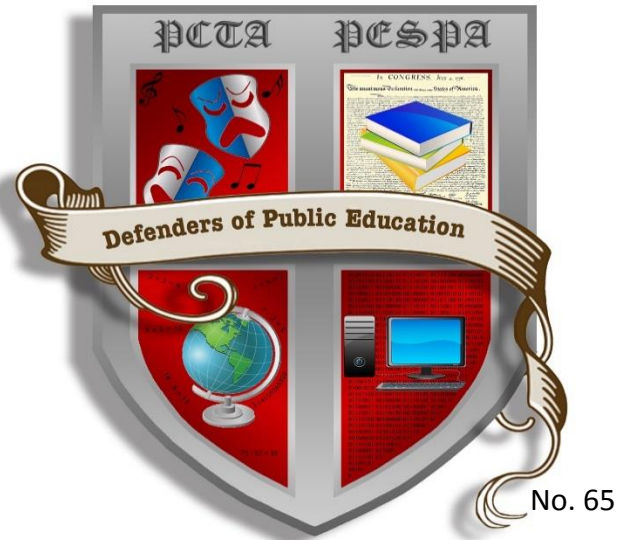


The President's

Solidarity Report



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Faculty Rep Council Meets to Discuss T/A

The PCTA Faculty Rep Council will meet this Thursday to discuss the tentative agreement that will be sent for a ratification vote to the bargaining unit on February 5th. The Council will decide, whether or not, to recommend ratification to the bargaining unit. The faculty reps attending will pick up their voting packages to take back to their schools and those who were unable to attend will receive them in the PONY. All members of the bargaining unit are eligible to vote, members and non-members. Everyone who votes will sign the voter list provided by the school rep and the school signature list must match the number of ballots cast in order for the school's ballots to be counted.

If ratified, the School Board will have the opportunity to approve the Tentative Agreement on the February 12 School Board agenda. Should the Agreement fail to be ratified, the bargaining teams would be required to go back to the bargaining table.

Every member of the Bargaining Unit will have access to the redlined version of the tentative agreement so that they can see the negotiated contract language changes well before the ratification vote to enable everyone to cast an informed vote.

Dealing with the Teacher Shortage

So, now it is official. The teacher shortage that we have been warning Tallahassee about for the past three years, is now an accepted reality among lawmakers. The exodus of teachers from the profession and the lack of interest among college students to enter the profession, is largely due to the unwillingness of the Legislature to listen to the voice of educators. Some lawmakers tend to do what they think is best for education, based on their personal experience as a student. Well, I have been to a doctor's office but I would not profess to know what is best for the medical profession based on my experience. Other law-makers base their views of education on what privatizers, who help them get elected, would like to see happen to public education. Either way, the people that serve students in the classrooms of Florida are not among the consulted.

Now that the teacher shortage has reached a critical point, how will our Governor and our Legislature address this issue? Based on past performance, using a method similar to how VAM is used to predict how much of a learning gain a child should make in each teacher's class, I would make the following predictions.

In recent years, legislation that has been crafted to attract educators; performance pay, Best & Brightest bonuses, and A-plus money has actually harmed the teaching profession. The true intent of these laws is to divide and conquer the teaching profession, pitting educators against each other as they compete for bonus money. Teaching is the most collaborative, caring and loving profession there is and teamwork is essential to success so, competitive business practices have no place in this industry. After all, we do not manufacture widgets in a factory, we prepare children to become well rounded, civic minded Americans.

Of course, behind these state sponsored bonus programs is a hidden benefit for those who would like to set public education up to fail. By giving bonuses, as opposed to wage increases, they are able to by-pass teacher unions that would have been entitled to collectively bargain these funds on behalf of all teachers. It is a good way to keep teacher pay low while providing Districts with less operating funds for negotiations with employee unions.

Aside from the crazy bonus schemes, I fear the Legislature may try to enlist more teachers by lowering the requirements to teach. This will water down our profession and falls clearly in line with the charter movement, many of which do not require the same credentials public school teachers must have. Teachers across the state are already being asked to teach out-of-field. I fear that could become an accepted practice.

I would also predict that the class size amendment will undergo further revisions. Packing more students into classes would make the shortage look less severe but none of these ill-conceived remedies that I suspect the state may undertake, will benefit our students or ease the crisis.

It is easy to criticize but I believe criticism should be accompanied by suggested solutions. If the lawmakers of Florida really are interested in attracting educators and in having a top notch education system, they must revisit and reverse legislation that has caused the present situation. All employees deserve to have at least the semblance of job security. If you are doing a good job, you should expect to have continued employment. Of course, there will be times when an employee needs to be let go, be it for discipline, reduction in force, or other non-discriminatory reasons. However, no employee should ever be denied “just cause” or “due process”. Denying an employee their right to provide for their family without looking them in the eyes and telling them why, is an act of cowardice. These are things our legal system allows prisoners to have yet, our state denies to teachers. Since denying “just cause” for non-renewal of teacher contracts was enacted, the rate of teachers entering the profession has declined and the fear among annual contract teachers of losing their source of income has grown at an alarming pace.

A second recommendation would be to fund public education at the national average. That would not only raise teacher pay but provide the resources to bring the joy of learning back to our classrooms.

One final recommendation is to “Just Let Us Teach”. Enough with all the unfunded mandates and toxic testing. Allow professional educators to do what they do best and allow them to be free of any fears that prevent them from requesting assistance from an administrator when they need it. Teaching occurs between a teacher and students, everyone else is supporting cast. Why should a teacher have to worry about asking an administrator for assistance, resources or advice? Yes, administrators evaluate teachers, but that should be the least important aspect of their job, especially when compared to ensuring every teacher has what they need to succeed in a classroom.

I do not expect our Legislators to be experts in Education, but I do expect them to consult with professional educators, School Board members and Superintendents who are charged with educating our country’s most precious resource, our kids.

2019 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parade

I would like to thank all the PCTA-PESPA members who marched together in the parade. It is always a plus for union members to demonstrate their solidarity in public. The folks who lined

up on both sides of the 1½ mile parade route applauded our group and yelled praises to the educators who serve their kids.

It was colder than we are used to but the sun was shining and the smiles on the young children and the appreciation of the community were shining on us as well. Members brought their children to march with us and I could not help admire that decision. This event is a family event enjoyed by all and a teachable moment for our children as well. What better way to honor an American Hero whose message of peace and justice is as necessary today as it was during his lifetime.





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