

The President's

Solidarity Report



In this Issue: Grades and Money, School Hours for 2019-2020, Meeting with the Times Editorial Board, Wear Red 4 Public Ed Wednesdays, Bayside Urgent Care Center

Grades and Money

Ask any teacher what effective teaching is all about and they will talk about the relationships that need to be built before learning can take place. Many of us remember when the first month of school was dedicated solely to getting to know what makes each student tick and for showing them how much their teacher cares about them. Now its about pacing guides and testing, in other words, grades and money.

Today, public education is infected with a systemic virus that was created in the think tanks of privatizers and profiteers and sold to legislators who are only too happy to accept the political contributions of billionaires.

“The Billionaires Boys Club is a discussion of how we’re in a new era of the [billionaire] foundations and their relation to education. We have never in the history of the United States had foundations with the wealth of the Gates Foundation and some of the other billionaire foundations — the Walton Family Foundation, The Broad Foundation. And these three foundations — Gates, Broad and Walton — are committed now to charter schools and to evaluating teachers by test scores. And that’s now the policy of the U.S. Department of Education. We have never seen

anything like this, where foundations had the ambition to direct national educational policy, and in fact are succeeding.” – Diane Ravitch

The motivation of these robber barons is, and always has been, to make more money. There are billions in profits to be made in privatizing education, whether it be through companies that claim expertise in administration, curriculum, turning schools around, or just “for profit” schools. Government funding of these private/charter schools allows the wealthy elite to escape paying taxes and use that money to invest in profit reaping private schools. Its no secret that the super-rich do not like to pay taxes.

The virus to our system has been cleverly disguised with key terms like “accountability & parental choice.” These terms sound great to parents but if they could see their true intent, parents would find these ideas as abhorrent as educators do.

The worst part of this scenario is that Districts follow the maliciously designed script, without complaint. Either they have bought into the billionaire’s club doctrine, the idea that teachers are to blame for everything, or they are just committed to do whatever it takes to continue receiving the pittance of funding that the State threatens to hold back from us. I find this particularly hard to swallow as Districts should be our natural allies in the war to save public education. Yet, they are just concerned about following each harmful state mandate to the letter and in many cases, placing them on steroids. So, when you hear Districts lecture educators on what is best for students, sharp educators can see that it’s all about the grades and money.

The super-rich have been very successful at corrupting our system and our lawmakers. They have placed one of their own, Betsy DeVos, as the Nations Secretary of Education, a billionaire that has spent money and resources to harm public education and create faith based, for profit replacements to the neighborhood public school. In Florida, they have placed Richard Corcoran as Commissioner of Education. (Any need for further comment?) It’s disheartening to realize that they are winning. With the District’s following orders like Hitler Youth and the Foxes guarding the hen house at the highest levels of office, what chance does public education have.

There is only one obstacle to what seems like a clear path to privatizing the public education system. That is the teachers’ union. In a right to work state, where teachers can choose not to join, this is a particularly tough battle. Fighting a powerful enemy without the support of as many as half your numbers behind you is akin to entering a boxing ring with one arm tied behind your back. Billionaires did not become billionaires by paying their employees union wages and benefits. In fact, they hate unions and are as much the natural enemy of unions as the snake is to the mongoose.

Still, we are all that stands in the way of total privatization. Blaming teachers for everything ignores the fact that the main predictor for a student’s success is social-economic background. Students from affluent neighborhoods outperform poor students who endure more homelife

stress, have less resources, and whose parents may be unable to spend the necessary time and attention to their educational needs.

One thing is certain. The Teachers' Union cannot oust such a well-entrenched and powerful enemy alone. It will take parent and community allies to save public education. If we continue to make it all about grades and money, we will turn kids off to education, behaviors will continue to escalate and we will have generations of adults who can't sign their name, read a clock, or tell you what their rights as an American citizen are because they were not taught it in school. That's because school was all about grades and money!

###

School Hours for 2019-2020

The School Board approved the student hours for the 2019-2020 school year. While the Middle School times remain the same, the District has adjusted the Elementary and High School times.

For the past two years, parents have been coming to board meetings pushing for a later High School start time. Their claim that teenagers require more sleep and that sufficient sleep leads to better grades and even performance on the athletic field, is supported by scientific evidence. The times moved slightly last year and this year it moved up another 5 minutes. Certainly, this change is not sufficient enough to appease the parents but it does demonstrate that over the past two years, the Board has, at least, noted their requests.

Coordinating the transportation of students across a District of this size is a herculean task. Moving the High School times even 5 minutes cuts a bus driver's ability to get back for Elementary pickups even tighter. The District decided to move Elementary School dismissal back 10 minutes.

