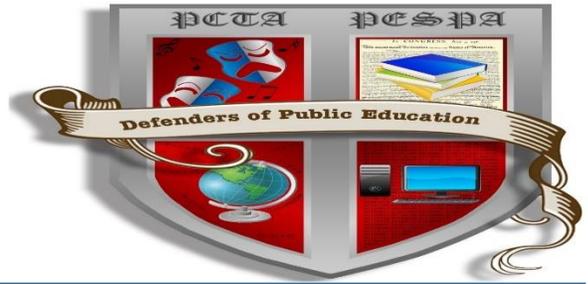


The President's

# Solidarity Report



SPECIAL BARGAINING EDITION

11/28/2018

## What teachers want and why doesn't the District get it?

While the District may believe that educating children can be reduced to scientifically proven and statistically verifiable strategies, techniques, and computerized programs, making the plans for a Space Shuttle launch seem simplistic, teachers yearn for a much more basic approach. There are some key elements that Marzano may have missed, but professional educators feel should be adhered to in order to successfully educate children.

- 1. Teaching and learning occurs between a teacher and students, all other personnel are supporting cast members.** This includes Administrators and other strange visitors from the planet "Admin. Bldg." on a mission to justify their positions by disrupting classrooms. Armed with *ISM* bombs that suck the air out of learning environments, these unwarranted and unwelcomed raids by people who fled the classroom years ago have no educational value to anyone outside of the privatization reform movement.
- 2. Just Let Us Teach!** All the extra demands placed on teachers have been placed under the guise of holding teachers "accountable". The Legislature loves to throw this word around for public schools while leaving charter and private schools free of any encumbrances to the teaching process. In reality, these demands have been placed to set public education up for failure as it steals from instructional time. Why would our District embrace such nonsense when we know it actually hurts our students? Why would the District push to have generation after generation of students leave our schools with the ability to fill in an answer bubble but lacking in the social skills, character, and basic knowledge needed to be a contributing and concerned member of society? Why are they content to be collaborators to a system bent on destroying public education? I am as baffled by this as you all must be.
- 3. There is no learning without discipline.** Every parent knows that without discipline, there can be no learning. PCTA is committed to the Restorative Practice philosophy that we hope is being implemented with fidelity. We feel that if teachers lead this movement, it will succeed. However, Restorative Practice means restoring and repairing broken relationships and teaching life lessons to young people. It does **not** mean doing away

with consequences or ignoring the referral process. Teachers want to feel supported by their administrators. Administrators should accept the professional judgement of a teacher when they decide that the learning environment in their classroom has been compromised. At that point, discipline belongs to the administrator as the teacher's job is to teach.

4. **Give us the time to get the job done!** Time is the one resource that a teacher does not have enough of. So why is it our District feels it necessary to steal away the precious little time a teacher has to prepare, grade, make parent contacts, confer with colleagues and reflect on how to get the best out of our students? Professional Development provides tools for teachers to be placed in their tool box. PLC's may discuss, add and exchange tools, as do the use of coaches. These are all important, but it must be emphasized that only a fool tells a tradesman what tool to use when you call them to make a repair in your home. Professionals will make that decision according to the challenges in a particular class and their own personal teaching style. All these meetings should be voluntary because teachers experiencing issues are professional enough to seek assistance. The key is for that assistance to be considered safe. As long as teachers get dinged for not being perfect, they will never feel safe enough to come to an administrator to ask for help. This is the result of legislation placing teachers on annual contract and performance pay, but also the Districts willingness to intimidate and bully educators while hiding behind these unjust laws.
5. **Stop stressing our kids out!** When kindergarten kids are forced to take bi-weekly assessments that, is an abusive form of educational malpractice. When first graders are asked to write essays on subjects they have never had first hand exposure to, (ex. which monument would you recommend while visiting Washington D.C?) that is abusive educational malpractice. When we spend millions on testing companies that provide assessments, as if assessing students isn't a major part of what a teacher does on any given day that, is an excessive waste of tax payer dollars that could be better spent. When elementary students spend their time on a computer doing ELA modules instead of being transformed to another time and place and being infused with the joy of reading by a teacher reading to them that, is abusive.
6. **Bring back the joy of teaching and learning.** Teaching from bell to bell, forcing kids who do poorly in math or reading to take double math or reading, pulling them out of something they enjoy, or preparing for endless testing, saps the joy out of teaching and learning. Teachers cannot form relationships with students when they are being forced to read from a script. A classroom with no laughter may as well have bars on the doors and windows. What researchers like Marzano fail to understand is that we deal with children,

