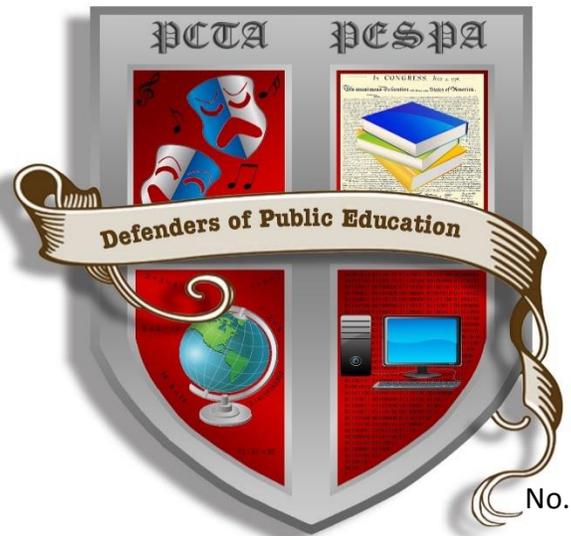


The President's

Solidarity Report



No. 72

PCTA-PESPA welcomes a new Executive Director, They call it Summer "Break", Fighting the Good Fight

PCTA-PESPA Welcomes a New Executive Director

Three years ago. The PCTA-PESPA Executive, Director Bruce Proud retired. The PCTA Executive Board decided that the best way to handle the decline in membership density, which had dipped below 50%, was to hold off on hiring an Executive Director and to hire a fourth Membership Service Director in order to offer better service to our members. I took on the role of Executive Director, in addition to my responsibilities as President of PCTA. The savings from the difference in the cost of an Executive Director and the cost of adding the additional Membership Services Director was reinvested in PCTA-PESPA. Our once floundering Professional Development Department is now robust and active offering courses that our members need and value. Added funds spread across out budget has led to an increase in membership that has us safely above the 50% decertification mark set up by state statute.

The past three years have been beneficial to PCTA-PESPA and we have demanded and received a great deal more respect from the District than when I first took office, allowing us to empower our members with stronger contract language. PCTA-PESPA is in a better place than it was three years ago but the benefits have come at a cost to me and to my family. I no longer have the strength or ability to balance two positions that are each alone, challenging and all consuming positions. So it is with great pleasure and relief, that I announce that the

Executive Board has hired former FEA President, Joanne McCall, as our new Executive Director.

PCTA-PESPA will benefit from Joanne's vast experience, knowledge, contacts, drive and focus. I myself, am excited to have her to assist in carrying out the agenda of the President and the Executive Boards of PCTA and PESPA, but also because I believe she has the vision and wisdom to advise the presidents that follow me.

I hope you will all join me in welcoming Joanne McCall to the PCTA-PESPA family. Her addition to our team should give us all cause to hope for a brighter future for educators in Pinellas, despite the vail of darkness that threatens Pinellas County Schools and Public Education in general. PCTA-PEPSA has made some great strides in recent years and with the addition of Joanne McCall, we have become even more formidable.



Joanne McCall, (far right) with Mike, Randi Weingarten, and Nelly Henjes.

There is a reason they call it Summer “Break”

The Union Hall's training room is occupied with trainings most of the summer. It is wonderful to see all the dedicated educators taking classes for certifications and personal improvement. I joked with a group the other day, saying that “I thought teachers were off all summer.” That mentality is still rampant among the lesser informed populace who do not truly understand what it is we do or what it takes to do it.

I would never discourage educators from taking professional development over the summer, as it is a good time to get some things out of the way. However, as I mentioned in my last pod-cast, your number one job this summer is to rest, love, recover and replenish. When the oxygen masks come down from above your airline seat, you will remember that the

stewardess told you to put yours on, before you place it on your child. If you do not take care of yourself first, you won't be able to save your child. It's the same with teaching!

You need to take care of yourselves. Get yourself into healthy routines this summer. Spend time with family and friends. Pay attention to those relationships that you may not have had time to give 100% to during the school year. Life is short and it goes by fast, so find ways to slow it down and appreciate it. Do what it takes to make yourself happy because when you come back to school, a happier version of yourself, is the best teacher you can be.

You guys are in high demand and short supply so look out for yourself. We need you, Public Education needs you and, your students need you. Every profession in the world can only exist, because of your profession. You are professional educators and this summer, you need to make -"YOU"- a priority, so that you come back in August, in top form.

“Fighting the Good Fight,” all summer long

Not everyone will have a restful summer. This year, 95 teachers and 57 ESPs have been displaced. These folks will spend their summer searching for a new school to work in and the stress can wipe out the benefits normally associated with the summer break. PCTA has filed, and already advocated at nonrenewal appeal hearings for members. We have many more that we are currently working on. Every day, we converse with the District HR department working to find positions for the displaced. Summer is a busy time for us, but it is far less stressful than what some of our displaced members have had to endure.

How sad is it that during a time when Florida is facing a critical shortage of educators, Pinellas County Schools has Administrators that choose to abdicate their primary role as instructional leader and mentor? Rather than coach the team they have, some administrators would rather ignore the potential a professional educator has and dispose of them in favor of a new hire, as if the new hire comes off the shelf perfect.

As long as the State of Florida has a Legislature that feels educators are undeserving of any job security, Pinellas County Schools will have administrators that will wield the power they have subjectively, capriciously, and without regard to discrimination. What better reason could educators have to join voices collectively through their Union but to fight against such anti educator, anti-public education and anti-American sentiments?

Rest assured, PCTA-PESPA will be working and “fighting the good fight” all summer long.