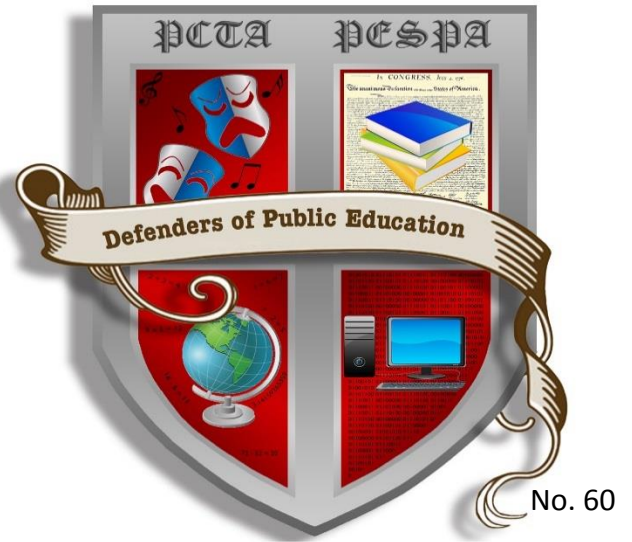


The President's

# Solidarity Report



**In this Issue: Feeling Valued, Jeff Larsen for School Board, Boo-Bash, Nicole Carr for School Board, PCTA-PESPA PAC endorsements, Message to Parents, Hurricane Relief, Tom McKone for East Lake Fire Commission**

## FEELING VALUED?

Pinellas County Schools recently sent out a short “Teacher Pulse” survey which asked school level staff to evaluate aspects about their workplace. PCTA viewed this as an opportunity to pinpoint problems within the District, particularly with School based leadership. It had always been a problem when PCTA aggressively investigated an administrator who had never had a complaint against them because the entire staff was too intimidated to file a grievance. We appear to be less than collaborative when we investigate administrators with stellar records free of complaints even though we have a slew of complaints from teachers who prefer to be anonymous. The problem here is that PCTA will never allow the District to discipline one of our members because of an anonymous complaint and so we must respect the District’s right to not allow one of their administrators to be condemned anonymously as well.

The District’s survey showed that 70% of our teachers feel valued by their administrators and 80% feel safe at school. This contradicts my initial suspicions based on the number of, and types of complaints we receive at the PCTA-PESPA offices. PCTA-PESPA also placed a survey on our website and to my surprise, only 10% of our members took the survey and of those that took the survey, many refused to provide their last 4 digits of their Social Security numbers, which we use to ensure that no one takes the survey multiple times. The reason, some

members gave, for not providing the number is that it might identify them and they feared the District would find out they complained.

Needless to say, I was disappointed. Did I mention it was on our website? If there is even one person who feels that their union would be the ones to rat them out to the District, we are in worse shape than I imagined.

I have been telling the District that a climate of fear exists for four years now. I had hoped that the “teacher pulse survey” would verify that beyond doubt. The results however, were a mixed bag of nuts. They do however, point to a number of schools where as much as one third of the staff feels they are not valued. Those schools will be looked at closely by PCTA-PESPA. If you feel you are at a school that has an unhealthy climate, and the results of the survey indicates that your staff gathers every morning to hold hands and sing Kumbaya, well your union’s job was made a great deal tougher because of employees who were too afraid to answer honestly on the survey.

The District can, has, and should use their results to point out that they have a happy workforce. I hope that what I hear every day is truly the exceptions and not the rule. I am, however, skeptical and of the belief that if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck, it most likely is a duck. While I believe there is a fear factor at work, I am becoming less patient with the excuse. I can understand people being afraid but, I cannot wrap my mind around the idea that the fear is greater than the need for change.

PCTA-PESPA is always ready to fight the good fight for members and that will not change. However, educators need to stand up for themselves. Not everyone needs to stand tall, but they do need to stand. This is our time. Change is within our grasp. The law of supply and demand is on our side and the winds of change are coming to Tallahassee. All that means we have a lot to gain in the near future but, the only way to gain it all is to lose the one thing that FDR said was the only thing to fear, “Fear Itself”.

In Solidarity,

Mike



**WE HAVE A TABLE AT THE BOO BASH,  
JOIN US FOR SOME HALLOWEEN FUN!**



HELP US DO WHAT EDUCATORS DO BEST, PUT SMILES ON THE FACES OF CHILDREN.



