MDEA Bargaining Crisis and Strike Buildup
Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are MDEA's Demands?

MDEA demands better learning conditions for our students, including:

- Lower class sizes
- More support for Title 1 schools
- More nurses
- More counselors
- More librarians
- More support for bilingual programs
- More support for fully included students
- More support for students who require Behavior Intervention Plans
- 4% increase to the salary schedule retroactive to July 1, 2018 which will help ensure that no student ever again spends time in a class for which the District has not been able to hire a teacher.

Additional details about MDEA’s Demands can be found in the document, “MDEA Demands Better Learning Conditions for Students.” Full proposals on all contract Articles are posted on the MDEA website at OurMDEA.org.

2. What has the District offered so far?

So far, the District has offered a 2% off-schedule payment for the 2018-19 school year. They have rejected all MDEA’s proposal regarding lower class sizes as well as proposals for lower caseloads for nurses and counselors. They have proposed additional work requirements for librarians. They have stated that they believe teachers in bilingual programs have all the support they need. They have refused to any supports for classrooms with fully included students or for students who require Behavior Intervention Plans.

The District has agreed to the following changes:

- any member with permanent status may join the Catastrophic sick leave bank with no requirement for a sick day balance
- expand the current pay teachers receive for attending IEP meetings outside of site time to include the cumulative time spent if both IEP and 504 meetings on a given day which exceed 75 minutes outside of site time
- probationary teachers at the secondary level will be assigned no more than three different classes, in so far as possible
- all elementary teachers shall have a relief period every two hours
- members who apply for TSA positions will be provided with District-paid release time for their interview
- the number of annual Discretionary Days will be increased from three to four days
3. **How did MDEA identify its Bargaining Demands?**

   Beginning in 2017, MDEA Leadership engaged in an ambitious project of “Listening Sessions” at which members at each site discussed improvements that were needed to improve the student’s learning conditions. This list generated over 500 suggestions, which the Executive Board then distilled into 133 Bargaining Goals. These goals were used to develop MDEA’s Initial Proposal and are guiding the Bargaining Team’s efforts.

4. **Who is on the MDEA Bargaining Team?**

   The MDEA Bargaining Team includes Chairperson Debbi LaDue (Valle Verde Elementary), Eric Clifton (Delta View Elementary), John Hallquist (College Park High School), and Linda Ortega (MDEA Vice President). The team is supported by CTA Staff member and MDEA Executive Director Mark York.

5. **How long have the teams been bargaining?**

   MDEA’s submitted its Initial Proposal on May 22, 2018 officially beginning the Bargaining Process. The first Bargaining session was held on Wednesday, September 19th. Our previous contract expired on June 30, 2018. As of April 22, we will have been working without a contract for 295 days and in bargaining for 8 months.

6. **When are the next bargaining dates?**

   There are three more bargaining dates scheduled: May 8, May 9, and May 10.

7. **Are we going on strike?**

   Only the membership body has the right to authorize MDEA’s Executive Board to call a strike. If a strike appears to be a necessary action to achieve our goals, MDEA leadership will arrange a vote of all members.

8. **When will we strike?**

   There are several steps built into the Bargaining process to facilitate an agreement between a district and a union. If the Bargaining process is ineffective, either team can declare impasse. When impasse is declared, the state will appoint a mediator to work with the teams to attempt a resolution of the difference. If the mediator determines that they are not able to resolve the problems, the mediator will certify the teams to Fact Finding. During Fact Finding, a three-member panel reviews the situations and recommends a settlement. The District can implement the recommended solution or decide to impose the last, best final offer they made during Bargaining. If the District imposes a contract, the union can go on strike.

9. **What does a general timeline to authorize a strike look like? How long is the process?**

   From the date that Impasse is declared until a strike is authorized can take anywhere from three to nine months.

10. **Is MDEA going to stand up to the district’s stalling tactics? And how?**

    Yes! MDEA members are holding the District administrators and Board Members accountable for stalling by mobilizing for protests.
11. **How can we use the California Educators Rising group to strengthen our message of unity?**

   MDEA members who are members of California Educators Rising can work with the group to encourage them to attend our rallies and events.

12. **Do non-Title 1 teachers understand that title-1 teachers still need their support to authorize a strike for the contract we need? It’s seems many teachers are apathetic and are “OK” with the contract we have but have forgotten about the teachers fighting a different fight at Title-1 sites. How can Title-1 teachers share directly with their fellow MDEA members to increase empathy and unity?**

   Title-1 Teachers can share their message at rallies and can contact members at other sites to build support for MDEA’s action plan.

