

October, 2011

Dear Colleagues -

SMETA Executive Board members have been busy and I wanted to give you an update.

1) Our first meeting of the Labor Management Task Force took place in September. Susan Wright, Christy Rauch, Halimah Mekki and I represented SMETA. Donna Lewis, Susan Totaro, Maria Brady, and Phyllis Harrison represented the District. I presented your evaluations of the Early Release Wednesday Calendar process to the group, which led to a lengthy and healthy discussion on the purpose of the calendar and what issues had arisen from our perspective. We will meet again in December, to hear the responses from the principals. Then we'll look at what can be done to improve the process and support its intent.

2) Christy Rauch led both the Executive Board and the Governing Council through the process of interviewing and ultimately endorsing two candidates for School Board. SMETA will give its support to both Colleen Sullivan and Audrey Ng. Mark Hudak leaves the Board in December.

3) High class numbers and daily contacts continue to be an area of concern for all of us. Many teachers have taken advantage of our CBA's Appendix G, which provides some "compensation" for those of you with more than the contract maximum. Please remember, it's up to you to approach your principal, request a meeting, and initiate the conversation on what form of compensation you'll receive if your class is above the maximum.

4) Special Ed is also a continuing concern. To those of you dealing with the problems stemming from understaffing and inadequate resources in this area, I send this message: document everything; talk to your site administrator; and keep us informed. It has become clear that Board members and District administrators do not always understand how current policy

decisions are affecting each and every one of us on a daily basis. SMETA would like to be your voice -- so we need to hear from you.

5) Finally, I want to encourage all of you to understand your rights under your contract and to be proactive in making sure they are not abridged. A grievance is actually a statement leading to the clarification of our contract language. To initiate the grievance process will not endanger your job. What it will do is clear up misunderstandings between you and your site administrator on a specific issue covered by the contract language. While SMETA can and will initiate a grievance on behalf of our membership if there is cause, most grievances start with you requesting an “informal” grievance meeting with your principal to discuss what it is you feel is wrong. (You can ask for your site grievance rep to join you.) Once you request that meeting, the principal has 6 days to set up a meeting, at which you discuss your position and understanding of the issue at hand. The principal must respond to you in a timely manner. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction or appropriately, then, and only then, do you move forward with SMETA’s assistance to file a Grievance Level I complaint. Again, I urge you to document your situation as thoroughly as possible and to review the language of your contract before requesting the meeting with your principal. And always remember, if you are unsure of what to do, you can talk to your site rep, Susan Wright, Halimah Mekki, or myself for guidance.

What’s really important is to recognize that you have contract rights and that it is up to you to insist on their being honored.

Lastly, a recognition that our Year-Round colleagues are about to begin their first 3-week intercession break. I’m slightly jealous, I must say. The rest of us wish you well and hope you enjoy your down time!

Happy Fall to everyone,
Janet Chappell, SMETA President