
District Employees represented by Madison Teachers Inc. shut out of Employee Handbook conversations, confronted by uncertainty of the proposed Austerity Budget, and a School Board unwilling to provide additional mental health support for students with presumed withdrawal of School Resource Officers.

TODAY, Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) administration placed their proposed Employee Handbook changes to Monday’s Board of Education agenda - without appropriate employee input. MMSD is utilizing a “divide and conquer” strategy during times of crisis which harms our entire school community.

This proposal includes changes to surplus/layoff language that gives administration full control over the criteria used in determining who is subject to surplus/layoff as well as changing the Statutory notification requirements (May 15th of the prior school year), for layoff to a 30-day notice. It also includes language that both parties had agreed to in a meet and confer session on June 15.

This, combined with MMSD’s wrongful base wage survey bypassing MTI and dealing directly with represented employees, presents a drastic shift in employment relations and the way we have conducted work on the Handbook, base wage negotiations, and other (previously) collaborative efforts. These actions set a new precedent for the District bypassing existing processes and ignoring the exclusive representatives that members have democratically elected and certified. To do this at a time of crisis creates additional and unnecessary stress, anxiety, and damages relationships between the stakeholders.
MTI President Andy Waity said, “MTI and MMSD have worked to create a collaborative relationship based on mutual trust and respect around the Employee Handbook since 2015. Our past practice of working together has helped us reach consensus on previous Handbook matters and has helped guide our work on wages and salaries. As a Union we are committed to processes that amplify the voice of all employees. We know that having a strong voice in decision making is a primary factor that helps attract and retain high-quality employees. Given the many stresses and challenges facing our members we were really taken aback that the administration chose to approach things in this divisive and disrespectful manner.”

In addition, prior to Monday’s regular school board meeting, the BOE will be voting on the School Resource Officer contract between MPD and MMSD. Following MTI’s lead, the school board will be looking to terminate the contract. At the same time, it appears unlikely that they will be addressing the demands for additional resources that the MTI Board of Directors put forward. “We call for the removal of all School Resource Officers from the four comprehensive high schools with the caveat that this only occurs when all four high schools are properly staffed with counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and mental health specialists according to the national American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) recommended levels.”

Plus, on Monday night, the Madison Board of Education will also vote on the draft budget for the 2020-21 school year. This is a budget that puts the burden of the State and Federal governments under funding of public education directly on the shoulders of staff with the corresponding negative impacts for our students and families.

Recognizing that it has been a busy and emotionally challenging end of the school year, MTI advocates are turning their attention to serious concerns regarding the proposed unilateral changes to the Employee Handbook, the District’s failure to recognize MTI as the certified bargaining agent for the vast majority of MMSD employees, a lack of funding, and concerns that MTI’s caveat that other mental health support staff be added into high schools where SROs may be removed. We want our voices heard and to be a part of the conversations.

MTI is a member-led and democratic organization that represents about 3,000 employees of the Madison Metropolitan School District. The Union has maintained a strong voice on wages, benefits, and working conditions while advocating on issues of racial and social justice.

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