Now, while this reason has some merit, the bottom line is that they wanted 10 minutes more of instruction for elementary students, especially in light of the instructional time loss due to mandatory recess. The contract between PCTA and the District gives them the management right to set the student times but it allows for PCTA to bargain the impact, if any, of such changes. The following is an excerpt from my speech addressing the School Board at the last School Board meeting:

“However, we reserve a contractual right to bargain any impact on our teachers caused by increasing the length of the student day. Currently, we are hopeful that the impact will be insignificant.

Should the extra 50 minutes a week of instructional time begin to impede on our teachers two hours of planning per week outside the student day, we would have to make a demand to bargain. I would ask that you instruct your administrators to ensure that they do not add any more to the plates of teachers so as to ensure that teacher planning is not negatively impacted.

It is possible to do what is right for students without, making life tougher on teachers.”

There may be other negative impacts that have not been demonstrated yet and cannot be proven until the new times are implemented. We depend on our members to keep us informed as they occur. If, we can demonstrate substantial negative impacts on teachers, we will address those at the school level and if need be, make a demand to bargain.

There are two main reasons for not vigorously opposing this issue at this time. First is the fact that we do not have a contractual argument to present. The teacher contractual day remains the same. Most elementary teachers are paid for a 7 ½ hour day. Of course, we know that all teachers work beyond their contract hours but should they desire to work to their contract, their hours have not changed.

Secondly, during a time when we need parents to support us, and public education in general, arguing against 10 more minutes with their kids may make parents less supportive. If you recall, the last time parents were not on the same side as teachers, we lost our shortened Wednesdays. PCTA has to weigh the benefits of fighting over an issue that we cannot win contractually at this time.

As I stated to the School Board and to Dr. Grego, I am most concerned about intrusion on the 2 hours of planning time outside of the contractual day. If Elementary teachers hold firm to limiting duty to no more than 30 minutes a day, develop start and end times that work for everyone as outlined in Article 27 (voted on by the staff) and if Principals restrain from adding additional items to the teacher plate, we should be able to do what is right for our students without any additional stress on teachers. Should that not be the case, call the PCTA office.

###

Meeting with the Times Editorial Board

On Thursday, I joined FEA President Fedrick Ingram and Hillsborough CTA President Rob Kriete in a meeting with the Tampa Bay Times Editorial Board to discuss a number of educational issues and the legislative session. Our message was clearly articulated by President Ingram in his

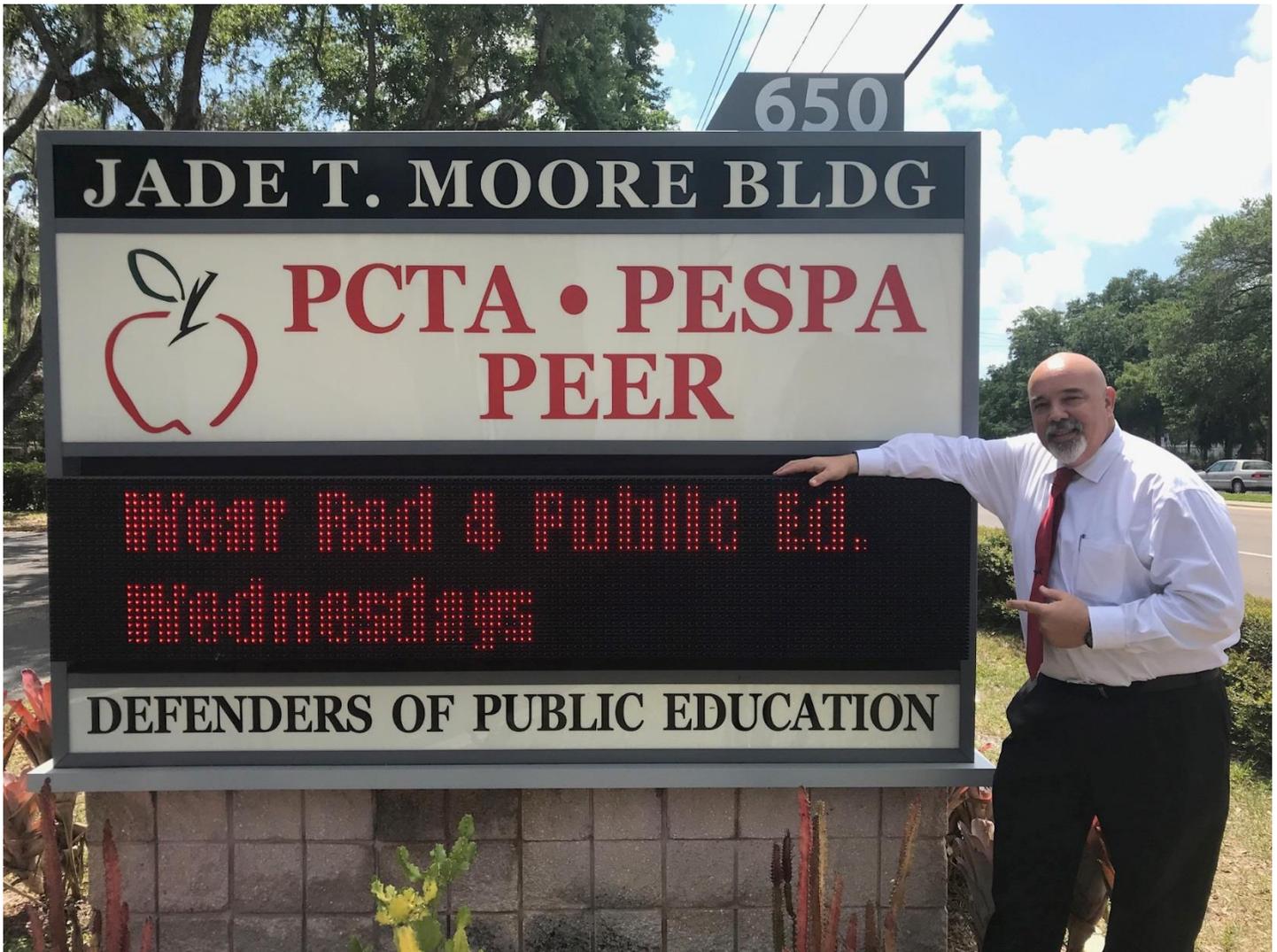
usual eloquent and charismatic manner. He was on point with our Fund Our Future campaign which has gained traction with community and parents, as is apparent by the Senate's proposed budget. While Rob Kriete and I supported our President with comments relating to our own counties, Fed carried the show making it clear that what we want is:

