

PROTEUN

A publication of the Providence Teachers Union available on-line at www.proteun.org or via e-mail.



February 2008

SMITH CRITICAL OF MCCLURE/EVANS TEAM

Dear Colleagues:

My November 2007 PROTEUN column focused on our decision to return to work at the start of the 2007-2008 academic year while the terms and conditions of the September 1, 2004—August 31, 2007 collective bargaining agreement between the Providence School Board and the Providence Teachers Union remained in full force and effect until a successor agreement was reached by the parties and ratified by the Providence City Council.

In accepting this course of action, each of us had specific roles and responsibilities to fulfill. They were the following:

1. I asked our Negotiating Committee to bring creative, forward thinking, positive proposals to the bargaining table. Proposals that would focus on the student and the teacher while offering a vision of a new and enlightened relationship between labor and management. Our team not only fulfilled this directive but did so enthusiastically and optimistically. In return, the School Board and the Superintendent countered with a proposal best characterized as lack-luster.
2. I asked you to continue doing the outstanding work you do on a daily basis and try hard not to allow poor leadership and the lack of effective management to dampen your spirit. You have met my request with sincere dedication to the students and the community we serve. Unfortunately, the Superintendent's plan never materialized.

Continued....

On December 20, 2007, the Providence City Council summoned key city officials to appear before the Council to give testimony about the totally unacceptable management of snow storm operations on December 13, 2007.

Appearing together was Mary McClure, President of the Providence School Board and Superintendent of Schools, Donnie Evans.

President Steve Smith, having worked into the evening trying to get stranded students and families united, took the opportunity to share some thoughts with the City Council about the school department's mismanagement of the snow storm as well as thoughts about the McClure/Evans management style.

What follows is Mr. Smith's letter to each council member which was received, recorded and read into the record by Council President Peter Mancini:

December 19, 2007

Dear City Council Members:

Thank you for calling a meeting on Thursday, December 20, 2007 to discuss with key city officials reasons for the totally unacceptable occurrences surrounding the snow storm of Thursday, December 13, 2007. I would have hoped that the Providence School Board would have seen fit to initiate this investigation.

On behalf of the 2100 Providence teachers and the Providence Teachers Union, I wish to offer some insight into the causes and affects of decisions made by the present school administration in hope that you will have a greater understanding as to how and why these unfortunate incidents occurred.

The school department, as we all know, handled the snowstorm in a totally unacceptable manner. The fact that the Standard Operating Procedure which requires the Superintendent and his/her staff to remain on duty until assurances were received that all children had returned home safely was completely ignored and represents a symptom of a much greater problem.

I respectfully request that you not limit your inquiry to the events on December 13th but that you take appropriate steps to examine a city department with numerous problems.

The current lack of leadership is exacerbated by the fact that the Providence School Board continuously protects and supports the ineffective leadership style of the Superintendent. While we are aware of the School Board's official role as policy makers, there exists a complete disconnect between School Board's action and public sentiment. Instead of establishing and maintaining open lines of communication with parents, community, elected leaders, labor organizations etc., the School Board instead provides ample evidence that they are not interested.

There is widespread agreement across all levels of employees, including administrators that the School Department Administration and the Board leadership are completely out of touch with the reality our children and challenges our teachers face on a daily basis.

Continued....

Teacher after teacher, faculty after faculty have approached the Superintendent and appeared before the School Board with pleas for help with curricula concerns, lack of supplies, insufficient equipment, poor scheduling, etc. only to fall on deaf ears. What we do receive is apology after apology from the Superintendent with promises to do better the next time. The School Board, by virtue of their actions, continues to demonstrate a disconnect between itself and teachers, between itself and the community. In fact, the School Board continually acts on behalf of the Superintendent which, more often than not, is contrary to the legitimate requests of the public.

3. My job was to convince the Mayor, the School Board and the Superintendent that a reasonable and responsible new agreement was in the best interests of promoting collaboration between the parties and would provide evidence of a reform-minded school district creating opportunities for school improvement and student success.

The response to this call for mutual respect between the parties with a shared commitment to a child centered agenda was disheartening.

The Mayor calls for a new agreement of the highest caliber, yet his appointed School Board and their chosen Superintendent simply will not step-up to the plate. The Board routinely rejects proposals aimed at meeting the multi-faceted needs of our students.

I've asked for your cooperation and your patience. You've provided me both with great generosity. The time has come for us to do more.

