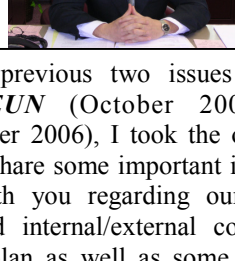


PROTEUN

A bi-monthly publication of the Providence Teachers Union available on-line at www.proteun.org or via e-mail.

February 2007



In the previous two issues of the **PROTEUN** (October 2006 and December 2006), I took the opportunity to share some important information with you regarding our newly designed internal/external communication plan as well as some thought about collective bargaining; specifically interest based bargaining. The progress of each is as follows:

I. Communications:

◆ As of this issue, the vast majority of teachers are receiving the **PROTEUN** and other important information via e-mail correspondence. Our website (www.proteun.org) is actively functioning as another vehicle of communication with our members as well as the public at large. If you haven't provided the Union office with your e-mail address, please do so at your earliest possible convenience.

◆ On a regular basis we are making formal statements at each school board meeting regarding the critical issues we face on a daily basis. These formal statements are then distributed widely throughout Rhode Island (see Open Letter to the School Board contained in the issue of the **PROTEUN**). In this first open letter, we enlist the support of School Board members willing to work to find ways whereby the Providence Teachers Union contract can become an instrument of systemic change by including school improvement and student success initiatives within the Agreement in addition to addressing salary, benefits and working conditions.

◆ Governor Carcieri and Mayor Cicilline issued their respective inaugural addresses during the first week of January 2007. The Governor and the Mayor gave strong emphasis to school improvement goals thereby prompting me to release the following statement — "Hearing that both are focused on education, and the total commitment that it requires, I look forward to working with them on improving education. We continue to emphasize the importance of collaboration; and welcome what seems to be a very real opportunity to work together as partners."

II. Negotiations:

◆ We have received valuable information and suggestions from those teachers who attended the four (4) negotiations update meetings. Our negotiating committee has given considerable thought to the suggestions and many will be included in our contract proposal. We will continue to schedule these meetings on a regular basis in order to maintain this valuable dialogue.

◆ We have been in touch with Adam Urbanski and are in the process of considering Providence Teachers Union membership in TURN (Teacher Union Reform Network); the coalition of progressive urban local teacher union for the AFT and the NEA.

◆ We continue to have discussions and seek the support of Commissioner Peter McWalters in exploring ways in which the Providence Teachers Union can be of assistance in implementing the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Law. The Commissioner not only welcomes our participation but includes us to a great extent in discussions pertaining to school improvement and student success.

III. General News:

◆ Credit must be given to Superintendent Evans for creating the position of Assistant Superintendent for Labor Relations. This new post, presently held by Dr. Tomas Ramirez, has resulted in the elimination of the backlog of grievances. Most grievances are resolved without the necessity of a hearing or, when necessary, hearings are scheduled in a timely manner. This is another example of the positive outcomes realized through collaboration and mutual respect.

PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE

January:
3 Mayor's Inauguration
PTU Executive Board
4 Superintendent Evans
5 Bi-Weekly Meeting with Dr. Gallo
8 Grievance Hearings
9 Building Delegate Meeting
11 Professional Time Com. Superintendent Evans
16 City Hall: Department of Administration West Broadway Faculty
17 DelSesto Faculty Springfield Faculty Carnevale Faculty
18 Face to Face w/Commissioner McWalters & Supt. Evans Veazie Faculty Negotiations Briefing Session
22 AFL-CIO Executive Board Negotiations Briefing Session School Board Meeting
23 Perry Faculty Grievance Hearings
24 High School Renewal Steering Committee Superintendent Evans: High School Advisory West Broadway Faculty
25 City Hall: Department of Administration
29 Grievance Hearings
30 Fortes/Lima Annex Faculty
31 Reservoir Faculty

February:
1 Superintendent Evans
2 Bi-Weekly Meeting with Dr. Ramirez
5 Grievance Hearings RIFT: Highly Qualified Teachers
6 Hanley Vocational Faculty
7 PTU Executive Board
8 Professional Time Committee
9 PTU Mid-Year Reception
12 Grievance Hearings School Board Meeting
13 Building Delegate Meeting
14 RI Kids Count City Hall: Contract Negotiations
15 City Hall: Contract Negotiations
16 City Hall: Contract Negotiations
26 AFL-CIO Executive Board School Board Meeting

(See CALENDAR OF EVENTS for listing of school visits.)