- Raises, Not Bonuses for all educators
- A fair living raise for our Support Professionals
- Equal accountability for any school receiving tax dollars
- Safe Schools that are properly staffed
- Working conditions and pay that will retain and attract teachers to our profession

President Ingram speaks with passion, conviction and eloquence and captivates listeners. It is always a pleasure to work alongside him.

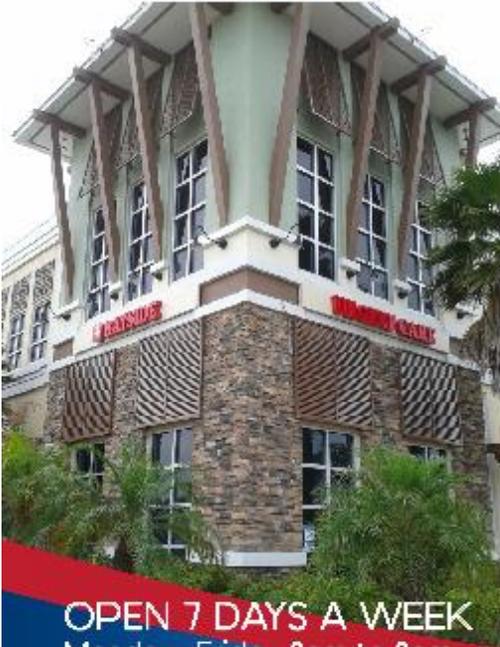


Wear Red 4 Public Ed Wednesdays



Thank you to all of you that have been wearing red on Wednesdays. I ask that you spread the word and get everyone at your school to do the same throughout the Legislative session. This is not about promoting our union, it's about a high quality education for all students. We are just showing that we care about the future of public education. I have invited the Superintendent, School Board and Administrators to do the same. Ask non-member colleagues to wear red as well. We are all united in this so please make this message grow strong enough to get people to notice. It does not have to be a PCTA or PESPA shirt, **JUST WEAR RED!**

Bayside Urgent Care Center (now accepting Aetna Insurance)



OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK
Monday—Friday 8am to 8pm
Saturday & Sunday 9am to 6 pm

Need medical care?
Come in and see us now.

No Appointment Necessary

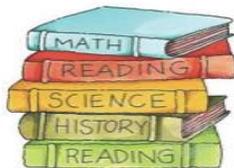
IMMEDIATE, CONVENIENT, FAST SERVICE

(727) 441-5044

We take the time to listen to you, to accurately diagnose your illnesses or injuries and ensure prompt treatment. Our friendly staff is genuinely interested in caring for your health and well being and want to ensure your experience exceeds your expectations.



1001 S. Fort Harrison Ave, Suite 101 Clearwater, Florida 33756
Fax (727) 441-6008



www.BaysideUrgentCareCenter.com

1001 S. Ft. Harrison Ave. Suite 101
Clearwater, FL 33756

(727) 441-5044

Mon - Fri 8am - 8pm & Sat - Sun 9am - 6pm

School Physical - \$10

Sports Physical - \$10

*** Please bring in this coupon for discounted price.