



sta note

A Brutal Environment for Teachers, Unions & Contracts

By: Kevin Ahern
President

Make no mistake about it, teachers and their unions – indeed, public employees in general – are under tremendous scrutiny in these difficult economic times. Our salaries, our benefits and our pensions are being blamed for municipal and school district deficits across the nation. As irrational as those accusations may be, they seem to be resonating with the public, many of whom are suffering greatly as a result of this recession.

Last Thursday I went to Lieu-

tenant Governor Duffy's New York State budget presentation at LeMoyne College. When describing the

We Stand United



\$1.8 billion being cut from education funding he suggested that school "managers and teachers" agree

to a statewide pay freeze which would, according to his PowerPoint slide, restore \$1.1 billion of the proposed cuts. He then followed that idea with a statement of how important unions are to he and the governor and that "we are all in this together."

The following morning I read that the Liverpool teachers voted to reject their superintendent's proposal for a wage freeze – a proposal made publicly last week. I then read the ten or twelve pages of negative, hateful comments

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NEXT STA BUDGET GROUP MEETING - MARCH 3, 2011 - 3:30 PM at the STA OFFICE (Call x4526 for information)

STA Working on Many Issues in This Busy Time of Year

By: Joan Brown
First Vice President

This month your elected officers have been working on many fronts to keep our voices prominent in the decisions that will affect our professional lives. I have been representing members who have been put on Assistance Plans, planning a rep training, participating in interviews for PLA schools, and seeking more understanding in the budget breakdown, both at the district and state level.

I would like to address the due process our unit one members deserve if an evaluator believes their instruction needs improvement. All our members have the right to representation at a post evaluation conference if they feel that it will be a negative

evaluation. If the administrator is requesting a teacher be placed on an assistance plan, they have the right to a fair and achievable plan based on the performance indicators in the mutually agreed upon Model for Practitioner Evaluation. Please have members call if they are feeling that their due process rights are not being honored. The Rep Training on February second will address this evaluation process. Bob Ringwood from NYSUT will present the legal issues affecting tenure and Denise Androvette, 3rd Vice President, and I will discuss the issues pertinent to SCSD.

We are all aware that federal and state policymakers are pressing states to use student test scores as part of the

evaluation of teachers and principals. STA believes that teacher evaluations, which are a mandatory subject of collective bargaining must include multiple elements, including documentation of the conditions for teaching and learning.

Along with the officers, there are several members revising the Model for Practitioner Evaluation Committee. It is our goal to ensure a fair system of evaluation as we work to incorporate student growth into our MPE. We feel that this is a huge endeavor and we have many concerns, therefore it is vital that we are part of the decision making process. We are also working alongside the administrators as they on the design their MPE that will also incorporate student

growth.

Finally, officers are serving with representative teachers on the Elementary, Middle and High School Task Forces and on the interviews for the Redesign teams for the PLA schools- Grant Middle, Henninger, Corcoran, and Nottingham. These task forces and redesign teams will be instrumental in the decisions that affect our lives and working conditions. A lot seems to be out of our hands lately- we are being blamed for just about everything that is wrong- from the school district's budget to the mental health of our students. We all know that there are many issues we had nothing to do with, but we will continue to work hard, and participate in shaping our profession.

Expanding Horizon Money Available Now

- Target your classroom needs with an Expanding Horizons Grants proposal.
- Prepare an in-school field trip experience.
- No SCSD field trip packet required for guest presenters invited to your school.
- Check STA website for trip offerings. The EHG committee is available to help you fund your plan.

Contact the STA office at 472-6374

PeopleSoft...

Dirty words come and go, and the most recent dirty word is PeopleSoft. You'll hear the word PeopleSoft when times are tough and problems can't be solved.

Using technology we explored the roots of this dirty word. We searched the farthest reaches of the world-wide web to find out more about this mysterious word, PeopleSoft. Our search led us to many web sites, blogs and social network sites dedicated to how much people hate this program.