Within the next few weeks, our Executive Board will begin deliberations about the next steps to be taken. They will reach consensus on a plan of action which will then be shared with all building delegates for further input and refinement. Once this plan has been finalized, I will disseminate it so that you will be fully informed.

Continued...

SMITH CRITICAL OF MCCLURE/EVANS TEAM *(Continued)*

As you begin this inquiry, you should be aware that the Board has entered into negotiations with Superintendent Evans on a new contract. The Board President publicly expressed hope that the Superintendent would remain in Providence. Unfortunately, she doesn't share the same sentiments regarding teachers, clerks, and aides.

Please be advised that I am available to meet and/or speak with you to provide you with greater detail and specificity as to the problems and challenges the district faces.

Again, I thank you for acting in such a responsible manner and wish you well.

Sincerely,

Steven F. Smith
President

SFS/mmf

c: Mayor David Cicilline

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

Professor Matthew M. Bodah, PhD of the University of Rhode Island, the appointed mediator of the Providence Teachers Union/Providence School Board contract negotiations, has chaired twelve (12) sessions to date, the latest held on December 21, 2007.

Agreement regarding an alternate to bumping remains the Board's single most important issue. To date, the Board has been unable to design objective criteria which would replace seniority as the vehicle to be used in identifying teachers in need of reassignment.

Agreement regarding economic issues remains as the single most important unresolved monetary item. The Board maintains there is no money for salary increases since the RI Legislature enacted level funding. The Union maintains there is sufficient funds available in the present budget which could be utilized to address the economic components of a contract.

Finally, the Board's Chief Negotiator, Mr. John Simmons, has resigned from employment with the City of Providence to take a new position with the RI Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC). Mr. Simmons will no longer continue as the Board's chief negotiator and has been replaced by Mr. Richard Kerbel, Director of Administration for the City of Providence. Professor Bodah has pledged to have the Board name a new Chief Negotiator and commence negotiations after the start of the new year.

LOCAL EDUCATION NEWS

1. PARENTS VOICE COMPLAINTS

More than 100 parents turned out at Adelaide Avenue High School on December 4, 2007 to hear Superintendent Evans discuss his efforts to create good communication between homes and schools. What he heard from parents was their frustration with their inability to get their children the help warranted, being treated rudely when attempting to register children, lack of support from the district, schools out of control, one school's decision to abolish parent/teacher conferences, voice mails not returned by the administration, etc., etc. Evans stated that he was unaware of these problems and promised to do better.

2. MAYOR NOMINATES 3 TO SCHOOL BOARD

Mayor David Cicilline has appointed Philip Gould, a Brown University professor, public school parent and Paul Cuffee School Board member along with present members Mary McClure and Ronnie Young to new three (3) year terms on the Providence School Board. Each nomination was confirmed by the City Council on January 3, 2008.

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LOCAL EDUCATION NEWS

3. REGENTS APPROVE SPECIAL EDUCATION CHANGES

The Regents have approved a series of controversial changes to RI Special Education regulations. After a lengthy process of hearings, the Regents lifted the State's restrictions on class size for special needs students. Commissioner McWalters said that during the month of January 2008, he will issue a series of guidelines for school districts to ensure that schools do not dramatically increase special education class size as a way of saving money.

4. CLASSICAL MAKES "BEST" LIST

Classical High School won a Silver Medal awarded by U.S. News and World Report in its America's Best High School rankings. Among the 18,700 high schools surveyed, Classical placed within the top 500 schools using criteria that measures school preparedness upon graduation as well as how schools served minority students.

5. FLANDERS REPORT DUE FEBURARY 1, 2008

The Chairman of the RI Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, Robert Flanders, plans to announce publicly the results of a Regents sponsored study addressing work stoppages by teachers without contracts. The chairman also said he wants to improve teacher training, give principals and superintendents more authority and expand early childhood education.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

There has been meetings of two joint committees in the Collective Bargaining Agreement since the last publication of the PROTEUN.

1) Site-Based Management—Article 8-31

This committee has met with all the Site-Based schools on Friday, December 7th and Monday, December 10th to review their site-based plans that are currently in effect.

