

THE SCHOOL BELL

Publisher S M E A

Volume No. 1

Issue No. 6

Date February 7, 2002



School Funding: Foundation Grant Increase a Go Says Gov. Engler

It's a sunny day for Michigan public school children AND our members!!

Thanks to the bridge that MEA has built with Governor John Engler and other Republicans, the Foundation Grant WILL increase to \$6,700 next year and ALL current categoricals will be fully funded!

This is a huge victory for MEA!!

Lu Battaglieri and Al Short were summoned by the Governor on Tuesday to hear the good news in person. MEA was at the table with the Governor, Sen. Dan DeGrow, Treasurer Doug Roberts and Budget Director Don Gilmer.

The rest of the school community was notified AFTER that meeting. All of us joined the Governor February 6, 2002 at 11 a.m. for a press conference in Lansing.

This does NOT mean that our hard work is done! Stay tuned as the Governor's budget makes its way through the Legislature.

We will need you to keep the pressure on. LOBBY DAY, Feb. 28 is the PERFECT opportunity to do that.

Thanks to all for paying attention to this issue.

SCHOOL AID ACT OF 2002-2003

The School Aid Act for 2002-03 with the restored foundation allowance will be introduced in the State Senate February 7, 2002. At this point, the only public document regarding the budget is the Governor's press release. Based on the press release, this is what we know:

1) The plan would increase all foundation allowances by \$200 per pupil next year. So, districts at the basic foundation allowance would move up to \$6,700 per pupil. This would be an increase of 3% for those districts. (Your percentage increase depends on what your foundation allowance is this year.)

2) The categoricals that exist this year will be funded again next year. The press release specifically mentions that the following categoricals will be funded for 2002-03:

- At-Risk
- School Readiness
- Vocational Education
- ISD operating and millage equalization
- Adult Ed
- Bilingual
- Math/Science Centers
- Gifted and talented
- "and other smaller programs."

It is not yet known if the smaller programs include the LAP grants or the small class size categorical. It appears the Professional Development is NOT funded.

Some of the money for the proposal comes from the State's Budget Stabilization Fund. Most of the rest of the new money comes from a change in the timing of the collection of the 6 mills statewide property tax. (As you may recall, Proposal A included a 6 mill statewide property tax on all property that goes straight to the School Aid Fund.) At present, some taxing units collect all or part of the 6 mills in the winter. Under this bill, all of the 6 mills would be levied in the summer, which would

mean that all of the revenue from the statewide education tax will be available for the 2002-03 State Aid Act. This change will force property taxpayers to pay their taxes earlier in the year, so to offset this, the Governor is also proposing a 1 year reduction in the statewide education tax from 6 mills to 5 mills. Even with this reduction, the change generates significant revenue for 2002-2003.

Updated Training Schedule 2001-2002 (Please Note Changes)

February 19, 2002	"Grievance Processing for Presidents and Building Reps"
February 26, 2002	"Understanding Your District's Finances"
March 26, 2002	"Probationary Teacher's Workshop"
April 23, 2002	"MEA Financial Services"
May 16, 2002	"Your Legal Rights (teachers)."

All trainings will be 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the MEA office in Three Rivers. Refreshments will be provided. The MEA in Three Rivers is committed to your professional growth and success. Don't hesitate to call with questions or for more information: 616 279 5285. See you at the office!

Political action pays!

If you haven't filled out your PAC, do it now. Political contributions are the life-blood of lobbying. MEA's lobby efforts mean more money for school. An MEA PAC contribution is a vote for better schools, locally, state-wide and nationally.

Give whatever you can, \$2 per pay period goes a long way in Lansing AND locally!

LOBBY DAY 2002!

MEA Members Will Meet with Legislators on February 28

On February 28, 2002, the Michigan Education Association (MEA) will be hosting its annual Lobby Day at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing.

In addition to briefings on current education legislation, participants will have an opportunity to meet with their legislators. The governor's education budget, retirement proposals and special education rules will be on the agenda.

Each year MEA's Government Affairs department hosts the event so members have the chance to hear updates on current legislation and to discuss education issues with their legislators. For many members, this is their only opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with their own legislator.

The day's events will begin with a briefing at 9 a.m. There will be a legislative reception with legislators and State Board of Education members at 11:30 a.m.

MEA Government Affairs will pay for substitutes on this day. Registration forms are available with your building representative, at the local MEA office, or can be emailed to you. Please contact the MEA office if you have any questions. 616-279-5285.

