

Random Notes

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FACT-FINDING SET FOR FEBRUARY 12

A hearing in the contract dispute between AEA and the Board of Education will take place before a mutually agreed upon fact-finder on February 12, 2013. Additional hearing days will be scheduled by the fact-finder, if necessary. The parties selected Patricia Bittel from a list of arbitrators/fact-finders provided by the American Arbitration Association.

Contract talks broke down late last summer. Wages and fringe benefits are the largest among the stumbling blocks. According to school

Attorney Patricia Bittel is a full-time Arbitrator/Mediator. Ms. Bittel has extensive experience in both the public and private sectors in virtually every imaginable employment topic. She has served as a permanent arbitrator for management and labor in many companies. Ms. Bittel is a graduate of Emory University (BA) and the University of Virginia (JD).

negotiators, the Board set parameters for a wage settlement from which they were not permitted to deviate. Those parameters included a three year wage freeze (including no step or longevity increases for the length of the contract) and \$10 million in insurance give-backs. The same non-negotiable offer was apparently not received too well by other bargaining units in the district; their talks with the Board have either reached impasse or ground to a halt.

We're all familiar with the saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well, maybe not all of us. The meaning of the phrase is simple—if something is working adequately well, leave it alone. Among the Board's proposals are several that have us wondering how this message got lost on their negotiators. For example, they propose to eliminate language which permits teachers who fail to renew their credential by the start of school to do so by the end of the first semester. The language was written when the State first required finger printing and background checks for existing teachers due to renew. Often, the process got bogged down (and still can) in bureaucratic red tape...an inordinate number of applications hitting all at once, finger prints that can't be read, etc. The solution

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AEA 1st VP Rusnak to Retire

AEA 1st Vice President Mike Rusnak is retiring November 1 after nine years in the position and thirty-five years with the Akron Public Schools. Rusnak took over as 1st Vice President in January, 2004. Prior to that, he amassed twenty-six years as a classroom teacher and librarian.



Mike Rusnak

Rusnak began his teaching career in Akron as a long-term substitute. His full-time assignments (English) included Thornton and West junior high schools (both now closed), Innes Middle School, and Garfield and East

high schools. He served a short stint as the librarian at Roswell Kent Middle School and was

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DISTRICT GEARS UP FOR FINAL LEVY PUSH

The midnight hour is rapidly approaching as the Issue 61 campaign prepares an all-out effort to win voter support in the days leading up to November 6. Radio spots have been purchased and plans are in place for last minute calling and a final mailer. If you haven't yet contributed to the effort, please send your contribution now! Checks should be made out to "Citizens Committee, Akron Public Schools" and sent to AEA or the Admin. Bldg. None of us can afford to not GET INVOLVED!!

Fact-Finding Date Set

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seemed simple enough: give folks experiencing problems a semester to get it done. For people with no one to blame but themselves for their tardiness, the Board could terminate them at the end of the grace period without going through due process if they still had not applied for and received their credentials. Truly a win-win situation. Only twice (to our knowledge, and we know about these things) has a member gone beyond the first semester without getting credentialed. In one case, the member didn't care and when confronted with the possibility of termination, she simply declared that she was "outta here." In the second instance, the member was terminated. But in that case, the member's spouse had connections with the Board...if the rest of the story isn't obvious, give us a call. So, during the time the language has been in place, on only two occasions has push come to shove, and the only side that failed to follow the Agreement was management. The only argument they advance for wanting to remove the language is that folks ought to get things done on time. **Amen to that.** Proposals to eliminate the librarian and counselor job descriptions and extend the elementary teacher work day fit, in our estimation, the "if it ain't broke" test. Another item on the Board's wish list is to prohibit the use of personal days during the months of May and June. Seems there are not enough subs to meet the demand during those months. We prefer to believe that the overload is caused not by hundreds of teachers taking personal days during this time, but rather by the large numbers of teachers being taken out of the classroom for professional development activities.

The accompanying inset summarizes **the majority** of proposals on both sides that will be addressed by the fact-finder.

