

Board Address 6.10.08

Good evening – I'd like to congratulate our new board members and thank Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Moscato for their efforts on behalf of our district.

I would also like to announce our scholarship winners. As you may remember the GTA gives 4 scholarships annually to our high school seniors going into the field of education. Our golf tournament allowed us to offer 8 additional \$1,000 scholarships this year: Erik Hubbard, Emily Timmons, and Taylor Lanio from Athena, from Arcadia Jessica Griffen, Allison Freeman, and Jacob O'Connor, from Olympia – De'Ja Dukes, Miranda Golish and Chad Pierce, and finally from Odyssey Academy – Chelsie Angelo, Michelle Delvecchio, and Anne Merritt

In May we awarded our Golden Apple Teacher of the Year - This year's recipient is Mrs. Carol Schneider – from Athena High School.

I'd also like to thank the voters in our community for their support in passing our budget. The Association mailed nearly 3,000 reminders to support the budget and along with our AGCEP colleagues manned the phone banks to call thousands of voters on the Thursday and Monday before the election. I believe our efforts in supporting the budget paid off.

We don't seem to be getting the same payoff in our efforts to make meaningful change in how teachers are being treated. I'm going to share with you the stories of 3 teachers who won't be back next year.

Our first teacher is a 15 year veteran recruited from BOCES because of her outstanding reputation and demonstrated excellence. During the interview process she realized she was being recruited for a job her skill set didn't fit. She mentioned this to the interviewers and was told that she would be supported and that she would be a good fit for our District. Though unsure at first, these assurances were enough for her to leave BOCES and come to Greece. She was fired the week before Christmas. In barely a quarter a teacher's career went from excellence to unemployed with little or no support from her supervisors.

Our second teacher came to education after serving in the Marine Corps. Bringing a skill set influenced by his military background, many would argue perfect training for a teacher going into any of our large high schools. However there were some instructional areas of concern. His colleagues in the department and friends in the building supported him in developing an improvement plan and things seemed to be improving. Until the morning of his pre-observation when he found an envelope in his mailbox with a letter addressed to Ann Mitchell stating that he would not be recommended for tenure. With assurances that this was just procedural he proceeded with the observation.

The teacher was told that two letters need to be submitted to Dr. Mitchell one stating he was being recommended for tenure and the one he received the day before his scheduled observation. How or why he received a copy of this letter we will never know. Yet the explanation that this is a requirement defies logic. In this day and age, when a simple keystroke sends a document in seconds, we are expected to believe this is protocol? What I do believe is that the process was predetermined and a charade to

meet the contractual requirements with no intent or consideration that this person could succeed.

Our third teacher, previously tenured in Virginia, returns to New York and is hired by Greece Central. His first observation is meeting standards, his second observation is working toward standards and his third observation is not meeting standards. Then he's told he will not be coming back – he's not a good fit for our district.

I want to examine this more closely. First observation is in November and everything is going well. It is conducted by the Assistant Principal. A month later he's found to be working towards standards and it too is conducted by the assistant principal. Between December and March there is no conveyed cause for concern. Only two visits by the mentor, no counseling memos, and no areas of concern mentioned by any of his administrators, nothing on record or shared with this young man about potential problems. So how can things change so radically? How can he not be a good fit? How can he be dismissed with no warning?

Some may argue these are 3 isolated instances punctuated by human error and maybe if these were the only examples I could accept that explanation. I'm here to suggest this is part of a growing pattern of attacks on teachers, moving our District backward to a time characterized by contention and arbitration. Though subtler and easily attributed to good administrative practice this is cautionary. Can it be remedied? I believe it can.

Simply put – afford the 1100 teachers of this district the same respect teachers around Monroe County get – a fair and equitable contract. Within

our current bargaining we have tentative agreements to help rectify some of these problems.

As we pass the two-year anniversary of the expiration of our agreement the growing sentiment among membership is that we are going backwards. Webster, Honeoye-Falls Lima, Brighton, Pittsford, and Brockport are among the Districts that settled fair and equitable contracts in the past year.

Our bargaining team remains committed to working with the district on a contract that is fair. We fully acknowledge the economic realities of bargaining but we have to question the District's commitment when surrounding districts are able to do in months what we have been unable to do in years. How can we have 5 bargaining units without contracts? Is it commitment? Is it administrative turnover? We've bargained with Deb Leh, Carol Pallas and 3 attorneys, Deb Leh, Carol Pallas and 4 attorneys, Carol Pallas, 4 attorneys and 2 board members, Bob Smith, Carol Pallas and Steve Achramovitch, Bob Smith, Bob Schroeder and Carol Pallas and finally Bob Schroeder and Steve. Continuity is lacking and we seem to start over with each change.

As we prepare for two new board members and a new school year, let's start on a positive note. We've offered some creative proposals on areas of mutual interest. Steve's an experienced negotiator and he's told us the board has set these parameters. If this is accurate – read our proposals; compare them with surrounding districts - reconsider. We haven't proposed anything unreasonable. In many respects our proposals offer the District more than the contracts settled in the surrounding Districts.

Protracted contract negotiations benefit no one. Already we are hearing local colleges advise prospective student teachers to avoid Greece.

We paid nearly \$100,000 to have Kathleen Fitzpatrick conduct an audit only to get confirmation of what we know. However that Board took action and we saw the immediate results of being responsive to all constituents. Healing our district and repairing relationships within the community boil down to some very simple concepts - respect and honesty. Deal with all constituent groups respectfully and fairly and you will get immediate returns on your investment.

Every day there are stories of excellence in every building and program in our district. Teachers remain committed to excellence. While administrators come and go and consultants are hired and forgotten, the heart of the district remains its teachers, aides, bus drivers, clerical staff, food service people, custodians and countless people not in the public eye. The majority of these people invest in a career in our students and community. Our teachers are the face of the District. Show them the respect other districts afford their teachers – bargain with us in good faith. Thank you and good night.

- Don Pallozzi