13. **Is MDEA planning to strike before the year is over? Or are we waiting until the following school year when we have already suffered through layoffs and staff turnover due to inequity?**

   The state-mandated bargaining process is already incredibly bureaucratic and slow and has been slowed further by the District’s lack of urgency. While it will not be possible to strike before the year is over, all our actions this year could still convince the district to negotiate in good faith and agree to improve the learning conditions for students. All actions this year will build power that will eventually allow us to bring more equity to all sites.

14. **Are we going to let the district win this year and think they can push us around next year too?**

   MDEA’s power is based on the willingness of members to take action and speak up and, ultimately, on our collective willingness to withhold services.

15. **What is the value of rallies?**

   Rallies build MDEA power by creating a visible, audible symbol of member's expectations.

16. **What is the value of writing letters to the School Board?**

   Letters to the School Board allow Board Members to hear about individual member expectations and experiences. The Board Members need to hear these pleas for help in order to view the situation from all perspectives and make fully informed decisions.

17. **Where is Dr. Meyer?**

   Dr. Meyer is an employee that the School Board has hired to run the District. The School Board is responsible for making decisions about allocation of the District’s limited funding. MDEA’s student-centered proposals are an expensive long-term commitment. It will take political courage for the Board to take actions that are in the best interests of students and could create additional risks for the District unless they reprioritize how money is spent. This is a political decision. The Board needs to be convinced that the community believes that improved services for students are worth realigning the District’s budget priorities.
While MDEA is aware of the costs associated with our proposals, we believe these changes are in the best interests of the students. Teachers can no longer be complicit in inadequate services for students due to inappropriate budgeting priorities.

Budgets are about moral priorities and MDUSD is currently underinvesting in students while choosing to fund ineffective and unnecessary programs and management positions.

18. **How will a strike affect students?**

Without teachers, schools will not be safe places for learning. Many parents will keep their children home or find other options. MDEA’s Strike Planning Team is working with community and faith groups to develop no cost alternatives for families.

19. **How will a strike affect our pay?**

Members will not be paid for days they do not work during the strike.

20. **How will a strike impact health benefits?**

The health benefits contributions from the District and enrollment in health benefits will not be impacted by a strike.

21. **How will a strike impact retirement?**

Strike days do not count as days of service and will impact the years of service for retirement purposes. For example, a member who works a full year except for one day of a strike would receive credit toward retirement for 184/185 of a school year. In most cases, lost days can be “bought back.” In some cases, some members may find they have to delay their retirement by the number of days of the strike. If they were hired at the beginning of a school year, this could mean continuing to work for a number of days at the beginning of a school year, and then retiring.

22. **What are the alternatives to a strike?**

There are two alternatives:

a) Accept the District’s proposals and drop MDEA’s student-centered proposals.

b) Continuing to bargain while focusing on electing a more student-centered School Board in the 2020 election.

23. **Why is it important for every member to attend our rallies and other organizing actions and to bring friends and family with them?**

The District’s refusal to agree to MDEA’s student-centered proposals in a political issue and will require a political solution. The School Board members must see that the community that elected them want our student-centered proposals approved. Rallies and other collective actions are essential for building community awareness and support.

24. **Why is it imperative that every member talk with parents and other community members about this issue?**

When community members are fully informed about student’s needs and understand how MDEA’s proposals will positively impact students, most will support and advocate for these proposals and will join us in helping to convince Board Members to do the right thing.
25. **Can the District really afford to agree to MDEA’s proposals?**

   The District can’t afford not to agree to MDEA’s proposals. The issues the proposals address, especially class size, are the reason that student achievement is not what it could be and is the primary reason many parents are removing their students from our schools, causing declining enrollment.

   The District has created a budget that does not allocate sufficient funding for the changes that our members indicated are necessary to meet students’ needs. Instead, the Board continues to fund non-critical programs and positions to the detriment of students. The District’s financial statements overestimate current expenses so that the community cannot really know how much money is available for students.

   Ultimately, a budget is a moral document that reflects the priorities of an organization’s leadership.

26. **Why do people tell me I should start putting money aside?**

   If we go on strike, members will not be paid for the days of the strike and should plan on having less income for that month.

27. **Can teachers encourage parents to keep their students home from school during a strike?**

   Solidarity with the striking workers is the foundation action of the labor movement. At its core, the labor movement is about fairness and doing what it right. Engaging in solidarity will teach students important lessons and grow their character.

   Of course, it will be difficult for teachers to encourage parents to keep their students home from school during a strike, just as it must have been difficult for farmworkers to tell people not to eat grapes. But their collective actions led to a redistribution of income that created higher living standards for millions.

   The stakes are just as high in the current struggles around school budgets. Schools are being starved of resources as the billionaires that own corporations get wealthier and wealthier. Our students are being denied the basic human right of a good education. It is time to say enough is enough.

   This is a pivotal moment in history. When students participate, they become active players in creating a better future for everyone.