

The President's

Solidarity Report



In this Issue: Beat them at their own game, How low down and dirty can they get?, Strong Union-Management Partnership Increases Student Performance, Know Your Rights, Florida Teachers Gap, Golden Apple, PESPA Toy Drive

BEAT THEM AT THEIR OWN GAME

I used to complain about the amount of energy that was spent on politics. I have always been an Independent voter who avoided political parties. President George Washington had warned our fledgling nation that political parties would “*tear the country apart*”. A less noble reason I remain independent is because I dislike anyone making decisions for me and my nature is one that causes me to do the opposite of what I am told I should do. (Yes, I put my parents to the test growing up)

As President of PCTA, I kept us clear of any political races that did not directly affect our members. In fact, with the exception of School Board races, we have only endorsed in a couple of races to support union members seeking office. I like to think that this is what made us such a formidable force during School Board elections. Our members were not calloused by the call to vote in numerous elections and they responded in full force when we needed them.

My core beliefs have not changed but even a die-hard political recluse like myself has to see the ugly handwriting on the wall. Public education is under attack and has been for the past dozen years. Just look at the bills that get defeated year after year, only to reappear the next year like zombies from the *Walking Dead*. Bills that attack our retirement, certification, evaluation, union standing, and contract status come at us no matter how many times they are defeated. While

people like myself were not watching because of our distaste for politics, those that seek to profit from a private education system have filled both House and Senate with their champions who stand ready to destroy the very heart and core of democracy; our free public education system.

How do we stay out of politics when every issue affecting our members originates from a decision by misinformed lawmakers or those with a financial interest in the destruction of public education? PCTA advocates for our members and wrestles over issues with our District. While we must continue to argue these issues with the District, we should not forget their origin. We push for greater control of our evaluations, but let's not forget that the concept of a business model evaluation based on student results did not come from anyone at our District.

While we confront our District on evaluations, the people responsible for the legislation behind the evaluation system are smiling. They smile because we are doing their work for them by fighting each other. It is a divide and conquer approach that has served them well in recent years. This example runs true no matter what issue you insert to replace the evaluation issue; be it class size, job security, student discipline, testing, etc.. We are being set up to fail to prove their theory that public education is failing our children. Why else would they give tax money to charter schools that, oddly enough, do not require the oversight or accountability that we are saddled with. If they really believed their theory, they would demand charters have the same accountability as public schools. As is often the case throughout history, if you want to know the reason for any conflict, look towards economics and who stands to gain financially. Follow the money and you will find reasons that have nothing to do with caring for future generations. Education is the modern gold rush, the largest budget item in any state's budget and when you are focused on making a fortune, it is a certainty that the education of children will become a secondary consideration.

So how do we live up to our nickname as *Defenders of Public Education*? We could stick to our current way of business and battle over issues gifted to us by Tallahassee politicians who enjoy watching public education destroy itself from within, or we could go after the true enemy. The problem of course is that we would have to engage in that political arena that causes many of us anxiety. I suggest that a compromise is necessary.

First, we must stay true to all the reasons that attracted us to union membership. Most of those reasons can be reduced to a strong belief in public education as the right of every American child. Secondly, we maintain our independence as citizens and vote our conscience without feeling pressure to vote one way or another. Because our union is such a diverse group, we must focus on the single issue that binds us together, public education, and hold accountable the politicians that vote on our single issue. It is *not* the job of PCTA to tell its members who to vote for as much as it will be to let members know how candidates voted or are likely to vote on

education issues that impact them. Those lawmakers that voted for harmful anti-union/anti-public education bills must be held accountable.

You may wonder if we can make a difference. The members of PCTA and PESPA represent close to 5,000 voting families. When we educate potential members about looming educational legislation, we can double our numbers. When we collaborate with the other Pinellas County employee locals (SEIU & PBA) we are over 14,000 voting families or approximately 28,000 voters. When we unite with our labor brothers and sisters in all the trades, the police, fire fighters, and letter carriers, we can carry Pinellas for education friendly candidates regardless of what party they choose to affiliate with. This is what we did during the last election when we helped two union sisters get elected to the Pinellas County School Board. With four open seats in 2018, the dream of having a voting majority of union friendly School Board members is within our grasp.