*PCTA-PESPA Political Action Committee  
Recommendations*

**School Board, District 2** Jeff Larsen

**School Board, District 3** Nicole Carr

**School Board, District 6** No Endorsement

**Senate District 16** Amanda Murphy

**Senate District 24** Lindsey Cross

**House District 65** Sally Laufer

**House District 66** Alex Heeren

**House District 67** Dawn Douglas

**House District 69** Jennifer Webb

**Chief Financial Officer** Jeremy Ring

**Attorney General** Sean Shaw

**GOVERNOR**

Andrew Gillum

**Recommendations on Constitutional Amendments:**

**Amendment #1: Oppose**

**Amendment #4: Support**

**Amendment #5: Oppose**

**Amendment #7: Oppose**

**Amendment #8: Court ruled to remove it from ballot**



\*\*\* *The PAC Committee urges everyone to read through each amendment in its entirety. They are very misleading and convoluted. They can sound like you are voting for something good but then include items entirely unrelated to each other. It is possible to be voting for something you are against because it is titled on behalf of an issue we can all agree on. Make sure you understand exactly what you are voting for.*

# **Message to Parents: Are You Aware?**

1. Crowded Classrooms mean:
  - less individual attention for your child
  - Secondary teachers have added an entire class without extra planning time to grade papers, read reports, prepare lessons.
  - Less ability for small group work
  - More classroom disruptions
2. While the state has eased up on toxic testing, the District has teachers doing bi-weekly assessments, even in kindergarten. Our students are more than a test score.
3. Your child's class is periodically interrupted by as many as 8 visiting administrators at a time. This takes the teacher off track and causes students to be distracted and makes instructors and students feel intimidated.
4. Teachers are being forced to spend more of their valuable planning time in meetings, instead of preparing for your child's next lesson.
5. Often, our classrooms lack the resources that an instructor needs to get the job done.
6. Our libraries and our librarians are being neglected as a resource for students.
7. Guidance Counselors are being taken away from their primary duties for their students and spending more time in bureaucratic roles.
8. Poor working conditions for teachers and staff means a poor learning environment for our students.
9. Teachers are working with unrealistic expectations to accomplish and students are being driven to the point that school is not a fun place to be for them.
10. Your child's kindergarten curriculum is not age appropriate and the joy of learning and the socialization of students are being sacrificed for better test scores.
11. There are an inadequate number of professional support staff (instructional & non-instructional) to provide for the social – emotional needs and well-being of our students.
12. Decisions are made that impact our students and educators by people that are far removed from the classroom.
13. Frustrated students become disruptive students and take away from the learning experience of their classmates instead of being given the services they need to help them succeed.
14. An effective, or even highly effective, teacher can be let go at the end of any school year “without cause” and without due process. This often places teachers in a position where they must choose to advocate for their students or risk losing their job.
15. Teachers are evaluated by how well students do on a standardized test. This leads to undue stress for teachers and students.
16. All these obstacles to your child's education are placed in our path by members of the state legislature that set public education up for failure so that they can hand it over to the free market economy and profit on the backs of our students and educators.

# Hurricane Relief

PCTA-PESPA will be contributing to the FEA fund for Hurricane Relief. There are FEA locals with members who have lost everything. Members who have lost parts of their homes and others who have been displaced indefinitely. Several school districts are closed:

Bay – Closed until further notice

Calhoun - closed until further notice

Franklin – closed until further notice

Gadsden – closed until further notice

Gulf – tentatively planned to open Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup>

Holmes – will reopen Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>

Jackson – closed

Liberty – closed

Washington – closed until further notice

The PCTA Executive Board will be meeting to decide on a course of action to help our brothers and sisters in need. It would be an honor for the PCTA and PESPA Presidents to present a check on behalf of the union members of Pinellas, to our new FEA President Fed Ingram, for the recovery effort.

For those of you want to do more, the Florida AFL-CIO has set up a [donation link](#) . We were spared this time, but this will not be the last storm to ravage our shores. We need to take care of each other when disaster strikes and we need to be able to rebuild and return those impacted to their regular daily lives.



[Click here to view email in browser](#)

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FLORIDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# SUCCESS FROM THE START

FOR NEW EDUCATORS

## In Your Classroom

**ShareMyLesson**

<https://www.aft.org/education/share-my-lesson>

**Are you struggling with disruptive student behaviors in your classroom?** The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) provides webinars to help classroom teachers and support staff implement proactive approaches to student behavior.

