

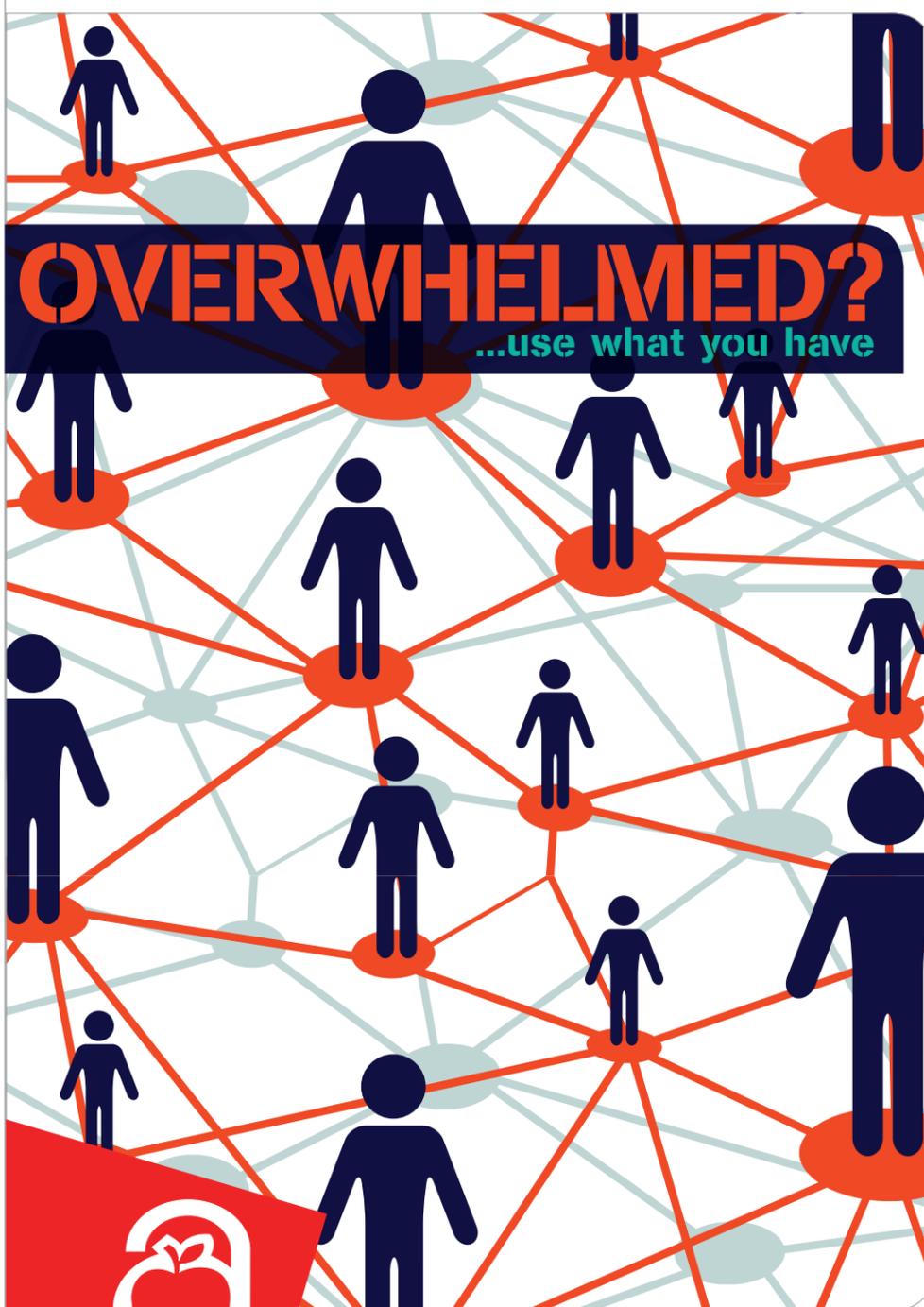
TEACHERS' VOICE



“ A good indication of a well-functioning school is how well its IC works. ”
- Pat Halama - Counselor, John Adams MS

PROFESSIONAL
PROGRESSIVE
UNIONISM

Nov. 2012



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albuquerque teachers federation

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OVERWHELMED?

...use what you have



Overwhelmed? You're not alone. The demands, workload and mandates just seem to keep growing, and they are often confusing and contradictory. How do you manage it all? How do you separate out the "have-tos" from the "shoulds" from the "want-tos"? Use what you have: your Union and your Instructional Council.