I still dislike having to deal with politics but if we are to be the true *Defenders of Public Education*, then we are going to have to go on the offense and meet our enemies where they have done the greatest amount of damage to public education. We have a great deal more power than anyone realizes. Members understand the concept of strength in numbers but their own doubts hinder us. Put aside your fears, vow to make a difference, stick together and we will change the way this state views public education.

In Solidarity,

Mike

HOW LOW DOWN AND DIRTY CAN THEY GET?

Every year the people who are supposed to represent us gather together and try and figure out how to get that pesky teachers union out of their way so they can be free to plunder the public education system. This year a familiar sounding Bill was submitted by Representative Scott Plakon (R) from District 29. HB 25 would force union locals to file an application annually. Once issued, the application will need to be renewed annually and the mountain of hoops required for a labor organization to jump through required 4 written pages to list.

In addition, any local representing less than 50% of the employees eligible for representation, will be decertified as the sole bargaining agent and have to petition the commission for recertification.

The purpose of this legislation is clearly to hurt working class families and the unions that keep them in the ranks of middle class America. What makes this even more low-down and dirty is that we live in a right to work (for less) state where no one is forced to join a union or pay an agency fee even though they may gain from having a union represent them at the bargaining table. So who does this legislation actually help? Is it a coincidence that the police and firefighters, whose perspective unions are near 100%, are exempt from this law?

Article 1, section 6 of the Florida Constitution established a constitutional right of collective bargaining for public sector employees in 1968 largely because of the sacrifice of educators who went on strike that year. The right to collective bargaining is a fundamental constitutional right. Imagine if a law was passed violating a fundamental right of the US Constitution, but not for all citizens, only for some. To say that this is simply putting restrictions on the right to collective bargaining (as if that makes it any better), imagine allowing some people full rights to vote but others can only vote if they pass the restriction of being over five feet tall in height.

Do my examples sound crazy? You bet they do, but sitting back and allowing lawmakers to take away a fundamental constitutional right is just as crazy and we must not stand for it!
HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

RESEARCH SHOWS THAT STRONG UNION-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP INCREASES STUDENT PERFORMANCE

A national study on union-management partnerships and educator collaboration in public schools across the U.S. shows that high levels of collaboration between educators positively impacts student achievement. The study also shows that collaboration lowers teacher turnover and increases teacher engagement. At a time when teacher shortages are being reported in states across the country, this finding could impact how school districts plan to retain their teachers.

A study that includes more than 400 schools in 21 school districts across six states including California, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Jersey, outline the following results:

- Improvement on student performance on standardized tests.
 - 12.5% more students met or exceeded standards in English at highly collaborative schools compared to the least collaborative schools.
 - 4.5% more students met or exceeded standards in Math at highly collaborative schools compared to the least collaborative schools.

- Reduction in voluntary teacher turnover and increased school commitment of faculty.
 - When collaboration is high, there was no statistical difference between turnover in high-poverty and low-poverty schools. Conversely, turnover in high-poverty schools was 3.5 times the rate of that in low-poverty schools when school-level educator collaboration was low.
- Highly collaborative schools and strong union-leader networks increase cross-school knowledge.
 - Teachers in schools with stronger collaboration are more likely to know about and implement innovations from other schools.

Over the past 16 years, federal efforts to improve public education have focused on market reforms like charter schools and voucher programs. To date, there is little evidence that these reforms have produced the promised benefits. However, for the past 10 years, research reveals a different approach to improving and reforming public education--one based on building strong relationships among teachers' unions and school administrations, and developing collaborative institutions in schools and school districts focused on improving teaching and learning. Our findings reveal that union-management partnerships help to catalyze productive collaborative behaviors that benefit students and educators alike.

For the study, union-management partnership was defined by the extent to which union leaders and district administration worked together to improve teaching and learning. School districts with strong partnerships tended to have more collaborative schools. In fact, formal union-management partnerships at the district-level seem to be a catalyst for building highly collaborative schools.

