

President's Report

PHILIP RUMORE, PRESIDENT



BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION

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January 27, 2010

I know that via viewing the monthly Council agenda posted on our website, www.btfny.org and being briefed by your delegates, reading the Provocator, checking the tapeline 881-4818 and our website under News & Alerts that you are up to speed on events; however, sometimes it's important to have you hear directly from me.

If you haven't seen our newly designed website, www.btfny.org, you might want to take a look – we actually have video. (See my favorites, Peter, Paul and Mary and "It's not on the Test".)

We are still working on it. Soon, you may be able to purchase items from the BTF store (boutique).

COURT UPDATE – STEP CASE

When the District refused to move us to our correct step on 7/1/07, we went to court. The New York State Supreme Court in Buffalo ruled that we should be placed on our correct step with retroactive pay to 7/1/07. The Appellate Court in Rochester affirmed that decision and also refused to grant permission for the District, City and Control Board to appeal to the Court of Appeals, New York State's highest court. The District, City and Control Board then went directly to the Court of Appeals seeking its agreement to review.

We have been awaiting that decision since December. We hope to have a decision in February. Some possible dates are Feb 11, 16, 18. Be assured that we have already begun discussions with our attorneys, should the court decide to hear the case.

While we have concerns based upon some of the Court's recent decisions, we see no good reason for the Court of Appeals to reverse the two lower court decisions.

Should the District attempt to delay paying us if the Court of Appeals refuses to hear the appeal, we will be in Court suing for interest.

It would be preferable for the District to agree to place us on step retroactive to 7/1/07 as part of negotiations thus avoiding further litigation.

NEGOTIATIONS

We have met with the District and the PERB appointed mediator and are scheduled to meet again on Feb 1st. While negotiations have been amicable, there has really been little progress as the District is still looking for payment toward healthcare, increased number of teacher attendance days, substantially reduced medical benefits, and a miniscule pay increase.

The last time they proposed an interesting salary schedule with raises; however, they did so by using all our step back-pay monies and by not advancing all teachers to where they should be.

Obviously, this was unacceptable. We believe that the District is waiting to see the results of the New York State Budget deliberations in April. We'll see.

SOLIDARITY FRIDAY

Thank you to all the teachers who are sporting our BTF Solidarity stickers on Fridays. They are a great way to demonstrate our solidarity every week.

We ordered these since some teachers didn't want pins ("They put holes in my clothes"). Also, wearing BTF shirts, sweaters and vests is great. Demonstrate every Friday as BTF solidarity day.

DR. OLADELE

For the first time in BTF/District history, the Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Folasade Oladele and her entire staff, (Community Superintendents, Area Directors and about 12 other administrators) agreed to meet with the Council of Delegates to hear teacher concerns and to share information on special district initiatives.

O-V-E-R

DR. OLADELE CONT.

Teacher concerns relating to burdensome lesson plans, classroom interruptions, correction of teachers and evaluation of teachers by outside agencies, etc. were covered.

We believe that written clarification on lesson plans and classroom interruptions from City Hall that will be met with your approval will be forthcoming.

Many of the problems identified did not apparently come from Dr. Oladele's office. She said the staff are working to correct the problem.

For example, Dr. Oladele could see no reason for including in lesson plans those lessons that were already scripted as part of some of the elementary reading and math program as well as the Direct Instruction program.

Hopefully this will be clarified.

We thank Dr. Oladele and her staff for meeting with us to discuss our concerns and working to resolve issues. While we might not always agree, it is important to at least understand one another's position.

HAITIAN RELIEF

Buffalo Teachers have always come to the aid of people in need. The tragedy in Haiti is almost beyond comprehension. Please make your donation as per the flyers distributed at the January Council of Delegates meeting. Thank you.

**RACE TO THE "TOP"
(BOTTOM)**

You may have read about the Federal Government's Race To The "Top" initiative. The grants were allegedly designed to improve the education of our students. For the reasons you have read in the correspondence given to your Delegates at the January Council of Delegates meeting, my signature was not going on the State Memorandum of Understanding. (See BTF website, www.btfny.org under News and Alerts.)

**STATE IDENTIFIED
SCHOOLS**

You have, no doubt, read and heard that seven (7) of our schools have been designated as low performing schools requiring that one of four possible strategies be used to address student performance.

Three of the suggested "strategies" are absurd and vindictive. One, the Transformation Model, is workable. Although one of the required aspects has been reported to be "merit pay", that is not the case. The actual language states "an equitable evaluation system for teachers and principals (that) rewards school leaders, teachers and other staff who in implementing this model have increased student achievement and graduation rates." "Rewards" do not have to be monetary merit pay incentives. We have no intention of negotiating merit pay.

For a more complete assessment of this issue, see my letter to the staff at those schools (www.btfny.org/News and Alerts)

BTF SURVEY

We are putting the final touches on our first BTF Survey that will allow you, the teachers on the front lines, to assess curricula, school environment, etc.

You will be able to either complete it online via your personal email or hard copy.

OUTSIDE AGENCY SURVEY

The District has hired an outside agency, M.T.G., to assess and evaluate District procedures. They will also be asking teachers to complete a survey online. Participants will be kept confidential and the survey will not use lotus notes, but rather the company's own website.

Feel free to complete it, if you wish.

IMPORTANT LEGAL ACTIONS

- An Improper Practice charge has been filed with PERB relating to the District's failure to live up to grievance timelines. We await a pre-conference date.
- A grievance has been filed relating to evaluating teachers, correcting teachers in front of their class and other unacceptable practices by outside consultants.
- We have filed a demand to negotiate the impact of cameras in the halls, gyms, libraries, etc. since, according to our attorneys, it can't be grieved. However, anyone who receives an evaluation as a result of, or for whom, negative consequences have arisen from these cameras, should call the BTF.