The ATF staff and I often get calls asking for clarifications or accurate information about mandates or added work. Sometimes it's a simple matter of reading the actual contract language, like in the case of the widely misunderstood language about the 184th day. Sometimes it's a matter of calling APS to get the accurate information from the source. And, sometimes your questions and stories lead us to advocate for a change in an APS practice or policy.

That has been the case recently. ATF and APS have agreed to establish a joint committee to work on the elementary mid-term progress reports. We are hearing from elementary teachers all over the district that the format is confusing and the added time burden is overwhelming. I hope to report soon that we have come up with a solution that will be more workable for teachers. Of course, we are working on much more: America's Choice (check out the column from John Adams teacher Mary Marshall), middle school schedules...the list seems to go on and on.

In addition to calling us, use what you have at your school: the Instructional Council.

The IC was always intended to be the place where discussions and decisions about teaching and learning take place, and where the instructional direction of a school is collaboratively developed. The IC in many schools became fairly perfunctory during the last decade, when meaningful discussions about teaching and learning were displaced by programmatic fidelity mandates.

I am happy to report that is now changing, especially with the added IC language on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). As the new language states, **"The IC will act as the leadership team that manages the process for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards at each site."** This contract language embodies a renewed and expanded commitment to shared decision-making. Many schools are revitalizing their Instructional Council to once again be the place where the staff can truly make a difference about the instructional direction of their schools.

With the focus on the implementation of the CCSS, teachers have the opportunity to become leaders in curriculum, instruction, school design, and professional development. It is through our Instructional Councils that we can work to create collaborative, constructive, respectful workplace.

Shared decision-making is a concept that has been around for decades, but too often, we have allowed this phrase to mean, "I made the decision and I'll share it with you." That, of course, was never the intent of school-based councils.

As Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller point out in the book *Teacher Leadership*, "There are policies that support standardization, accountability, and assessment and policies that support building capacity and enabling good practice." Contract language is policy, and the IC language supports us to continually build on our capacity to create, in collaboration with our principals, a school that enables us to teach using good practices that go well beyond teaching to a test.

The challenge is to use our contractual rights to create a well-functioning IC and make our professional voices heard. This is not easy. If you have not read the IC handbook, it is very useful and can be found on our website.

Use your IC to ask questions and work to separate fact from fiction, especially if something does not make instructional sense. For example:

Discovery Ed is a resource that should be used in conjunction with your textbooks and other instructional tools. If you are told that you must throw out your textbooks and use Discovery Ed as your only teaching tool, you should question that!

Use your IC to rethink practices. For example:

Elementary-level reading and math programs have mandated blocks of time. Sometimes, this mandate runs the entire school schedule, including the reduction of recess time for kids and squeezing out science and social studies from our curriculum. As we implement Common Core, we must craft lessons in which literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) are woven throughout every lesson and content is integrated so that kids can read, write, speak and listen about substantive topics and ideas. What a great opportunity to integrate content areas. Let's rethink those time blocks!

If you have a well-functioning IC and a collaborative relationship with your administration, then I'm sure this makes sense to you and I hope it reinforces your efforts.

If you have an IC, but it is not yet functioning well, call us and we'll work with you and the principal to set up APS/ATF training.

If this is the first you've heard of an instructional council—yikes! Please invite me to your school!

We are working hard to find relief for teachers from all that's being imposed. Sometimes we can solve a problem, and sometimes we can take something that's bad and work to improve it. We will help you use what you have.

In solidarity,

Ellen



"Trust is the key factor for effective

Instructional Councils. Principals need to trust teachers to be a part of the decision-making process. Teachers need to trust IC reps and administration to respect all voices and represent them with integrity. IC reps need to trust constituents to engage in the process by giving feedback and the administration needs to be forthcoming with all relevant information. No principal, no teacher, no department is above the process. There should be no personal agendas, just transparent engagement and consensus building."

Leila Pochop, Special Education Teacher
Jimmy Carter MS



"I feel the most important facet of a high-func-

tioning IC is that all constituent voices and opinions are heard. I am on an IC that includes every staff member at my school. When each person, has a clear understanding of the processes and a voice in decision making, it creates an atmosphere where everyone has a sense of ownership and responsibility."

Stephanie DeBellis, Kindergarten Teacher
Emerson ES



"Instructional councils are vitally important. They ensure that issues concerning the classroom are discussed and agreed upon by those professionals most closely in contact with the students impacted."

— Paul Roensch, Math Teacher, Eldorado HS

Taking Something off Our Plates

Every time we add something new in education, we need something taken off our plates. This need is often ignored or neglected. This year, we wrote contract language intended to help your Instructional Councils to do just that. In addition to the clarification about using programs in a Common Core Standards-Based system, this contract language encourages us all to take something off our plates.