PTU IN THE NEWS

PTU President Invited to Address Attendees, Media at School Facility Planning Press Conference

Invited to address the attendees and media at the recent School Facility Planning press conferences, President Steve Smith commented on the initiative. "Our children, our teachers, deserve no less than the best effort that can be given to promote academic achievement and update our schools to an appropriate 21st century learning environment."

Mayor Cicilline introduced Smith, acknowledging his direct involvement in the process. Smith opened with thanks to the Mayor, recalling that both were elected, and re-elected, at least in part, for their commitment to taking on the challenge of improving education. Smith recalled, "This was the topic of one of the first conversations the Mayor and I ever had," recalling when he was first elected president. "I have high expectations for his demonstrated. Today, the Mayor has demonstrated his interest and ability to plan for those expectations. We are excited at the prospect of a comprehensive plan."

In addressing the DeJong research and presentation, he thanked DeJong for their recommendations and for taking the time to meet with teachers to gain their insights.

Hosted by Donnie Cicilline and Superintendent Donnie Evans, the DeJong conference received statewide broadcast and print media coverage.

PTU PRESIDENT ADDRESSES SCHOOL BOARD

Providence School Board Meeting (January 22, 2007)

Public Comment

I come before you this evening with an invitation – an invitation for the Providence School Board to join Mayor Cicilline, Superintendent Evans and the Providence Teachers Union in identifying ways to improve our schools and create greater opportunities for student success.

During the next several weeks, you will be examining the Superintendent's proposed budget. You will make a decision as to the amount of money needed to operate the School Department during the next fiscal year, but more importantly, you will be deciding what curricula, programs and activities will be in place for our students.

I will stand corrected, if wrong, but I am unaware of any opportunity for the public as well as teachers to be involved in your budget review. School budgets are not presented to School Improvement Teams for valuable input. What is needed is an open, transparent public process of reviewing each school and each department budget in order to receive valuable input from individuals closest to the child. In doing so, here are a few important issues that may be brought to your attention:

1. **Curriculum:** We all know that the Balanced Literacy and the Math Investigation Programs are two expensive programs which Providence has embraced with mixed success at best. Teachers tell me they are prohibited from teaching basic skills during the day but follow basic skills instruction as part of their after-school programs known as Supplemental Education Services. In addition, I am advised that the student assessments presently utilized are not aligned with Balanced Literacy. You might want to learn more about these inconsistencies before approving significant sums of money to continue questionable programs.

2. **Instructional Leadership:** Instructional Leaders exist in each school. They are teachers with vast experience and well documented expertise in their respective fields. They should be actively involved in the ongoing process of curriculum review, text book selection, student achievement, selection of supplementary materials, design of sample lesson plans, enrichment and compensatory activities, etc. Teachers know what works and they know what does not work. We should be listening to them and utilizing this untapped resource and wealth of knowledge.

3. **Student Assessment:** How much money and how much time are we going to devote to over-testing? More importantly, how much instructional time is lost because of teachers doing excessive paper work, preparing students for tests, conducting tests, etc.? Teachers tell me they spend entire months dealing with testing at the expense of instruction. You should hear from teachers and principals before you approve a large expenditure of money on an activity which deprives students of valuable teaching/learning time.