Unresolved Proposals

Board

Increase elementary work day by 15 minutes; grant Board unilateral authority to establish school day starting and ending times.

Permit transfer out of building of teachers who do not follow the school's SIP plan.

Eliminate six month grace period for re-credentialing (see accompanying story).

Establish three year probationary period during which Board may terminate new teachers **for any reason** without due process. Take away tenure rights in termination cases of

non-tenured teachers.

Prohibit use of personal day in May and June.

Eliminate job descriptions for counselors and librarians.

Add a "zipper clause" to contract. A zipper clause effectively prevents past practices and past MOU's from being binding on the parties and enforced through the grievance procedure.

Association

Prohibit return to building of sped students who assault teachers unless doing so violates a student's statutory rights.

Add binding grievance arbitration to the Agreement.

Create a stipend/supplemental contract for mentor teachers.

Establish a joint curriculum committee to study and assess new initiatives before they become institutionalized.

Jointly create a building level administrator evaluation for completion by members in each building. Conduct climate survey in buildings where principals scored in the first quartile; administration to write corrective action plan for problems identified through the climate survey.

Require full pay without deduction from sick days for members who are released by their physician to return to work but who are kept out of work by the administration.

Permit use of attendance incentive days and personal day at any time other than immediately before summer recess (currently, incentive days cannot be used before or after a scheduled holiday or vacation period).

Limit sped enrollment in related arts classes whose enrollment is exclusively IEP students to the maximum allowable size under the Ohio Operating Standards for the respective disability.

Add language specifically stating that PLC agendas are determined by PLC members.

On Election Day, Support Candidates who Support Teachers

It's hard to believe, but it was merely a year ago that Ohioans soundly defeated legislation that would have set public employees and the progress they have made over the years through collective bargaining back decades. The intensity of that moment has vanished, but those responsible for the threat have not. Many are up for re-election to the Ohio House of Representatives. Also up for

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Rusnak to Retire

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the East High School librarian before beginning his full-time responsibilities with AEA.

Mike served as Chairman of the Contract Preparation Committee and member of the Board of Trustees. He also served on a number of standing and ad hoc committees. Mike was elected AEA 2nd Vice President in 1990 and served in that office until becoming 1st Vice President. He was a member of the AEA Negotiating Team from 1984 to the present, including several that produced early agreements using interest-based bargaining. He was a member of the teams that won benefits for teachers such as supply allowances, attendance incentive days, and the Sick Day Bank, which he has chaired since its inception.

As 1st Vice President, Mike was a member of the Coalition for Public Education, a state-wide organization that works for fair funding for public education, particularly for Ohio's urban districts.

Mike passionately believes that teachers should make decisions within their own profession. From his time and experience as an AEA officer, he has developed concern over current directions in education, most notably excessive testing, standardization, and the public's attitude toward teachers. He recently wrote, "More regulations, test preparation, record collecting—and stress—are being heaped on teachers as public education becomes so political. When you're working in your own building you see good things, but when you see what is happening around the district, especially in this current climate, you realize the work our teachers are doing is truly heroic."

Of Rusnak, former AEA President Bill Siegfert said, "I saw in Mike a true teacher advocate. When I was elected president in 1983, I immediately asked him to join our negotiating team. Then, when Neil Quirk left to open the Digital Academy, Mike was the first person I went to seeking a replacement for Neil. Akron teachers were fortunate to have him as a leader and spokesman."

We all thank Mike for his unwavering support of Akron teachers and wish him a happy, healthy and productive retirement.

Two Win Trustee Seats, Three Appointed

In contested Board of Trustees races in the Garfield Elementary and North Secondary clusters, **Jan Shipe** (Voris) and **Shelley Crosby** (North), respectively, were elected. In addition, Trustees

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appointed the following members to vacancies that were uncontested: **Leigh Conti** (Ellet Elementary), **Stephanie Baugh** (Firestone Elementary), and **Casey McHale-Hoag** (Kenmore Elementary). Vacancies remain for the Buchtel and North elementary positions. Members in those clusters interested in serving on the Board should contact AEA.