The Common Core State Standards, Standards-Based Teaching Practices, and the Relation to APS Programs and Practices

The District and the Federation agree that starting in the 2012-2013 school year and in all subsequent school years, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) will be the foundation of instruction for all APS students.

Both parties believe that teachers must collectively and collaboratively use the appropriate methods and materials to help students develop conceptual understanding that leads to proficiency in the CCSS.

Both parties affirm that all educational programs must be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of students and that all students in APS must have equal access to the CCSS.

The following clarifications are intended to support the above statements:

- All instructional programs can be used with the CCSS. Teachers have the discretion to augment the District-approved curricular programs. Teachers may also adjust the pacing and scope and sequence of District-approved curricular programs to align with the CCSS.
- Tier II and III intervention programs, while more prescriptive by nature, are one of the instructional tools used to teach to the CCSS. Additional tools and resources may be utilized to meet the CCSS.
- Principals and staffs are encouraged to analyze school practices to ensure they are still relevant as APS moves toward adopting the CCSS at all grades. For example: Baldrige is no longer a district-supported program. Continuing with Baldrige, CCI, Continuous Improvement, and PDSA is at the discretion of the Instructional Council.

America's Choice: "No thanks. We don't want your feedback."

By Mary Marshall, Sixth Grade Dual Language Math Teacher, John Adams MS

This year, I began my fourth year teaching middle school math, all in an America's Choice "intensive design" school. My experience with their program, Math Navigator, has been as a math coach, the mathematics department chair, and as a teacher. While the idea behind the Math Navigator program is a good one—to target students' misunderstandings in specific concept areas—the program itself is weak in its lesson design and uses language that puts children at a disadvantage. Every math teacher I have worked with feels the same way. After only a few weeks, even new teachers commented, "This is not a very good program."

My own professional judgment of the America's Choice Math Navigator program comes from an extensive background in both theory and practice. I obtained my Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in 2009 in Language, Literacy and Sociocultural studies with an emphasis on mathematics education for Latinos. My dissertation research focused on students' mathematical thinking and problem solving in the primary grades. I recently obtained my New Mexico Level III licensure, which advanced me to the category of an "educational leader". In the last three years, I have worked to add bilingual and gifted endorsements to my TESOL, mathematics and science certifications for grades K-12.

Although I have done my best to implement Math Navigator with fidelity, I become repeatedly frustrated when I encounter lesson designs that I know will not work well with students. I am disheartened by question wording like "6 less 6", which prompts my students to ask, "What does that mean?" Of course, they know what "6 take away 6" is, or "6 minus 6" or "6 subtract 6". Why set up students for failure by using language that does not reflect the standard terms used in the classroom? Over the last four years, I have tried to open discussions about the program, but nobody wants my feedback. I hear repeatedly that "data shows" Math Navigator works. But I am an expert on data collection and analysis, and I know that data can show whatever you want it to show. Apparently, nobody in any decision-making capacity wants to hear from those of us on the front line, or those of us who have extensive experience in math education.

To obtain a Level III license, I had to prove I could interpret curriculum, design lessons, differentiate and modify for students, respond to all their needs, and fill in their conceptual gaps as needed. Every day, I faithfully implement our core math curriculum, CMP. For the first time this year, we have 78 minutes to devote to math. I am following the district's pacing guide. I am preparing students for the fall DBA. Yet, in a move that can only be described as educational schizophrenia, I am told that I must pull time away from the core each day to implement a prescribed Math Navigator module that does not align to either the pacing guide or the core.

A new APS-required online training module for teachers this year is called Customer Service. We learn that respect, active listening, consideration, professionalism and communication are all part of the APS customer service initiative. Question 6 reminds us that when providing customer service, it is important not to forget APS employees, our internal customers. They should be treated with respect and responded to in a courteous manner. Question 8 specifically states that it is everybody's responsibility to provide high quality customer service. I suggest that some people in APS administration go back and review this training module. It is not in the best interests of students, parents or school communities to shut out the most critical voices in curricular decisions, the experienced teachers.



"Instructional Councils are the primary instructional decision

makers in the school, and when they function properly, everyone in the school wins."

