

Membership
Update



April 26, 2013

From the President...

Providence Teachers Address School Board Regarding the Lack of Educational Materials

On Monday, April 22, 2013, Providence teachers Michaela Normandin-Evans, Cherie Sanger and Jeremy Sencer spoke at the School Board meeting regarding Teaching & Learning's failure to provide teachers (especially at the Elementary level) with adequate student educational materials.

Michaela, a second grade teacher at Webster Avenue School, informed the School Board that while elementary teachers are provided with a 30 minute preparation period every day, that time is spent in the copy room making the necessary copies for the week. Michaela presented to the School Board a sample of material that she is required to copy for her students every week. The six-inch stack of paper certainly raised some School Board members' eyebrows. She stated that "Many teachers come to school early or stay late to just get it done, while other teachers take all their copying to a copy center like Staples and pay someone to do it." In addition to duplicating materials, Michaela also addressed the Board about the district requiring Elementary teachers to create their own Math assessments. She advised them that this is "hours of prep work each week" and that "There are varying degrees of difficulty within each standard, which creates inconsistencies in test scores amongst teachers."

Cherie Sanger, Vice President of Elementary Schools and a Special Education teacher at King Elementary School, stated that she was there representing the hundreds of teachers who are equally as frustrated and burdened by the lack of adequate materials but who are hesitant to come forth in fear of retribution. She stated "Everyday I hear from elementary teachers about how stressed they are about the copies that must get done. We worry if the copy machines will be working on any given day. We worry if there will be enough paper. We worry about how many people will be ahead of us so that we can get back to our classes in time. We worry about our families and the stress it puts on them. Above all, we worry about our students." She urged the district to be our leader by providing teachers with the necessary materials in order for teachers to do what it is that they are supposed to do — TEACH. The School Department needs to do a better job in supporting its teachers so that we can do our job. Cherie concluded her presentation by stating that "Teachers should be able to provide our students with the best educational experiences and be able to go home to our families stress-free."

Jeremy Sencer, union building delegate and a teacher at Young-Woods Elementary School, thanked Superintendent Lusi and the Board for embracing the work of Patrick Dolan with respect to labor-management collaboration, but he hoped for true respect for teachers rather than the idea that teachers are human capital. He mentioned that "Today's teachers want to be accountable but we need real support from administrators." An example of that support is providing teachers with required teaching materials. Being a math teacher, Jeremy did the math for the Board with respect to the amount of time that teachers at his school either donate or spend making copies. He stated that teachers at his school donate 1,150 minutes of time each week by volunteering to cover morning and afternoon supervision in exchange for photocopied materials that his principal sends out of the building to be made. He also calculated that on top of that teachers are spending on average 70 minutes per week making additional copies. In Jeremy's closing remarks, he stated "Accountability seems to be a one way street. The administration is treating professional educators like unskilled workers, but we have maintained our professionalism. It's time for teaching & learning to step up and behave in a supportive way in order to help serve the needs of our students. It's time for the administration to believe their own slogan."

(Continued...)

From the President...

Providence Teachers Address School Board...(continued)

In a rare occurrence, School Board Vice President, Nick Hemond, responded by thanking the teachers for bringing the matter to the Board's attention and that he would make certain that the Board's directive last summer— which sustained the Union's grievance regarding the lack of educational materials— is implemented.

I would like to personally thank Michaela, Cherie and Jeremy for their outstanding presentations and leadership at last Monday's School Board meeting.

PTU Executive Board Members Testify at Senate Education Committee Hearing

On Wednesday, April 24, 2013, members of the Senate Education Committee heard testimony from dozens of students, parents and teachers urging them to pass the Bill introduced by Senator Harold Metts, D-Providence. The Bill would abolish using NECAP as a criteria for high school graduation.

Among the PTU Board members who testified were President Steve Smith, COPE Chairperson Alex Lucini and Secretary Dan Wall.

President Smith testified that Providence teachers are being driven into the ground by the relentless focus on standardized test preparation. In some classes, students are tested as much as 47 days during the school year — taking away valuable time from instruction. He further testified that “if you want to see student improvement, it's not going to happen at the Shepherd Building [RIDE].” Under the Commissioner's leadership, RIDE has become a compliance driven organization where it should be a service driven organization that supports and empowers teachers and students. In order to improve our schools and raise student achievement we have to listen to and empower the professionals closest to the students.

Alex Lucini, PTU's COPE Chairperson, testified that many of our students in intervention classes do not receive any instruction within the core curriculum which makes it impossible for them to be successful on the NECAP test. He stated that “The NECAP graduation requirement stresses accountability to students way too far in their academic career when RIDE has turned a blind eye on the district's policy of social promotion.” He further stated that the NECAP policy “does not celebrate students as individuals but rather data points.”

On behalf of the Executive Board, Secretary Dan Wall, presented the Resolution that was passed by the PTU executive board (*see April 3, 2013 Membership Update*) regarding the NECAP graduation requirement along with the following statement:

“We respectfully ask that this statement regarding the NECAP graduation requirement be allowed to be read into the testimony regarding Senate Bill 117.

The Providence Teachers Union had originally intended to submit this statement at the April 11th Rhode Island Board of Education meeting. However, we were denied this opportunity due to time constraints imposed by the Board of Education. Providence Teachers Union and thirty other members of the public were silenced that day, as the Board of Education was not willing to extend the time allotted for public comment.

As the largest local teachers union in the state, we believe that our insight is germane in the debate over this controversial issue.”

From the President...

Criterion Based Hiring & Transfer Update

The second date of this year's first Hiring Fair will be held at Central High School on :

Saturday, April 27, 2013

9:00 a.m. – Noon / 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Hiring committees may begin to extend offers at the conclusion of the last interview. All offers will be communicated via PATS and followed-up with phone calls by Hiring Managers. Candidates have 72 hours from date of offer to accept the offer. Candidates may accept the offer by contacting the Hiring Manager by email. It is highly encouraged that candidates retain a copy of the email accepting an offer until he/she receives an official award letter from the Office of Human Resources. Anyone experiencing difficulty during this process should contact the Union office immediately.

Round II of postings will begin on May 3 and conclude on May 10. Please refer to this year's CBH procedures manual for specific deadlines with respect to application timelines.

Reminders....

◆ **Next Membership Meeting:**

May 15, 2013
4:00 p.m.
Union Office

◆ **Teacher Appreciation Reception**

Thursday, May 9, 2013
4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Botanical Center at Roger Williams Park

Please RSVP by **May 3** to Doris DelosSantos at 456-1792 or doris.delossantos@ppsd.org.



PTU members receive a \$150 credit towards the purchase of disability insurance, cancer expense insurance, and life insurance. In addition to this credit, all members are guaranteed a \$10,000 term life insurance policy at no charge.

Representatives from Benefits Communications will be visiting schools during lunches and will be available to meet with those members who have yet to take advantage of these benefits or for those who are enrolled but would like to review/update their coverages. Please see your building delegate for the date that a representative will be in your school.

For more information regarding available plans, please contact Jennifer Gervasio at (401) 383-2333.