Each school was represented by the administrator, teacher, SIT chairs, students and parents and they answered a series of questions about how their current Site-Based plans address the needs of the district and student achievement. It is the intention of the Site-Based Committee to provide each school with a timeline for completing new site-based plans for review and approval. All new site-based plans need approval of the faculty since they all contain contract variances. The current Site-Based schools are as follows: Charles Fortes Elementary, Vartan Gregorian Elementary, Feinstein High School, Health, Science & Technology Academy, Providence Academy of International Studies and E-Cubed High School.

2) Professional Time Joint Committee—Article 8-34

This committee meets every 2nd Thursday of the month but the last 2 meetings were postponed by the School Department due to scheduling conflicts. In addition, the recent resignation of Lynn Nunn who administered My Learning Plan has caused many problems with payroll issues and Professional Development opportunities. Currently all the curriculum supervisor positions are vacant due to the resignation of those administrators. A meeting was finally scheduled and held on Friday, December 14th to address several concerns that teachers have brought to their field representatives pertaining to Professional Development. The results of the meeting on the 14th are as follows:

- ◆ Additional professional development opportunities will be available starting in January for secondary teachers in the core content areas facilitated by the East Bay Collaborative.
- ◆ Specialty area teachers who are having difficulty fulfilling their requirements can contact their field representative directly and opportunities will be provided through the appropriate level directors.
- ◆ Teachers who are not assigned to a school and cannot complete school-based hours are also being addressed.

If you are having problems signing up for Professional Development due to lack of opportunities or because Professional Development is cancelled without proper notification, please contact your field representative at the PTU office immediately.

Contact Paul at 421-4014 or Pvorro@proteun.org.

I'm sure you will recognize some of the tried-and-true actions of years gone by. However, our plan will include new and innovative techniques aimed at informing the public about our Union's commitment to school improvement and student success and the need for them to join with us.

As we move our agendas into public view, I am hopeful we will gain support which will bring to a conclusion negotiations which began eighteen (18) months ago. Once again, we seek an agreement which can be characterized as good for our students, our city and our teachers.

Be assured that I will continue to keep you fully informed and that I thank you for your continued support and assistance.



PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE

November

- 1 Local 1033
- 2 Councilman John Igliazzi
Labor Management Committee
Quest Conference
- 3 Quest Conference
- 5 Negotiations
Councilman John Lombardi
Classical PTO
- 6 Atty. Mark Gursky– Special
Education Variance
- 7 Negotiations
RIDE/Board of Regents-SPED
Executive Board Meeting
CCRI/Board of Regents-SPED
Councilman Nick Narducci
- 8 Negotiations
Grievance Hearings
RIDE/Board of Regents-SPED
- 9 Hope High School
- 13 RIFT/RIPEC/NEA
Building Delegate Meeting
Representative Rhoda Perry
School Board Meeting
- 14 Negotiations
Youth Voices
Democratic Party Fundraiser
Senator Juan Pichardo

Continued...

PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE

November (cont'd):

- 15 Mayor Cicilline
Grievance Hearings
RIFT Board Meeting
- 16 Hope High School
Labor Management Committee
- 19 Site-Based Committee
Mayor Cicilline
Grievance Hearings
- 28 Health & Wellness Committee
Health & Welfare Trustee Mtg.
Direct Instruction Meeting
- 29 Grievance Hearings
School Nurse Teachers
Local 1033, et al
- 30 Mayor Cicilline
Labor Management Committee

December:

- 4 Executive Board Meeting
- 6 Site-Base Committee
School Nurse Teachers
- 8 Holiday Reception
- 10 Site-Base Committee
Superintendent Evans
Grievance Hearings
School Board Meeting
- 11 Building Delegate Meeting
- 12 Negotiations
- 14 Negotiations
Labor Management Committee
- 17 AFL-CIO Board Meeting
Grievance Hearings
School Board Meeting
- 18 Negotiations
Reservoir Faculty
- 19 Mayor Cicilline
Representative DeSimone/
Councilman Narducci
- 20 Negotiations
- 21 Negotiations

*(See CALENDAR OF EVENTS
for listing of school visits)*

DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES' REPORT

Grievances

During the month of November 2007, forty-one (41) grievances were filed. Of the forty-one (41) grievances filed, eighteen (18) were filed by elementary teachers; twelve (12) were filed by high school teachers; eight (8) were filed by middle school teachers; two (2) were filed by substitute teachers and one (1) was filed by Special Groups. The area most frequently grieved was Unfair & Inequitable Treatment (15). Other areas grieved are as follows:

Plant Maintenance	10
Fair Discipline Policy	1
Supplies & Equipment.....	4
Professional Development.....	4
Class Size	1
Substitute Teachers.....	1
Teacher Program	2
Lack of Teacher Assistant	1
Suspension List.....	1
Hiring of Teachers.....	1

Arbitrations

Currently, there are six (6) arbitration cases pending. Two (2) related to personnel issues and (1) regarding retiree medical benefit rates have confirmed hearing dates; two (2) regarding teacher programs are in the process of arbitrator selection and scheduling and one (1) regarding bargaining unit work is in the process of settlement.