Once again, the district has embarked on an initiative that was not ready for implementation. Instead of listening...to leadership and taking time to strengthen and correct initiatives already started, the district administration decided to add more to the plate of already overwhelmed teachers. (In addition to everything else,) we have the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards in grades 3-5 and 11-12 as well as the newly adopted K-2 curriculum that lacks proper supports. The poorly planned and badly executed initiatives are causing extreme frustration and anxiety in our teaching staff. Enough is enough. Haphazardly implementing academic initiatives simply to say you have them will not lead to sustainable student growth.

NO, THESE ARE NOT THE LATEST RANTINGS OF AKRON TEACHERS OR AEA LEADERSHIP. THE PARAGRAPH IS A REPRODUCTION, WITH MINIMAL LIBERTIES TAKEN, FROM A RECENT TOLEDO FEDERATION OF TEACHERS NEWSLETTER!

Election

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election or re-election are U.S. officials who took a pro or con stand on SB 5. In virtually all races, we have a choice: support those who supported us, or back candidates whose record shows they are anti-public school teachers.

We recommend election of the candidates whose names appear in boldface print:

Ohio House, 34th District

✓ **Vernon Sykes**

Ronya Habash

Ohio House, 35th District

✓ **Zack Milkovich**

Kevin Mitchell

Ohio House, 50th District

✓ **Sue Ryan**

Christina Hagan

Ohio House, 36th District

✓ **Paul Colavecchio**

Anthony DeVitis

Ohio House, 37th District

✓ **Tom Schmida**

Kristina Roegner

Ohio House, 75th District

✓ **Kathleen Clyde**

Nick Skeriotis

(Please see "Election" on last page)



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Election

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Ohio Senate, 28th District

✓ **Tom Sawyer**
Robert Roush

U.S. House, 13th Ohio District

✓ **Betty Sutton**
Jim Renacci

U.S. Senate

✓ **Sherrod Brown**
Josh Mandel

State Board of Education

✓ **James Collum**

Summit County Council

✓ **Frank Comunale**

**Remember to help yourself
by voting for the candidates
who helped you!**



Walking for Tonia. Seated from l to r are Catie Huff, Nancy Joseph, and Susan Sarli, Standing, l to r, are Pam Huff, Melanie Salyer, Duane Booth, Cheryl Pinto, Brian Johnson, Bart Hanlon, Sheila Snyder (Tonia's Mom), Vicki Way, Brandon Booth, Kayla Cooper and Katie Booth.

*Findley Staff, Family,
Honor Former
Colleague at Strides
Walk.*

Tonia Booth operated the Learning Resource Center at Findley CLC for nearly 20 years. Last spring, she fell victim to breast cancer.

Pictured at left are members of the Findley faculty and Tonia's family who showed up in force at this year's Strides Walk to honor her memory.

Retirees Attend Recognition Dinner in Record Numbers

Close to 130 Akron teachers retired last year. Of them, a record 57 attended AEA's annual recognition dinner for retirees on October 22. Counting their friends and family members, 150 revelers enjoyed an evening of good food and great company. Their story is told in pictures below.



Top to bottom: Debbie Lucas, Marvin Conner and Argie Spithas-Miner



Seeing double! Not just one, but two sets of twin sisters graced the dinner crowd. From L to R: Retiree Marion McReynolds, Peggy Swails, retiree Pat Roetzel, and Sharon Pryor.



Former Akron Alternative Academy leader Bill DiMascio (l) and counselor Dan Richards recall good times at AAA with retiree Jim Perge. Those beer bottles and wine glasses belong to someone else.



Aspiring retiree Dee Williams (l) and the real deal Betty Shuman are all smiles.



From L to R, Retirees Carol Hogue and Sally Reisman are joined by Nancy Koly and veteran retiree Connie Kubilus.

AEA CONGRATULATES ALL RETIREES!