

This week's issues come for the REA listening posts:

Pay schedule change – Although it was announced this week by Dr. Pekel, it won't change until March '22. This item also addresses one of the other concerns that came up in the September Feedback regarding how para or other hourly workers are paid in the district. If they start in the beginning of the month, they don't receive pay until the end of the month. By moving to the new pay schedule, this allows everyone to be paid in a timelier fashion. Hopefully, this will entice more people to apply for our positions we are desperately trying to fill. As you have seen, by recent school board action, the district is doing more outreach to hire paras and custodians. They have offered signing bonus money and bonus money for referrals made by district employees. Hopefully, all this combined will bring in people.

Tech - there were lots of questions regarding Tech in our district. As soon as I can get an answer regarding: loss of desk tops, subs and technology, docking stations, lack of input....etc. I will forward them on to you. I believe technology will continue to be a struggle for the district as we move forward. Keep sending in the questions to me, but make sure you email technology or talk with your admin as well. Many times, they don't even know what you may or may not need and since they didn't ask – we need to tell them.

Bell schedule – If you have parents that aren't happy with the new times, please have them share that with the admin and the board. If you have a chance to have a board member in your building, share with them what the effect of having elementary in until 4 and riding a bus until 5. They need to know how their policies impact the day.

Negotiation Survey – This was developed by our team. It was not meant to do anything other than get a read on the membership to see what position we should be bargaining from when we present our financials. Our team has to do its due diligence on looking at state averages for settlement, district finances and balance between member needs when putting together a financial package for the district to consider. If you have followed the board, most of the settlements have been about 5% packages for the other bargaining units. We are, once again, going to have to push the board to stretch that limit.

SPED Caseload – this is and will continue to be an ongoing discussion at the district level. Karla Bolleson meets with us every week as we go through all the different scenarios that happen in our district. Every time I get a new report or question about numbers, I bring it forward to see what can be done. A question was raised about Case Facilitators and how many buildings have them and who decides. I am not sure how many we have, but it is decided at the building level. From my experience, it seems to work for some staff and not for others.

COVID – If you have questions about quarantine, those should go to the Task Force. I have asked the questions that have been sent to me and I try to get back to the staff that ask. As of now, there is no vaccine mandate. I will be at the board meeting on Tuesday to hear about that possibility and the parameters around quarantining a section, grade level or building due to COVID.

Finally, I had a good meeting with Dr. Pekel on Thursday. One of the main discussions was about the Strategic Planning Committees. Thank you to all that showed interest in being involved with the process. Dr. Pekel was impressed with the number of people that wanted to be active in the process. I am going to serve on the Coherence Committee. This committee is going to help make sure the work of the other 5 committees can be correlated and centered into the task at hand. It is good to have representation and input from the staff and I look forward to serving alongside you in this endeavor. It gives me a sense of optimism to see outreach to our staff so that input can drive a final product.

The other topic we discussed was staff morale. It is low and there is no denying it. Dr. Pekel is going out to buildings and is talking with staff, so when you see him introduce yourself and your class. I thought it was bad when we went into lockdown, then I thought last year was tough. Here we are in October and we are experiencing the February slump in some places. As President Specht mentioned last night, that it doesn't matter where she goes, educators across the state are tired, stressed and a little angry. This also came up in the Listening Post that people are being triggered by all sorts of things no matter how small. I don't know how we are going to fix that, but as I have said to others – I will continue to work on member issues every day in an attempt to make things work better.

Thanks,

Dan

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