4. **Student Behavior:** The frequency of disruptive behavior by students is of great concern to educators and the community at large. Too much valuable time is spent dealing with students who exhibit unacceptable behavior patterns. Teachers and administrators alike tell of duties and responsibilities left unattended because of student behavior problems. What's worse is that serious minded students are robbed of valuable instructional time. Our school district has very limited programs and/or placements available to address these problems. Until the district is serious about holding students accountable for their behavior, we cannot expect to achieve district and student goals.

5. **Early Childhood:** Educational research is consistent....there is an absolute need to identify and serve students at risk of failure from as early on as 3 years of age. These children exhibit a developmental lag that must be met or we will continue to have children entering our school system in Kindergarten or grade one already behind their peers and already in need of catch-up programs. Teachers can give you specific ways in which early intervention programs address this need.

6. **BEP:** Now that the Commissioner has responded to the PTU complaint about the loss of opportunity for students in music, art and libraries, he will now address the PTU complaint about student loss of Physical Education and Health instruction. Does the budget address this directive from the Commissioner? It is been brought to my attention that the resolution to this problem is the elimination of other electives –namely Foreign Language and Computer Instruction. Art, Music and Library access should not be restored at the expense of other electives. Our kids deserve the same opportunities as other students in Rhode Island.

Obviously I could go on and on, but I believe I've made my point. The PTU stands ready to serve as equal partners in school improvement and student success initiatives. The Mayor wants this partnership and so does the Superintendent. What about the School Board? Are you interested in joining in? If the answer is yes, then why not demonstrate your willingness by opening up the budget process and hearing what the public and your teachers have to say. It's nothing more than common sense. Thank you for your kind attention and I anxiously await your response to this request.

QUALITY COUNTS 2007

For the past 10 years, Education Week's annual Quality Counts report has tracked state policies for improving K-12 education. But children's chances for success doesn't just rest on what happens from kindergarten through high school. They are also shaped by experiences during the preschool years and opportunities for continued education and training beyond high school.

As always, "Quality Counts 2007" examines states' educational policies. But this 11th edition "From Cradle to Career: Connecting American Education from Birth through Adulthood"—begins to track state attempts to define students' readiness to succeed from one stage to the next.

Using a uniquely designed index, Quality Counts 2007 provides each state's perspective on the importance of education throughout a person's lifetime. The index is based on 13 indicators that highlight whether young children get off to a good start, succeed in elementary and secondary school, and hit key benchmarks as adults. Those indicators, grouped by stage in life are:

- ◆ The early years
- ◆ The school age years
- ◆ The adult years

States that do significantly better than the national average on each indicator receive a point, those that outpace the nation receive two points. Conversely, states that fall below the national average lose a point or two.

Since all states start at zero, the index captures the cumulative effect on education experience by residents of a state from birth to adulthood and pinpoint the chances for success at each stage.

Quality Counts 2007 is available online at www.edweek.org.

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

Regional meetings for teachers to dialogue with members of the PTU Negotiating Committee were held on December 13th and 16th as well as January 18th and 22nd. Much information was gathered at these meetings and has been taken under advisement by the PTU Negotiating Committee for possible inclusion in our contract proposal.

Some of the areas discussed were clear contact violation of existing language and, therefore, they will be addressed with the Superintendent and/or the filing of a grievance.

Some of the areas proposed for inclusion in our contract proposal are as follows:

1. Creation of curriculum committees in the contract.
2. Need to improve Professional Time schedule and payment procedures.
3. Class size (especially in primary grades).
4. Revisit site-based management.
5. Elimination of United HealthCare Plan 750 and have all teachers in the present Blue Cross Plan (i.e. City Blue with option to buy Classic Blue).
6. Teachers on lay-off due to program elimination and serving as LTSP's should be treated as LTS or R for several benefits.
7. Re-examine longevity, advanced degree schedules for possible balance with other communities.

Another round of negotiations update meetings will be scheduled in the near future. As always, critical information will be disseminated immediately.