— Pamela Irvin, 5th Grade Teacher
Alamosa ES, Former IC Chair

AROUND THE NATION

Adapted from AFT LeaderNet

Judge Strikes Down Much of Wisconsin's Anti-Union Law

A judge in Dane County Wis., has struck down the main portions of Gov. Scott Walker's anti-union law, which stripped Wisconsin public employees of their right to collectively bargain. Judge Juan Colas ruled on Sept. 14 that Act 10—which Walker signed into law in March 2011—violated both the state constitution and the U.S. Constitution because it infringes on employees' rights to free speech, association and equal protection.

"This is a good day for Wisconsin's working people and the union movement," says Stephanie Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin State AFL-CIO. "When workers choose to join together for mutual aid and protection, their employer should honor their choice, come to the table, and discuss wages and working conditions."

Rep. Peter Barca, the Democratic minority leader in the state Assembly, calls the ruling a huge victory for workers and free speech. "This decision will help re-establish the balance between employees and their employers."

Walker has said he will appeal the decision, and some legal experts are predicting that the case will end up being resolved by the state Supreme Court.

AFT Condemns Shooting Of 14-Year-Old Pakistani Activist

AFT president Randi Weingarten calls the Oct. 9 assassination attempt on 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai, who has campaigned for the right of Pakistani girls to receive an education, one of the most heinous, shocking acts imaginable.

"This young girl, brave and articulate beyond her years, just wants for her peers what the rest of the world takes for granted—an education that will help propel them to a better life," Weingarten says. "The Taliban have not only taken credit for this outrageous act but called Malala's campaign for female education an 'obscenity.' What is obscene is extremism in the name of Islam or any other religion or ideology. Malala was only speaking truth to power that education is the vital path to opportunity and progress for everyone, no matter what their gender or religion."

The AFT is asking the public to send the following message to the Pakistani ambassador to the United States, Sherry Rehman: "Implore your government to redress the attempted assassination of Malala Yousafzai by immediately guaranteeing that every girl in Pakistan has access to high-quality education. It is an outrage that Malala's campaign for female education is vilified as an 'obscenity.'"

ISSUES

Clarity on "184th Day" and the 13 hours

In 2009, the teacher contract was reduced from 184 days to 183 days. The contract was reduced to help deal with the district's budget crisis. The day removed was a professional development day. This year, as part of contract negotiations, we restored the day (and an extra day of pay), **which may only be used for professional development. Only your instructional council, working in collaboration with your staff, can make decisions regarding the date(s) and professional development topics.**

The day—commonly called the "184th day"—can be divided up into segments, not to exceed 6.5 total hours. Most schools are breaking up the time over multiple PD sessions during the school year.

Some schools have inquired if it is permissible to work the day on a Saturday or holiday. It is allowed, provided the instructional council made the decision to work on a Saturday or holiday. This is a big decision, and it should be made by the council in collaboration with the entire staff.

In addition to questions about the 184th day, we are also receiving questions about the contract language provision that allows for up to 13 hours beyond your duty day to be used for professional development. Each school's IC is responsible for deciding **if, when and how many** of the 13 hours for professional development need to be used.

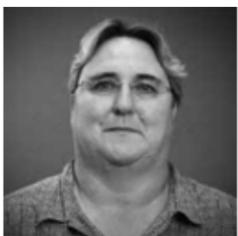
Some teachers are reporting frustration over mandates and training requirements (like Discovery Ed), which seem to take away options considering content. On top of mandates, some teachers are reporting that principals are manipulating staffs and/or spreading misinformation about who decides what topics will be covered and when. If you feel pressured into making decisions based on outside factors, or if you believe you are not receiving accurate information about the 184th day or 13 hours, please contact us so we can clarify for your staff.

On a very positive note, we are witnessing first-hand how some instructional councils are thoughtfully addressing the professional needs of staffs and learning needs of students. We are seeing councils make these and other meaningful decisions while participating in IC trainings

Many Lovelace Participants to Lose Health Care Providers

ATF, APS and employees who have Lovelace insurance were shocked to learn that doctors in the ABQ Health Partners Group would be terminating their participation in the Lovelace Network. APS, which received virtually no prior notice of this change, tried to obtain an extension until the end of the year, but was unsuccessful.

The APS benefits manager assured us that there would be assistance for anyone needing help in finding a new health care provider within Lovelace. APS did not agree to ATF's request to extend the switch enrollment period in anticipation that there would be large numbers of employees wanting to move to Presbyterian. Instead APS will work with individuals having trouble with the switch time lines.



"Good communication, respected conversation, and meaningful/thoughtful discussions about what is needed to move students forward are crucial. A cohesive, articulate instructional council can make the process of educating our youth, supporting our teachers and furthering our professionalization a collaborative effort."