In Pinellas, PCTA and the District have worked closely to find ways to support new teachers. Teachers new to the profession go through a full year of Foundations training from our national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers. PCTA has earned strong representation on the Data Working Group and the Appraisal Advisory Committee and is working closely with the District on a focused Marzano Evaluation model that should benefit educators. We work closely with the Human Resources Department of PCS on issues that affect educators and students. It is important that this collaboration continues and that the forces that attempt to divide us are not successful. If we keep our eyes on what is best for students, we will discover it is best for educators, our District and for public education.

(Saul A. Rubinstein and John E. McCarthy March 2014 *Center For American Progress*)

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

LESSON PLANS

ARTICLE 27 - 2B

10. Teachers shall plan for instruction and maintain lesson plans either in a written or electronic format for the purpose of preparing daily lessons for each course they teach. Lesson plans shall be “standards based” and aligned to District curriculum resources and shall be followed with sufficient flexibility to allow for varying conditions, events, interruptions, and the varied needs of the students. Lesson plans shall be readily available for review by the administration and for the use of each potential substitute teacher who may be called upon to conduct the regular teacher’s classes. At the discretion of the administrator, teachers may be required to submit their lesson plans to the administrator for review.

FLORIDA’S TEACHER GAP, NO MYSTERY

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/floridas-teacher-gap-is-no-mystery_us_5a14bda5e4b009b331ad75a1

11/21/2017 07:00 pm ET Updated Nov 22, 2017 Peter Greene, HUFFPOST

Shocking news in last week’s Sun-Sentinel:

Almost three months into the school year, thousands of public school students in South Florida still don’t have a permanent teacher —a problem expected to get worse as more educators flee the classroom and the number of those seeking teaching degrees plummets.

Okay, not shocking. Utterly predictable, given Florida’s unending efforts to create the worst atmosphere for public education in the country. Here are some of the things they’ve done, in no particular order:

- * They have tried to make it possible for [parents to stamp out the teaching of science](#).
- * They have given charters [the unchecked ability to steal local tax dollars](#).
- * They have made [an absolute disastrous amateur-hour hash](#) out of their Big Standardized Test.
- * They have made [successful students repeat third grade](#) for failing to love the BST.
- * They have declared — in court — that [teacher-prepared report cards are meaningless](#).
- * They have demonstrated how badly [teacher merit pay can fail](#).
- * They made [a dying child take the Big Standardized Test](#).
- * They turned [recess into a political football](#).
- * They based a strategic plan [based on bad retail management](#).
- * They abolished tenure and [fired teachers for advocating for students](#).

- * They've allowed racist underfunding of schools to flourish.
- * They have provided ample proof that an A-F school rating system doesn't work.
- * They host experiments in computerized avatar classrooms.
- * They have charter legislation hustled through the capital by lawmakers who profit from it.
- * They allow more charter misbehavior than you can shake a stick at.
- * They have created a charter money grab law so onerous and obnoxious they have actually moved public schools to sue the state government.

All of this over and above the continued drip, drip, drip of starving public schools of resources and finding new ways to treat public school teachers with disrespect. And the pay stinks. There is no reason to be surprised that Florida teachers are “fleeing.” And the article notes just how much fleeing is going on. Broward County lost 1,000 teachers last year — and that's not counting retirees.

The Sun-Sentinel article is brutal, noting that the drain of teachers leads to economic problems for communities, as well as becoming a self-perpetuating problem — as the teacher pool is drained in schools, schools become less effective, which means they turn out fewer and fewer grads well-prepared for or interested in teaching. The article piles on the anecdotal evidence. A teacher who left, tired of constant testing and lack of autonomy. A teacher who left because you can't afford to be a single mom on a Florida teacher salary. A teacher who handles over thirty kids in an honors class because the state class size law only applies to “core” classes.

And of course, Florida is “solving” the problem by opening up alternative paths, because the way to get better teachers and fill teaching jobs is by making it possible to slap any warm body into a classroom. My favorite bar-lowering idea— Florida Atlantic University will give Palm Beach Schools a list of students who flunked out of medical and science programs so that those students can be recruited to teach. And meanwhile the remaining dedicated, qualified teachers of Florida wonder how much longer they can hold on.

