



The Montage

PEA's Newsletter
September, 2013
Volume 5, Issue 3

CONTRACT RATIFICATION
WHEN: Tuesday, 9/17 at 6:30-8:00 PM
WHERE: PMHS Auditorium
ONLY MEMBERS MAY VOTE!



Who's got your back? We've got your back! Neil Linville, President

The *Montage* contributors welcome you back to the 2013-2014 school year. As you know from my emails to you, PEA has reached a tentative agreement with the corporation for the 2013-2014 school year, and we plan to hold a ratification meeting next Tuesday, September 17th, at 6:30-8:30 PM in the PMHS auditorium. Please make every attempt to be there.

With that said, I need to address a growing concern I have, which manifests itself in various forms. In recent months, PEA has worked with teachers who have found themselves in situations where their reputations, their careers, and even their integrity and job security have been threatened. They have been accused by students and/or adults, the MAJORITY of them wrongfully accused, of inappropriate behavior or practices. As recently as a few years ago, a teacher in this situation would have been questioned by his principal or other administrator, and if the teacher professed innocence and that the accusations were false, the matter was concluded. The teacher received much needed support from his administration.

As I've seen in recent months, this, sadly, seems to no longer be the practice in Perry Township. In short, if a teacher is accused of something, he is questioned immediately, and he is usually immediately placed on paid administrative leave. While teachers are scrutinized more now than they ever have been historically, I don't think I need to tell you that this sends a message to students, parents, and the community that "the teacher did something wrong." Furthermore, it sends a message to the teacher that he has done something wrong, even if he really didn't do anything wrong. Unfortunately, the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" does not seem to apply in these situations, and this gravely concerns me. Even more grave is that in many cases I've dealt with where accusations were either false or inaccurate, the students and/or adults making the accusations were not addressed. They saw no action taken against them for making false claims against teachers, while the teacher continued to live under the umbrella of suspicion.

I will be discussing this concern at length with our administration and school board in the coming weeks and months. We can't have teachers so afraid to do their jobs that it adversely affects their performance in the classroom, thereby affecting their evaluations, thereby affecting their salaries and job security. It is a real concern that has real consequences; I'm talking about the livelihood of people, of professionals, and I find it disheartening that when a student's or parent's word is put up against a teacher's, the teacher's word holds the least weight. I am embarrassed that these situations are handled in this manner.

Know that PEA has your back, and we will fight—and "fight" is not a word I use lightly—to ensure your rights, dignity, and professional integrity are upheld in the highest standards. While we attempt to work on changing the process of how these situations are handled, we, PEA, will support our members in these situations. The legal support from ISTA alone is unparalleled; the expertise their legal team brings is unmatched.

While we work with administration to effect some positive change in the way these issues are handled, what can you do to protect yourself?

- Never work alone with a student behind closed doors. Make sure you are in a very visible, public area of your building. If in your classroom, keep the door open and sit so that people walking by can see/hear you.
- Never put your hands on a student. Do not physically break up a fight or put yourself in a situation that requires you to have physical contact with a student.
- If threatened, verbally or physically, by a student or parent, talk to your PEA rep and file a police report with MSDPT police.
- Student-Teacher confidentiality only goes so far. If a student asks to talk to you in confidence, but you find that the topic, such as potential abuse, addictions, etc..., may require you to legally notify administration. Again, do not talk to the student behind closed doors.
- If you receive an email, voicemail, or any correspondence from a parent or student that is accusatory toward you, **talk to your PEA rep first.** We will counsel you and begin supporting you IMMEDIATELY.
- Use common sense. If you find yourself dealing with an uncommon situation, **talk to your PEA rep.**
- If meeting with a parent for a conference, **have a PEA representative with you.**
- If meeting with HR about any sort of extended leave, **have your PEA representative with you.**
- NEVER meet with administration regarding discipline without your **PEA representative.**
- If asked by administration to write a report of an incident for which you're accused, talk to and **work with a PEA representative FIRST.**
- If you feel uneasy about meeting with administration, **have your PEA rep with you.** If you get to a meeting with an administration, and you decide in the middle of the meeting that you need a PEA rep, ask to stop the meeting so you can secure representation.
- If CPS or the police contact you about an accusation, tell them that you need your lawyer. Then, **contact your rep or PEA officer,** and we will have ISTA's lawyer on the case immediately.
- If you feel you're harassed by a student or parent, **talk to your PEA rep ASAP.**
- When in doubt, **TALK TO YOUR PEA REP!**

This article is not meant to instill fear among teachers; **it is meant to inform you.** We teach in a time when we teachers are always scrutinized and held to standards to which no other professionals are held. We must protect ourselves. Any teacher I've worked with in recent months will tell you that he did not see the accusations he faced coming until it happened. He never thought something like this could happen to him. It can happen to any of us, myself included, and just know that PEA will support its members every step of the way!

