

Hello SVVEA Members,

I trust you and your students have settled in for the New Year following a rewarding break over the holiday season. The season of giving brought a reminder that a small amount of goodwill can go a long way towards generating a positive environment. The inverse is true as well, as we've experienced with the District's stance towards classroom coverage compensation and annual leave taken on a day that winds up with emergency school closures.

SNOW DAYS / ANNUAL LEAVE For some of us the break got off to an unpleasant start. The "Oh, by the way . . ." email from "Finance_HR Information" the day after the snow day on Tuesday, Dec. 14 was poorly timed, particularly for one that communicated such controversial news: the District will dock a leave day for a prearranged absence that fell on the snow day. No rationale was provided. (See the original email below.) Understandably, I was overwhelmed with feedback from SVVEA members and building Association Reps. I can't disagree with the comparisons to the Scrooge and the Grinch Who Stole Christmas. Having heard every ticked off members' every good reason to *not* dock prearranged annual leave days that coincide with unplanned school closures, let me share some of the compelling arguments for the District to reverse course on this decision.

Consider first those in the immediate path of this regrettable decision: conscientious teachers who arranged and prepped in advance for a sub, for a day during the midweek, thereby avoiding the high sub demand of a Monday or Friday. While it was likely not the intent of the deciders, those directly impacted felt the decision was mean-spirited in an arbitrary and punitive way. Another unstated and hopefully unintentional message sent: the District values the leave day cost itself more than it values the teachers.

With fewer than 75 teachers and their substitutes impacted on December 14th, the sub cost saved was well under \$10,000. With district budget expenditures of \$255,000,000 and a \$22,000,000 unassigned general fund balance, the cost to the District is completely inconsequential.

I have checked with other Front Range local associations for their policies in this event and I've have heard back from most. SVVSD is keeping company with Poudre, Adams 12, Greeley & Denver. Other districts, including Thompson, Boulder, Jeffco, Aurora and Colorado Springs, have the more thoughtful position on the issue. Among all of the districts it's a mixed bag, from unwritten practice to being formalized in a bargaining agreement or BOE policy. In St. Vrain there is no definitive rule – it's not found in our Master Agreement or our BOE policies. The last district-wide closing was during the Flood of 2013. That catastrophe only set precedent for arbitrary decision making in an emergency district closure situation. On the first two days of closure prearranged leave days were docked, on the last three days it was not. Go figure.

Too lengthy to detail here, there are many other consequences, largely unintended and predominately negative in nature that will result if the snow day/annual leave decision is not reversed. This issue has been raised with District leadership and its being taken into consideration. I have asked for more expediency with this decision than we've experienced with the consideration of class coverage compensation. I'm cautiously optimistic that this decision will be reversed.

CLASS COVERAGE COMPENSATION After mulling the issue over for two and a half months, the District has finally agreed to class coverage compensation moving forward starting this semester *and* paying it *retroactively* to the beginning of this school year. The details for securing the retroactive pay will be worked out when Fran Docherty (SVVEA's UniServ Director) and I meet with HR this Thursday. Stay tuned.

There are a couple of different options for the District when it is unable to fill a sub assignment. If a sub does not show up for a secondary level teacher, other subs in the building may be directed to fill-in during their teacher's plan period. Other teachers may also be asked (even directed by their principal) to fill-in during their plan periods, which is to be compensated at the hourly rate of \$30. Occasionally at the middle level, but especially at the elementary level, teachers have also been asked to split up an absent teacher's students when a sub is not available. In these situations, it's the District not offering the volunteering teachers compensation (the total not to exceed the daily sub rate) that has been tormenting teachers. While there is no Master Agreement language allowing principals to direct this class coverage, it hasn't felt very voluntary either when teachers have been asked to do so. It's in teachers' nature to want to help out colleagues and their students, but this should not be taken advantage of by administrators.

It is frustrating that it's taken so long to resolve this issue with the District. The cost is again inconsequential. It's only about \$20,000, but primarily it's the fact that the cost would not exceed the amount that would have been paid out if subs had been available. It'd be less, actually, because the District is not incurring the additional costs of PERA, Medicare, etc. when a sub is paid.

Our substitute coordinator, Leann Cooper, indicates that overall the sub shortage has diminished somewhat recently, but the long term view remains challenging.

In conclusion, the District has struggled with the notion that a small amount of compensation can go a long way towards making employees enjoy their workplace. Further, these are issues the District can address without negotiated agreement. Nonetheless, you can be certain that annual leave will be on the table again this year. Your bargaining team looks forward to your input in this regard!

TRIP MERKLEIN
PRESIDENT

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From: Finance_HR Information Notice [mailto:finance_hrinfo@svvsd.org]

Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 9:31 AM

To: All SVVSD Staff

Subject: Snow Day and Leave Days



ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOLS
academic excellence by design

Department of Human Resources

395 S. Pratt Parkway, Longmont, Colorado 80501

303-682-7367

To: All Staff

From: HR and Finance Department

Subject: Snow Day and Leave Days

Date: December 16, 2015

On December 15, 2015, a snow day was called for St. Vrain Valley Schools. For any staff member who was previously scheduled to take the day off (annual, PTO, vacation, bereavement, etc.), the day will continue to be counted as leave.

Time card staff who were scheduled to work on December 15th, will be paid for the weather day. A Job Code labeled "Weather Day" has been added to Time Clock Plus. Secretaries, managers and authorized approvers must enter the Weather Day job code for employees scheduled to work, in the same way you enter PTO for an employee.

Classified employees who were approved/required to work on December 15th will need to turn in an extra duty time card for the hours worked.

In order to ensure that all employees are paid for the weather day on their December paycheck, we are asking that all "Weather Day Leaves" be entered and approved by the end of the day today.

If you have any questions please contact the Nancy Shetler (shelter_nancy@svvsd.org) in the Payroll Department – 303-702-7528 or x57528.