The most recent two (2) arbitration decisions received were favorable to the Union. Both arbitration awards were relative to personnel issues.

11th Annual Book Drive—Dress Down Day

With the proceeds from the November 5th Dress Down Day, new books for all age groups were purchased. A total of 1,890 books were donated to the following Providence community centers: Federal Hill House, DaVinci Center, Hartford Park, Silver Lake, Washington Park, Joslin, Nickerson, Smith Hill and Mt. Hope. Thank you to everyone who made this year's book drive a great success!



Contact Maura @ 421-4014 or mgalvao@proteun.org.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY RECEPTION

On Saturday, December 8, 2008, Donna & Steve Smith held their annual holiday reception in support of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. The event was well attended and a total of \$2,450 was raised to help the fight against hunger.

*(Victor Corporan,
Robin Sampson,
Cesar Elias,
Donald Proto,
Camille Pezzi)*



*(Bob Delaney,
Cesar Elias, Victor
Corporan,
Colleen Callahan,
Fr. Nick Milas)*

UNION PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Peer Assistance and Review – Part 2

In an attempt to be proactive, the American Federation of Teachers national leadership has turned its attention and efforts to examine Teacher Quality. They are doing this because, as you have noticed, public education has been taken out of the hands of people who understand what education is really about. So-called “educational partners” are stepping up to bat to manage schools, set educational policies, and define teacher quality.

We have a clear example of this in the current membership of the Rhode Island Board of Regents. We’ve heard a great deal about them lately, as they reviewed the request to increase class size for the neediest and most challenging of our student population. Of course, they turned a deaf ear to teachers, the union officials, and the parents of special needs students. Others were too afraid they would lose their jobs to speak against the increase. Rumor has it, this is just the beginning.

According to the official website, “The Board of Regents is the chief policy-setting body overseeing elementary and secondary education in Rhode Island. Through its designated powers and duties, the Board helps shape the course of public education to ensure that all of the state’s children receive the best possible education.”

Here lies the irony. What qualifies the members of the Board of Regents, other than being appointed by a Governor? Let’s look more closely at the people who are making decisions that govern the lives of teachers, and students alike, through their “policy-setting.”

There are currently eight members of the Board of Regents:

- ◆ an attorney
- ◆ an active member in a banking and commercial real estate firm
- ◆ a former 6th Grade teacher
- ◆ a Metlife employee who specializes in interpreting contract language
- ◆ a retired judge
- ◆ the co-founder of a technology firm
- ◆ an East Greenwich teacher from 1968-1978
- ◆ the CEO of a corporation

The members of the Board of Regents are apparently all prestigious and intelligent people. There is very little that qualifies them to guide the education of public school students in Rhode Island, and specifically in Providence. It is frightening to think that this group of non-educators has the authority to say what good teaching looks like, or, who should and who should not, be in a classroom.

A good auto mechanic is a blessing. But he/she is probably not qualified to suggest how to make urban public schools better. The best people for that job, are the people who live the realities of urban education day in and day out. It is time to put public schools in the hands of people who know what is best. It is time for teachers to claim public education policy and to chart the course for quality teaching.

Contact Fr. Nick Milas at 421-4014 or Frnickm2@aol.com.

SCHOOL NEWS

During the past two months, many of our schools began the holidays with concerts, fundraisers, and celebrations of the season. At Greene Middle School, students and teachers hosted the Greene Idol Talent Show and Holiday Concert. Veazie Street Elementary School conducted its third annual Community Sing. Lead by music teacher Catherine Markovitz, they shared their favorite holiday songs. Members of the Hopkins Italian Language Club Chorus and their teacher, Angelo Neri, hosted the 35th annual Italian Christmas Program. The students toured the city singing traditional Italian Christmas Chorals. The students and faculty of the Fogarty elementary school staged a walkathon and 4,000 dollars was raised for the school. Students from Tracey Boothman’s English II class at the 9th Grade Academy of Service attended a presentation by Eric Jay Dolan, author of the Leviathan: The History of Whaling in American, at the Providence Public Library. Webster Avenue Elementary kicked off their participation in the PBIS program with a visit from Webster Bear who represents the school motto of being responsible, respectful, and safe. Janet Cambio a fourth grade teacher at Webster was recently awarded National Board Certification.