PEA Leadership

Neil Linville (PMHS), President
Matt Henninger (PMHS), 1st V.P.
Danielle Brooking (PMA), 2nd V.P.
Steve Dawson (PMHS), Treasurer
Kyle Hanefeld (GV), Secretary
Matt Henninger, Membership Chair

Perry Education Association

P.O. Box 47432
Indianapolis, IN 46247-0432
<http://www.perryea.org>
789-4414, PEA Office

Special points of interest:

- **HSBT Health and Wellness Center**
6925 S. Harding Street
497-6140
- 24/7 Nurse Line (888-279-5449)
- **Anthem Member Services** (800-345-2460)



Is it Better, the Same, or Worse?

By: Kyle Hanefeld, Secretary

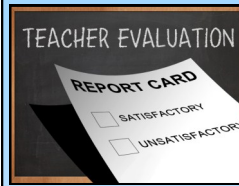
Normally when you are asked “Is it better, same, or worse?” you find yourself visiting the optometrist getting a new pair of glasses or contact lenses. However, I would like to adopt this question for assessing our evaluation process during the 2013-2014 school year.

At numerous summer discussion and bargaining meetings, PEA was told that the focus by our administration for this year’s evaluation cycle is to continue to improve rater reliability that, in turn, will improve the consistency of scoring as a

“We are approaching this from the angle of improving our improvement model.”

township. Moreover, the administration felt that there was consistency within each individual building, but they also believe that consistency from one building to another is an area that needs improvement. I, for one, wholeheartedly agree.

In order to develop inter-rater reliability among buildings,



administration needs to ensure that the evaluation practices that are being done in one building are consistent in all buildings. How can our evaluation process become more consistent or better if we are not placed onto a level playing field?

Your PEA leadership team and building representatives will maintain our focus on the evaluation process during this school year. However, we need you to vocalize any inconsistencies that may occur within your building to your building rep or any PEA officer. Regardless of the situation, please do not place yourself into a position that may be construed as being insubordinate. We are approaching this from the angle of improving our improvement model. We want to be part of solutions to help ensure teachers are evaluated fairly across the district.

So as the year progresses, we need to ask ourselves is this year’s evaluation practice getting better, remaining the same, or is it getting worse? We definitely cannot accept worse, and we will not settle with matters remaining the same. No, we can only accept one change and that change is for the better, but we will be tasked with providing constructive feedback to help this happen.



The Dawson Monologue

By: Steve Dawson, Treasurer/HSBT Board Member



Changes to Your Retirement

If you qualify for retirement, you have an important decision to make, and if you hope to someday retire, you have work to do. As written in the *Indianapolis Business Journal* on August 27, “Indiana lawmakers grilled the head of the state’s pension system Tuesday on a decision to push future retirees into a market-based system that could **almost halve the amount they earn** from annuity plans [emphasis mine].” You can read the article at <http://www.ibj.com/state-pension-board-change-cuts-retiree-payouts/PARAMS/article/43210>.

Unless legislative action corrects the Pension Board, those of you eligible for retirement must retire at the end of this school year to receive the benefit that you have expected. If you wait to retire, you will receive a lesser amount. You can learn more at the pension website <http://www.in.gov/inprs/2817.htm>.

ISTA is actively taking steps to protect your state retirement. ISTA has already convinced the head of the state Pension Board to allow those who retire at the end of this year to be funded under the old formula. Read more at <https://ista-in.org/data/documents/1566.pdf>.

Those of you who hope to retire comfortably after devoting your lives to the children of Indiana need to contact legislators and share your expectations. If you read the above websites, you will likely know more than your senator or representative. This was a recent and unexpected move by the Pension Board. Your voice needs to be heard for your retirement to be protected.

Thank You, Vickie and Bob!

Assistant Superintendents Vickie Carpenter and Bob Bohannon secured a grant which will put money in your pocket. Perry Township received \$921,300 from Indiana’s Excellence in Performance for Teachers grant. The grant is directly related to our use of TAP for teacher evaluations. The money will reward administrators, teachers, and master teachers. Employees at Abraham Lincoln and Southport Elementary have other bonus opportunities and are excluded from this grant.

Teachers will receive approximately \$837 and master teachers will receive approximately \$3,560 (based on the number of teachers eligible). The money will be paid in a lump sum during the summer of 2014. Please send thank you notes to Vickie and Bob.