desmos.com since it is now approved the testing purposes through TEA. Each campus has a capital outlay budget that should be used to purchase items needed for the campus.

17. Is it not an option to have finals for Seniors earlier than the day before graduation practice?

The schedule for Senior exams are decided in advance of the school year. Due to the fact that Seniors graduate early and do not attend school the last week of instruction, every day of attendance matters. While we do understand the timeline is indeed tight, for now the schedule will remain the same.

18. I had a student in 2014 who received 504 services. The student continues to appear in AWARE as one of my students although the student graduated in 2015. How long does student information remain in AWARE?

We are currently migrating Section 504 service plans into Skyward during the 2018-19 school year. As these service plans are uploaded into Skyward, they will be deleted from AWARE.

19. At the elementary level, what are the required weekly minutes for students in the ESL pullout program?

Currently, time-in-service for ELs is not addressed in the TEC §29 or §TAC 89 state policy. However, TEA states that the language services must be full-time, consistent, robust, and provide equitable support to all ELs. The Mesquite ISD ESL Pull-Out program design requires 30 minutes of full ELA instruction provided by an ESL certified teacher on a daily basis.

20. In reference to TTESS, can a principal do a formal observation on every staff member regardless of when they were last evaluated?

Yes, the principal has the discretion to do a formal evaluation on teachers every year.

21. Do all campuses have a kindergarten aide? Why does one grade level get an aide regardless of class size?

All MISD elementary campuses have a kindergarten aide. The number of bilingual aides on a campus is based on the number of bilingual sections at that campus. Campus aides are placed in classrooms where the greater need exists and as budgets allow.

22. Are male employees allowed to wear earrings?

In the past few years we have relaxed the dress code for both students and staff to a certain extent. Male students as well as male employees are now allowed to wear earrings. Although it will be left to the discretion of the supervisor as to whether or not the appearance is acceptable, there will be a lot of trust placed on each individual to use good judgment and not push the limits on the appropriateness of the earrings they wear. It should be noted that the professional dress guidelines are reviewed on an on-going basis and certainly subject to change as deemed appropriate and necessary.

23. Is there an action plan to help alleviate the substitute teacher shortage across the district?

In addition to offering competitive substitute pay rates, our district constantly seeks ways to provide incentives for the 700 plus substitutes that are employed in MISD each year. Our campus administrators are also encouraged to offer additional incentives to help retain our subs from year to year. Last year, we implemented a policy change to limit the use of discretionary days. As a result, we've had fewer sub requests district-wide.

24. Are the discretionary absence policy and blackout dates permanent solutions to the substitute teacher shortage?

Whereas, our new absence policy is not a permanent solution to our substitute shortage, our employee absences have decreased dramatically since the policy was implemented last year. As a result of the implementation of this policy, we had 18,096 fewer absences than what we had the year before.

25. Is the black-out policy concerning teacher absences here to stay in its current form?

At this time, we see no need to change the current form of the black-out policy. Please refer to answers to question(s) above regarding our black-out policy.

26. Are Teachers protected by the ADA?

Teachers are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

27. Will the district hire all future administrators from the employees that are participating in the mandatory yearlong administrative intern program?

It is our policy that current employees who are interested in becoming an administrator in MISD participate in our yearlong intern program however, our district is open to hiring quality candidates from outside if they have adequate administrative experience.

28. Do Instructional Specialist positions expire? Can new individuals apply for the position if it is renewed using Title I money?

Instructional specialist positions are approved on a year to year basis because they are funded through Title 1. Campus principals are given the authority to make the selections for these positions when funds are available.

29. The discount page on the MEA website is cut halfway off. Please fix!

This item has been corrected.

30. Is there any way the child care after school program provided by the district could be available on staff development days?

We are currently working with Right at School to provide one or two centralized camp locations for staff development days.

31. Will the district be giving us guidance on which candidates to vote for?

As an American, your choice in candidates is always yours. In the latest issue of The Advocate, links to currently elected officials have been provided.

32. How do I find out which candidates support public schools?

It is illegal for school officials to endorse candidates or encourage others to vote for a specific candidate. The best course of action is to look up the platforms of who you intend to vote for and ensure their priorities align with yours.