We hope that you all had a safe and happy holiday season. If your school has any significant events scheduled in the future, please send the information on them to your field representative and he will highlight it in this section of the PROTEUN.

Contact Ed at 421-4014 or eneil@proteun.org.

SCHOOL NEWS

Perry Middle School

The Perry Middle School students and staff recently donated 368 pounds of cans and dry goods to the RI community Food Bank as part of the Feinstein Food Challenge. Social studies teacher Carol Duffy-Deady and Student Assistance Counselor, Wendy Miller led the drive.

Teachers Maryanna Lapati, Sheila Cruz, Dianne McElroy, Adria Dutremble and Deb Lockwood organized a Thanksgiving Feast for all students who passed their courses and followed school expectations. More than 70 students contributed and participated in the Thanksgiving meal.

Teacher DeWolf Fulton arranged for Dr. Timothy Warren to visit the school's sixth graders on December 6th. Dr. Warren spoke with the students about his attempt to climb Mt. Everest.

Central High School

100 Central High School 9th graders attended a performance of a 'Christmas Carol' at Trinity Rep. The students were accompanied by teachers Michael Colannino, Patricia Bergantini, and Willie Wortham.

After school activities at Central High School include the Debate Club, The Theater Club, The Spanish Club, Youth Alive and the Cheerleading Team. Additionally, the school offers after school sessions in Portfolios for Graduation, Make-Up School, after school tutoring and interscholastic sports.

Central High School's Project Impact program helps a group of special needs students gain real life experiences that will benefit them in the workforce. Teacher Jill Teixeira and TA Vilma Salvatore assist each student in developing an individualized career path, job training and placement opportunities. Students have made visits to city-based organizations for job shadowing and dialogue. Seven of the students have secured volunteer positions the Salvation Army's daycare program

George J. West

Pam Resendes' fifth grade class made gift bags for veterans who are patients at the Providence VA Hospital. The gift bags, contained games, toiletries and clothing items donated by the school community. The gift bags will be delivered to the patients for Christmas.

For the fifth year, the faculty and staff at George J. West have adopted a family from the Women's Center for Christmas.

Contact Phil at 421-4014 or pdececco@proteun.org.

UNION OFFERS

Verizon Wireless

Providence Teachers Union members receive 15% off, unlimited in-calling mobile-to-mobile calls, and unlimited nights & weekend minutes.

Members who are interested should contact Kevin Howe at 529-3500 or Kevin.howe@verizonwireless.com.

Main Street Martial Arts

Michael Werth, Sensei, Math teacher at Hope High School and Professional Martial Arts Instructor, is offering Aikido, Karate, and Tai Chi classes to all Providence teachers and their students at 36% off the regular rate.

For more information, contact Michael Werth, Sensei, at mwerth@budojo.org or visit their website at ww.budojo.org.



Contact Michelle at 421-4014 or mfleet@proteun.org.

FYI

◆ Trinity Rep Educator Discount

Trinity Rep offers a discounted ticket purchase price (\$25) to teachers for any regular season performance. Identification is required.

◆ Inclement Weather Announcements

In addition to notifying staff and parents of school closings through the media, the PSD also utilizes its automated telephone message system. Teachers should make sure that the office of Human Resources has accurate information on file.

◆ Union Workshops

The following workshops are scheduled for teachers interested in learning more about the Highly Qualified Teacher process and the I-Plan:

Highly Qualified Teacher	February 6, 2008
I-Plan Training	February 26, 2008, April 29, 2008

Workshops will be held at the Union office from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Interested teachers should register on My Learning Plan.

◆ Providence Princess

The PTU is holding a DRESS DRIVE to collect gowns, party/cocktail dresses, shoes and accessories. You may drop off gowns and accessories at the PTU office during the months of December and January. If you are unable to stop by the Union office, you may give them to your Building Delegate and ask them to deliver them to the Union office at the next building delegate meeting.

Help a young woman feel like a princess on her prom night!



Contact Maura at 421-4014 or mgalvao@proteun.org.