

# Random Notes

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## First Breakdown Since Mid-90's

### **Negotiations Reach Impasse**

For the first time in nearly two decades, contract talks between AEA and the Board of Education have ended at an impasse. It will now be left to a fact-finder to recommend a contract settlement to both sides. Not since June, 1994, have negotiations been settled by a third party. That year and in virtually every round of negotiations before that dating to the late seventies, contract disputes had to be resolved by either an impasse panel or an arbitrator/fact-finder.

Why were the Board and Association able to string together nearly twenty years of relatively peaceful settlements on the heels of nearly the same number of years of antagonistic bargaining that included the only Akron teacher strike (1989)? The answer is quite simple: beginning with the settlement reached in 1996 and continuing through to the contract that expired June 30, negotiations were facilitated by a third party. We've reported in the past how mediator Rob Stein's presence at the table forced real discussion of each side's proposals and how he was able to guide the parties to compromise agreements on difficult issues.

Administrators and Board members have whined in recent years that Stein was too "union friendly" and used that as their excuse to abruptly dismiss him at the end of the 2010 talks. What they really wanted was to escape the accountability Stein demanded from each side; this administration doesn't like being expected to justify why bargaining proposals from their employees (not just teachers, by the way; another group is at impasse and the remaining are going nowhere fast) should not become part of the labor agreement.

So it's not surprising that since our June 4 Negotiations Update—when we reported that only 10 of approximately 50 proposals had been resolved—not a single additional issue has been settled. The Board's original wage proposal remains on the table: no wage, step or longevity increases for three years and \$10 million in health care givebacks. Their team claims no authority to modify the proposal; its terms are non-negotiable parameters established by Board members. Their chief negotiator, outside counsel hired specifically to negotiate contracts (no budget crisis there), essentially declined

*(Please see "Negotiations" on back)*

### **More Schools Join Evaluation Pilot**

Nineteen additional schools have agreed to pilot the new teacher evaluation process this year. That makes a total of 21 now participating in the program. Only a limited number of teachers in each school will be evaluated using OTES—the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System—this year.

We've published plenty of information over the past year or so about the direction in which Ohio is moving regarding teacher evaluation. It is very important for every teacher to understand how they will be evaluated in the future (every district in Ohio must adopt OTES or a similar process approved by the Department of Education by the 2013-2014 school year) and to understand how the results of the evaluation—positive or negative—will affect them. So, at the risk of being redundant, we will be publishing both old and new information about OTES this year, starting with some background information in this edition.

In 2010, Akron applied for and won a Race to the Top grant. To be eligible for a grant, districts had to be willing to experiment with new strategies for teacher and principal evaluation and that student growth measures had to be a component of the evaluation strategy. The district's plan was written and approved in 2010. It included annual evaluations of all teachers by the fourth and final year of the grant.

*(Please see "Evaluation Pilot" on back page)*

## STRIDES WALK SET FOR OCTOBER 7

AEA is once again a flagship sponsor of the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Akron, Ohio. You are invited to join us for the 3 mile/5K fundraising walk on Sunday, October 7, 2012 at the University of Akron Field House. The Field House is located at the corner of S. Union and Vine Streets. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. and the walk begins at 10:00 am.

This is AEA's eighth year of participation. We have raised \$273,302 over the past seven years. Watch for announcements from your building captain of fundraising events at your school beginning in September and join in the fun.

We are looking for building captains at the following locations: **Hyre, Kent, Glover, Mason, Smith, Ott** and the **Early Learning Center**.

## Trustee Seats Open Following Summer Moves

We have an unusual number of vacancies on our Board this year as a result of a number of Trustees transferring this summer to schools outside of the district they represented. Elementary District Representative seats are open in the Buchtel, Ellet, Firestone, Garfield, Kenmore and North clusters. Elementary terms of office expire on July 31, of 2014. The North secondary seat is also vacant and that term expires July, 31, 2013. Interested members must complete a petition signed by at least five AEA members within the petitioner's district (all five may be from the petitioner's school) and submit the petition to the AEA office. Petitions are available from AEA and your Building Representative.

## Negotiations at Impasse *(continued from front page)*

to discuss other issues until we caved in on their salary demands.

We have received a list of potential fact-finders from the American Arbitration Association. In all likelihood one will be chosen by August 31<sup>st</sup>. The parties will then decide hearing dates and ground rules for the hearing with the fact-finder. We will publish a **Negotiations Update** prior to the hearing to advise you of the unresolved issues and the fact-finding process and what follows. We will also report on who was selected as the fact-finder and provide you with biographical information about him or her.

## Evaluation Pilot *(continued from front page)*

Tenured teachers would have continued to be formally evaluated once every three years. During the "off years," tenured teachers would have been evaluated based upon a "project" selected by the teacher, such as earning master teacher status or completing a portfolio or pursuing a professional growth plan tailored to the teacher. At the end of the grant period, we would have either reverted to the "old" evaluation form or negotiated with the district a new process based upon our experience with the RttT experiment.

Our RttT plans were preempted by House Bill 153. With its passage last summer, annual evaluations for all teachers became state law, as did the requirement that student growth measures account for half of the evaluation. The legislation forbids districts to use seniority in determining layoffs and recalls and requires them to use evaluation results in making such decisions.

In the next edition of the **Notes**, we will take a more in-depth look into the legislation governing teacher evaluation.

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Firestone High English teacher **Susanne Grywalski** will divide her time this year between teaching at the high school and working on the district's RttT Scope of



**Susanne Grywalski**

Work. Susanne is a 30+ year veteran and a long time Association activist. She presently is one of Firestone's building representatives and also serves as the Firestone secondary representative on the AEA Board of Trustees. She is a member of the District RttT Transformation Team. Susanne will be working on strategies within Assurance

Area D. Much of her time this year will be devoted to working with teachers and principals in buildings participating in the evaluation pilot.

Susanne can be contacted at Ott Staff Development Center in the afternoon or at [sgrywals@akron.k12.oh.us](mailto:sgrywals@akron.k12.oh.us). Please do not try to reach her at Firestone during morning hours. She has a full teaching schedule there and will be unable to take RttT related calls.