

PCTA ACTION



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Tentative Agreement reached on Health Plans

Last Tuesday, the School Board approved a change in health plan administrator from Humana to Aetna. The Employee Well Being and Satisfaction Committee had input into this process and were very much in favor of this change in administrators.

The lower overall pharmacy costs, the fact that there will be minimal disruption, greater access to primary physicians and not having to have referrals for specialists were very much attractors to the EWBS committee. We were also pleased with the Districts commitment to onsite support for employee assistance. We realize that health insurance increases are a reality across the nation and across industries, every year. This year an increase was inevitable but once again, EWBS was able to convince the District to pay the lion's share of the \$5.8 million increase, with the District picking up close to \$5,000,000 of the increase while employees pick up the remaining \$822, 000. For an employee on an individual plan, that comes to \$2 per paycheck for an increase of \$40 for the year.

Pinellas offers one of the top benefit packages in the state. This is a good business practice that keeps us competitive with surrounding Districts, but it is safe to state that this is made possible, in a large part, by active Union participation. For more information on this, visit our website at www.pcta-pespa.org

Bargaining Obstacles

As the bargaining teams try to reach agreement on the contract for the next three years, many of the articles in the contract will be agreed upon with little or no change or debate. Others, will prove to be more challenging. Aside from pay increases, which are always made more difficult by our state's unwillingness to fund public education adequately, several other hurdles may prove a hardship to reaching an agreement. The District will want to continue to make cowards of our administrators by submitting to a law that allows annual contract teachers to be non-renewed without just cause or due process. They claim the contract language we won last year is now "outlawed" language. PCTA feels that job security is even more important to teachers than pay raises.

Also, a point of contention is the workload. More is demanded of teachers while at the same time, the District wants teachers to have less uninterrupted planning. This ties in to yet another sticking point in that we are evaluated without consideration to the fact that they are evaluating us beyond what can be accomplished in a contract day and making it impossible to reach a rating of highly effective without giving up your personal life. We have administrators that have not rated a single teacher as highly effective in three consecutive years but they want to deny us a fair appeal process. Add to this the extra work from larger class sizes and we are in full swing of the "more for less" philosophy that has been hurting working class families in recent years.

The next bargaining meeting is Tuesday September 18th at 5:00 in room D-134 of the Administration Bldg. Spectators are welcome.

Restorative Practice Training

PCTA has been very supportive of the Restorative Practice initiative. We have made a point of having members of the Human Civil Rights Committee trained as trainers and we would like to see the District implement this program with fidelity. RP should be used, not only as a way of repairing relationships with students in need of discipline but also as a way of replacing the climate of fear teachers are forced to work in, where an administrator is viewed as an adversary instead of a source for assistance.

PCTA, however, feels that the message from some principals regarding mandatory training is problematic. Training after hours cannot be mandatory. PCTA encourages teachers to take advantage of the \$20/hr stipend for, voluntary after-hours training, but we understand that some of our teachers have childcare, parental care and/or second job responsibilities. That does not mean we do not want every teacher to receive this valuable training. Teachers should be allowed to attend a training on the non-student day on October 15th at any school that offers it. Also, it may be cost effective to pay for subs so that teachers can utilize a TDE.

I also had a concern about Principal's requiring teachers to use circles before they are ready or at least provided prompts to counter some of the unexpected and sometimes shocking things students may bring to the group about their lives outside of school. These concerns and suggestions have been brought to the District as we hope to move the restorative practice agenda forward in a manner that keeps our teachers engaged and not overwhelmed by what some may view as another element to be evaluated on and another task on their plate. We will report on any developments made on this topic.

Climate Survey

There has been a great deal of clamor on our facebook page over a short “*teacher pulse*” survey sent out by the Superintendent. The District will continue to send out their usual survey that, as far as PCTA and PESPA are concerned, is put into place to earn accreditation for the District from outside agencies, but in no way uncovers the true climate of our District. The Teacher pulse survey of 4 or 5 questions came about after Dr, Grego and myself spoke about pinpointing trouble spots in our District. Past surveys were not great indicators because so few people participated in them. With this short survey, there is no excuse for employees to not take part in it as it takes under a minute to complete. This survey will provide us a tool to investigate potential problem spots. For example, if a majority of staff members at a school indicate that they do not feel supported by their administration, both the District and PCTA will have cause to investigate and hopefully repair the situation.

In the past we have had a large number of staff members from a single school come to PCTA with complaints that they kept silent about for a number of years. This puts PCTA in a position that we are addressing complaints that have expired timelines to grieve and makes us appear like we are harassing an administration that has never had a complaint against them before. This survey, if we are all willing to utilize it and are honest in our replies, could help identify potential problems early. The PCTA-PESPA leadership encourages everyone to take the survey. It may be much more effective than you think. Look for it September 19th and 20th.

PCTA-PESPA is also working on a short survey that can be accessed through our website. The data we collect from that will help us in future bargaining and for organizing around issues that impact us all.