Many of us are concerned that contract salaries and leave time aren't being printed on our checks. We are being told by the district PeopleSoft will take care of that.

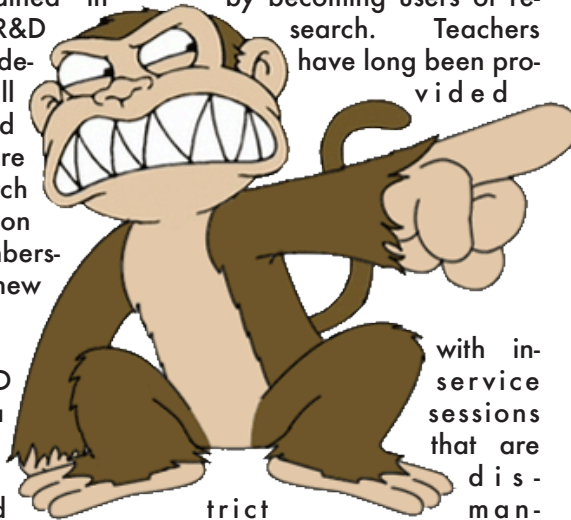
Our hope is that the SCSD will be able to work out the bugs and issues. Until then please be patient. This dirty word PeopleSoft is here to stay.

STA is Looking for a Few Good Teachers

STA is offering to sponsor several teachers to attend ER&D training this summer. Members trained in delivering ER&D professional development will be supported by STA to share the research and information with our members—including new teachers.

The ER&D Program is a union-sponsored, research-based professional development program. It fosters the belief that class-

room practitioners can improve their practice and their student's achievement by becoming users of research. Teachers have long been provided



with in-service sessions that are district mandated and often rated as not very worthwhile by the participants. ER&D

is constructed as a program that is an ongoing process, rather than an in-service event. It is committed to offering a non-judgmental learning environment, opportunities for reflection, and a process that allows for implementation of strategies that result in real change in practice. It is taught by classroom teachers, grounded in reality. If you are interested in being part of this program, STA can sponsor you to take part in the training. STA will also support you as you offer this professional development to our members. Please contact Joan Brown at STA (4526) for more information.

STA Seeking Progressive Responses in Trying Times

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following the article on Syracuse.com about teachers and their greedy unions. The Liverpool episode follows an equally public display (complete with teacher/union bashing comments) that saw the West Genessee superintendent asking their unions for a wage freeze two weeks ago.

On the national front several governors and mayors are also waging assaults on teacher tenure and seniority rights. The Obama administration's Department of Education, with its Race to the Top initiative, is forcing states to adopt unfair and unscientific teacher evaluation and compensation systems in order to receive much needed education funding. The misguided film *Waiting for Superman*, with its demonization of teacher unions and hyping

of a false charter school panacea, has only added to an already crowded field of non-educator driven anti-teacher rhetoric.

So this is the context in which find ourselves as we face \$50 million budget gap that will cause hundreds of layoffs and two of our four units with expiring contracts. This may be the worst negotiating environment — both economically and in terms of public opinion — we have ever faced. Our challenge is, I think, twofold: How do we navigate these difficult waters in a way that is both responsive and responsible?

At the very least it seems that we must acknowledge and respond to the concerns expressed in the public arena (however uninformed and hysterical they may be) without conceding

the debate. We must also be responsible as unionists and protect as many of our members as possible while continuing to move forward despite a public agenda that attempts to set us back decades, if not destroy us altogether.

The stakes for the STA couldn't be higher and the consequences for our actions couldn't be more serious as we try to develop a strategy that will ensure that we remain a viable entity for our members for years to come. Our leadership is poised and ready for the challenges that we face, but your input and support is critical. As always, don't hesitate to share your thoughts and ideas as the budget process moves forward. Unlike the Lieutenant Governor, we mean it when we say that we are all in this together.