If you are unable to attend a regional meeting with the negotiating committee, but have some suggestions, please mail them to the Union office c/o PTU Negotiations Committee or you may e-mail them directly to Steve Smith at ssmith@proteun.org.

GRIEVANCE UPDATE

During the months of December 2006 and January 2007 fifty-four (54) grievances were filed. Of the fifty-four (54) grievances filed, seventeen (17) were filed by elementary teachers; fourteen (14) were filed by high school teachers; twenty-one (21) were filed by middle school teachers; one (1) was filed by Special Groups and one (1) was filed by the Union. The area most frequently grieved was Inappropriate Administrative Action (14). Other areas grieved are as follows:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----|-----------------------------|---|
| Plant Maintenance..... | 13 | Personnel File..... | 3 |
| Loss of Pay..... | 5 | Teacher Evaluation..... | 2 |
| Supplies & Equipment..... | 5 | Fair Discipline Policy..... | 2 |
| In-house Coverage..... | 3 | Violation of BEP..... | 2 |
| Discipline Code..... | 3 | Appendix B..... | 1 |
| | | Teacher Program..... | 1 |

All fifty-four grievances were filed at the Superintendent's level (Level A). Twelve (12) have been resolved while the remaining fourteen (14) are pending resolution.

Contact Maura at 421-4014 or mgalvao@proteun.org.

JOINT COMMITTEE WORK

◆ Professional Time Joint Committee:

This committee was established by contract (Article 8-34) to address the professional development hours that were mandated by the Commissioner for all Providence teachers.

Some of the issues/concerns and decisions this committee has addressed are as follows:

- Streamlining the professional development opportunities by putting in place MY LEARNING PLAN so it is easier to select professional development sessions.
- Addressing concerns related by specialty teachers so the professional development offered for them is relevant to their certification area.
- Payroll concerns pertaining to timeliness of payment have been minimized by establishing a payroll calendar.
- Cancellation policy established.
- Expansion of professional development opportunities to include summer, weekends and school vacations.
- Development of a teacher survey to get feedback on the professional development that is offered and how to improve professional development offerings.
- Teacher mentoring program for new teachers focused on classroom management techniques.
- Coordination of professional development with Providence Charter Schools: Tecton & Times2.
- High School Advisory workshops for staff.
- Practicum workshops at the school level.

This committee meets every third Thursday of the month.

Contact Paul at 421-4014 or pvorro@proteun.org.

Workshops Offered by the PTU

For the past few years, Union sponsored Professional Development has focused on ER&D Workshops with emphasis on Reading Instruction, Reading Comprehension, and Mathematics.

But this has not always been the case. The PTU has traditionally offered workshops on a variety of topics, including Classroom Management, Differentiated Instruction, Helping Parents with Homework, Brain Based Teaching, Inclusive Practices, and Using Data to Redesign Schools, just to name a few.

We are in the process of adding other topics during the second semester. "How to Apply for National Board Certification" will be held at the PTU on March 28 and March 29 beginning at 3:45 p.m.

The other topic will focus on "Highly Qualified Teacher" verification. At this point in time, we are planning to offer two workshops. One will be a workshop for teachers at all levels and the other will have the same content except it will be addressing the specific information for Special Education Teachers.

In the meantime, we are looking to organize ongoing support for teachers in the I-Plan. If any teachers are interested in becoming I-Plan trainers for our district, please contact Fr. Nick Milas.

Contact Fr. Nick Milas at 421-4014 or Frnickm2@aol.com

FYI....

◆ Preference Sheets

Preference sheets are scheduled to be distributed to all teachers on or prior to March 1 and must be returned no later than March 15, 2007. Preference sheets must be completed annually to remain active.

◆ Job Fair

The annual Job Fair will be held on Friday, July 13, 2007 at Springfield Middle School. Deadline for registering to attend the Job Fair is **Tuesday, May 15, 2007**. Registration must be done in person at the Office of Human Resources.

(See CALENDAR OF EVENTS for listing of school visits)