Of course, somehow, these champions of free market, these lovers of the invisible hand, cannot figure out that if people won't sell you a good or service under the terms you set, free market competition demands that you offer better terms and conditions. It's as simple as that. If you can't buy a Porsche for \$1.98, that doesn't mean there's an automobile shortage. Even convenience stores understand that if you can't get enough quality people to work for you, you have to offer better terms of employment. Florida's leaders simply insist on pretending not to understand this, even as they try to starve public education so that the unregulated world of Florida charter schools will look more appealing. This is like setting fire to an apartment building so that the tenants will “choose” to move into a shifty trailer park operation, while in the meantime you “try” to hire firefighters by offering \$1-an-hour wages and a punch-in-the-face benefits.

This — all of this — I have to remind you, is what Education Secretary Betsy DeVos thinks is the shining light that our nation should be following. This disastrous train wreck, this state that has worked hard to destroy its public education system — this is what DeVos thinks the nation should be emulating. Run the public system into the ground, drive the teachers away, and sell the pieces to privatizers.

NOMINATE A COLLEAGUE FOR THE GOLDEN APPLE AWARD



In association with

THE LAW OFFICES OF
NANCY L. CAVEY

GOLD & DIAMONDSM
SOURCE



**Nominate A Deserving Teacher
To Win A \$150 Gift Certificate
Towards Their Own Class!**

Teachers...
Nominate Someone!

What We Offer For You:

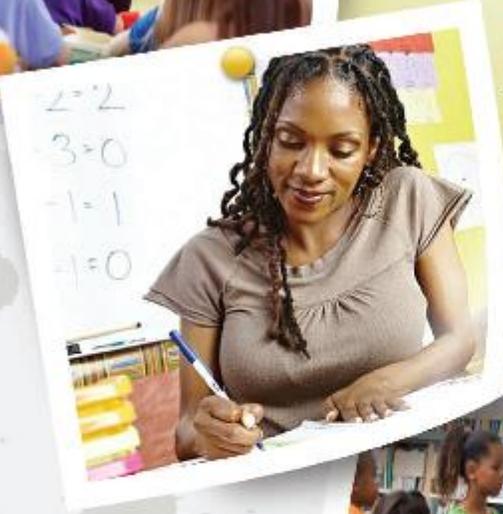
- ✔ \$150 Gift Certificate
- ✔ Recognition Certificate Award
- ✔ Golden Apple Award Pin
- ✔ Feature Article in "The Educator"
- ✔ Year End Honoree Banquet

NOMINATION OPEN: AUGUST 5, 2017

Each month we will pick 2 teachers from a school in the Tampa Bay area to be our winner! To nominate a deserving teacher, please contact us at the below email address with your nominations!

Email Your Nomination to: Apps@GoldenAppleAwardTampabay.com

All Rights Reserved. All teachers are only allowed to win 1 time in any given 10 month school year. This award is presented by the Law Office of Nancy L. Cavey in association with the Gold & Diamond Source.



PESPA TOY DRIVE

The Educators of Pinellas have been generous every year since PESPA started having a Toy Drive. Each year we ask for your support and each year you come through for kids who come from low income families that struggle to provide holiday gifts. No child deserves to be forgotten during the holidays. Make a child's holiday and donate an unwrapped gift. Giving really can make you feel good!

Educators Make Dreams Come True.



PESPA Toy Drive



We are looking for your help again this year to fill the tree with wonderful gifts for those children that are less fortunate. You may donate gift certificates, clothes, and toys for all ages from newborn to teenager. We will deliver them unwrapped to the Juvenile Welfare Board by Wednesday December 13, 2017.

Unwrapped toys can be dropped off at the PCTA-PESPA (Jade T. Moore) Building. If you would like the PESPA elves to shop for you, monetary donations can be sent to PESPA prior to Wednesday December 6, 2017.

Please help us provide the best holiday ever for these children. Set up a plan at your work site/school to advertise and collect for the toy drive.

Thank you for your support.



For more information please contact us at (727) 585-6518

Drop off location 650 Seminole Blvd, Largo Florida 33770