

sdta **HOTLINE**

May 5, 2016

CTA • NEA

15/16 – 12

Message from the President

At the Board of Trustees' Study Session on Student Academic Stress, I found myself wondering when we might be having a similar conversation about teacher stress. Every issue the Board tackles for students – stress, mental health, academic achievement, attendance, engagement, A-G completion, graduation rates – all have their roots in the classroom and with teachers.

Along with our colleagues in support positions at the school sites and district, we are at the front-line of these battles day in and day out. We know that a quick 2-minute conversation with a student can be the difference between that student staying connected or feeling lost. And yet we don't always have time for that 2-minute conversation. Or when we do, we don't know where to turn for the follow up conversations and additional support. We know that increasing engagement can address many of the data points the District and the public look to, but we only have so many hours in the week to adapt our curriculum.

The work of teaching has always been challenging and it will become more so as we continue to take on more and more of the societal expectations for nurturing, mentoring, and fostering the positive spirits of our students. When I began my career over twenty years ago, there wasn't much talk about work-life balance, but thankfully that concept has entered the zeitgeist in more recent years. It is important for us to recognize the disparity that may exist between our aspirations and our capacity to reach them and it is crucial that we be able to communicate these limitations and needs to our communities and administrations. When teachers are pushed beyond their breaking point, it is the students who will suffer, which is the last outcome that any of us wants.

-Edith Salvatore

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

On April 27th, the Board held a study session to discuss the issue of Student Academic Stress. There were student, teacher, and parent representatives from each site in attendance. Some of the topics that bubbled up were the pervasive pressure students feel to do and be everything for their college applications and the degree to which this is based on (*cont. on back*)

PART-TIME LEAVE DENIALS

SDTA is aware of at least eight part-time leave requests for family responsibilities that were denied this year while only four part-time leaves were approved district-wide. Those whose leaves were denied were given the option of either returning to work full-time or resigning from the district.

This is a vast departure from the district's previous practice, which was tightened up last year when members who had taken multiple years of leave were given the option to resign a portion of their permanent position if they were unable to commit to returning to full-time employment. While this was obviously far from an ideal solution for our members, it allowed them to make the decision to honor their commitment to their families and their work responsibilities while also lessening the burden on our sites of filling temporary positions. Unfortunately, even this option is being denied our members this year.

At the April 27th Board Study Session Seven staff members spoke on the recent policy shift in the district to limit part-time leaves of absence and more than a dozen have written to the board and superintendent, but we have seen no movement from the district on their hard-line approach. It is perplexing, especially given that many sites did not even know what their departmental needs for next year would be before the denials were made. As it is, many of our members are still receiving mixed messages about whether or not it will be possible for their requests will be accommodated.

At the very least, we were hopeful that the district could extend past practice for one year as we work out agreements for the future so that everyone knows what they can expect, but we haven't gotten that commitment yet. (*cont. on back*)

TGIF THIS FRIDAY

Who: You & your colleagues throughout the district

What: Snacks and camaraderie in the downstairs bar

Where: RWC Underground, 2650 Broadway Ave, Redwood City (across from Sequoia)

When: Friday, May 6th, 4pm-6pm

Why: 19 days left until summer vacation!

Teacher Appreciation Week

The first full week in May is celebrated as Teacher Appreciation Week and the Tuesday of that week is National Teacher Appreciation Day.

California teachers are doubly appreciated with California's Day of the Teacher celebrated next Wednesday, May 11th.

California's Day of the Teacher has its roots in the community and is patterned after the celebration of the traditional "El Día del Maestro," which is observed in Mexico and Latin America countries. Our California's Day of the Teacher arose out of legislation co-sponsored by CTA and the Association of Mexican American Educators in 1982.

May is a hard month for teachers as we race toward the finish line. Please take a moment to reflect on what you do and who you do it for and know that your efforts are appreciated even when you can't see that.

Notes from the Board (*cont. from front*)

misinformation, or at the least incomplete information. One student spoke about the how difficult it is to reach out for the "panic button", even when students may know they are overwhelmed and need to bail out. A recurring theme was the need to be aware of student stress and to increase and improve communication among all interested parties (counselors, teachers, administrators, students, and parents) about what the reality of college applications are.

In addition to these systemic issues, curricular issues were also discussed, including philosophies on homework, the concept of eliminating zeroes in the gradebook, extending assignment deadlines, and permitting multiple test re-takes to encourage a focus on mastery. Obviously, these are topics that should be discussed in depth among departments and

faculties as a whole as they impact teachers' curriculum and grading policies which are determined by the individual teacher.

Denial of Leaves (*cont. from front*)

While the District's responses to our questions have often revolved around the need to be able to offer full-time positions in hiring, the truth of our scheduling is that in a high school district, our departments do not always need exact numbers of full-time employees and often the part-time positions we offer are due to our teachers being released to complete work for the district or to teach non-departmental classes. In the past, our sites have been able to balance these needs and our members' needs to create master schedules that offer students the wide variety of classes they require. It remains unclear why this is no longer possible.

The District has proposed language on job sharing at the bargaining table, but it is not clear how this language, if adopted for next year or the future, would apply to the cases we are dealing with right now or even if it is necessarily needed in a high school district.

If you have not yet had a chance to address the board on this issue, please consider writing to them at the following email addresses:

- Trustee Sarver: asarver@seq.org
- Trustee Du Bois: cdubois@seq.org
- Trustee Thomsen: cthomsen@seq.org
- Trustee Jack: gjack@seq.org
- Trustee Weiner: aweiner@seq.org
- Superintendent Lianides: jlianides@seq.org

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/MySDTA>

Your SDTA Site Reps:

Carlmont

Katya Burton
Connie Dominguez
Joseph Hill
Cary Milia*
Hai Nguyen
Genevieve Tep
Carolyn Wade*
Kelly Redmon

(communications)

Menlo-Atherton

Tim Bowler*
Manuel Delgado
Karina Escobar-Weaver
Tania Kranzler*
Patrick Maier
Mike Molieri
Liane Strub

Sequoia

Belén Álvarez-Iglesias
Debolina Dutta
Guadalupe Navarrete
Octavio Rodriguez
Edith Salvatore*
Jasmine Schimek
Dylan Shelley*
Kate Sheehan

Woodside

Adele Alvarez
Rick DeFrancesco
Greg Gruszynski*
Diana House
Alexandrina Pretto
Marian Welch
Felicia Yang
*bargaining team rep

Redwood

Javier Galaviz*
Mike Martin
Maureen Svenson
District Office
(available opening)
EPAA
Tamesha Wise