not products. There is no way to measure the gifts of knowledge our teachers give to students. The seeds we plant may not grow until years later and may benefit another teacher's evaluation. It is a team effort to educate a child and it takes all of twelve years. Sapping the fun out of education does not make our kids better prepared for life. Art, music, clubs and sports are all necessary ingredients. Our motto is 100% student success. That does not mean 100% college bound. It is our job to help our students find their place in the world and provide them with the tools they need to achieve success. Our obsession with preparing kids for college has disenchanting students who may not have wanted to go to college and it has diminished the trades, many of which pay far better than the teaching profession does in Florida.

7. **Staff our schools correctly.** We understand that the Legislature is setting us up for failure. Nowhere is that more apparent than in state funding of public education. However, the District knows that class size matters. Smaller classes mean more individualized attention per child. It means more room in class for our kinesthetic learners who need to move around. It means less stress on teachers and students. It means less discipline issues. How can the District believe it is fair to increase our workload and make no adjustment to the teacher evaluation? Should a Specials teacher with 40 students be expected to have the same classroom management as a teacher with 18 students? How many Highly Effective teachers have been knocked down a rating or two because they now have more students to deal with. If they ask for help, they are told to take PD on classroom management or are placed on a success plan and their evaluation suffers. Our District could invest in their professional educator workforce, but chooses to invest in companies that may not have the best interest of public education in mind. They should stop wasting money supporting our enemies and invest in smaller classes.
8. **Pay Educators a fair wage.** Everyone in Florida seems to value education except for our Legislature. Twenty out of twenty referendums on ballots throughout Florida were passed by voters wanting more funds and resources for their local schools. In Pinellas, the citizens passed our referendum for the fourth time two years ago. Without it, art and music would be non-existent for our students. Florida teacher pay ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> among the states and \$10,000 below the national average. In all fairness, our District does provide better health benefits than most others but the money wasted on third party education consultants, programs and companies would be better spent boosting teacher and support professional pay.
9. **Good Teachers deserve job security.** What possible reason can be used to justify a District wanting the ability to non-renew contracts of effective or highly effective

teachers? If a teacher's effective rating eliminates a job performance issue, what other reasons are left to justify dismissal. Here are some that come to mind:

- *race or ethnicity*
- *contract status*
- *age discrimination*
- *union involvement*

If these reasons sound illegal, it's because they are. Allowing Administrators to act like cowards and hide behind bad legislation is unacceptable. I do not know of any business, with more than 50 employees, that does not provide due process or just cause for their employees. In case you are wondering, yes, I am speaking of here in Florida where the law allows managers the option of letting people go without a reason. I find it odd that a law would be passed that relinquishes a manager of his or her responsibility to look a person in the eye and tell them why they are being let go. This is state sponsored cowardice.

10. **Respect Experience.** I can think of no other profession or trade where experience is so devalued. The more you do a thing, the better you become at that task. This rule applies to doctors as most of us would want a doctor that has performed a specific type of operation many times, over one that is new to the surgery. It applies to lawyers as most of us would prefer an attorney to handle a case for us who has many victories in similar cases, to one that has not had experience with that type of case. Only in education, is it permissible for a thirty-year master teacher with years of highly effective evaluations, to be rated less than highly effective by an evaluator with one quarter of their classroom experience, simply because someone decided to use a different rating system designed by researchers, not educators. The transfer period used by PCS disrespects veteran teachers every year without fail.

So, the next time people ask why are teachers unwilling to settle in bargaining and what is it that they want, feel free to use any of these 10 issues. As to why the District does not understand this, well I am not sure how to answer. I am sure of one thing though, if the District feels they can continue to keep pushing teachers around and keep up the pressure to get more out of them, they are wrong. A business cannot succeed if it makes its employees feel it is impossible to do their job successfully. Neither can a District.

In Solidarity,

Mike Gandolfo  
PCTA President/Executive Director