— Pat Halama, Counselor, John Adams MS



ADVOCACY

Union Wins Grievance at Middle School

Your union recently won a grievance that will provide compensation to the vast majority of an entire middle school staff. At the beginning of the school year, the principal required teachers to work several hours beyond their contractual duty week.

Once our fed reps noticed the schedule requirements before the beginning of the year, they notified the administration of the violation, but the administration ignored the notice and implemented the schedule. The schedule originally called for teachers to work the extra duties for the first ten days of school, but the administration rescinded the order after eight days due to the filing of the grievance.

The grievance, which was won without having to go to a hearing, will result in an average payment of about \$160 per person.

This is a great example of how we enforce contract language and get relief when teachers choose to work with us. Rather than accept a violation of a very well-known provision of our contract, teachers chose to work with us, their federation representatives at the school, and each other to know their rights and enforce them.

Chronic Climate Issues

We are working intensely and closely with two staffs (and are in frequent contact with several others) that are very afraid of, and frustrated and concerned with, the leadership of their schools. Issues are related to disrespectful treatment, bullying, indifference, favoritism and overall lack of ability. The poor leadership has created chronic and toxic climate issues at the schools.

Unfortunately, we have concerns with many of the district's principals. Organizing around chronic climate issues is different than addressing individual concerns and contract violations. If your school is suffering from chronic climate issues and your staff is ready to organize, call the office so that we can meet with interested staff and inform you how we can help.

Retirement Plan Redesign Recommendations

ATF reported last month that the ERB had approved a retirement plan redesign recommendation intended to ensure the long-term solvency of the educational retirement fund. The recommendation was the result of months of work done by a diverse group of stakeholders in the retirement system including representatives from ATF and AFT New Mexico. The stakeholders met again in October to discuss a unified strategy to secure a favorable outcome from the legislative session when lawmakers tackle this problem in January. The group of stakeholders will meet in early November after the elections to finalize strategies prior to the start of the 2013 Legislative Session to build support for legislation that will follow the ERBs approved plan redesign. We will be keeping our members updated on what you can do to support our lobbying efforts.

ORGANIZING

Kicking off "1+1=7000" Drive!

The election is over, and no matter if you're thrilled or disappointed with the outcomes, it's time to work with the players left in the game. Do you want to be a player, or just sit in the stands and hope for the best? If you want to obtain the resources you need, both professionally and personally, there is only one way: **We need to have the strongest union possible!**

Our union IS strong, and has accomplished countless things that benefit both our members and non-members over the past 50 years. Prep time? We did that. Duty-free lunch? We did that. Differentials, religious leave, sick leave bank...the list goes on, but there is much more to do! **The more members we have, the stronger we are, and the more we can do TOGETHER—it's that simple.** How do we have the strongest possible union? It starts with every educator joining their union, standing together, and standing up for public education.

Take part in the ATF "1+1=7000" Drive by 11/30!

Do you know a colleague who is not a union member? Have an honest discussion with that person. Tell them why YOU are a union member. Help them understand that the more members we have, the stronger our union is. Stronger unions mean better policies, as well as better salaries. Stronger unions have more power to make positive changes.

ATF will be sending membership applications and talking points to all members. We have over 50% membership right now. **Imagine this: if each ATF member recruits one person who isn't a member, we would have 100% membership, and be twice as strong!** Everyone who recruits a new member receives a \$25 recruiting incentive (must be picked up at ATF) and will be entered in a drawing for a \$200 Visa gift card!

Roadrunner Food Drive & Volunteers

Thank you to all the schools that have signed up to work with Roadrunner Food Bank and hold food drives this month! Last year, our participating schools collected over 19,000 pounds of food—let's strive to surpass that amount this year.

We also have dozens of members, along with their friends and family, coming out to help us sort food donations at Roadrunner on "Sortin' Sunday", which is November 18th. Hunger is a huge problem in our state, and it is evident in many of our schools and communities. Thank you for working with us to help fight hunger!

NOVEMBER EVENTS		
11/8	Common Core Planning & ELLs: "Butterflies in the ELL Classroom" (Elementary teachers) 4:30-6:30 PM	No cost
11/12	PDD Overview 4:30-7:30 PM	Members: No cost Non-members: \$50 each
11/15	S&RSP Workshop w/ Melody Fill, LISW: "Making the Most of Simple Interventions"	Members: No cost Non-members: \$25 each
11/29	ATF Symposium – TBA	No cost

All events held at ATF office @ 530 Jefferson Street NE
Call 262-2657 to RSVP unless otherwise noted.



"A strong, well-functioning Instructional Council is indicative of a healthy, collaborative school where the democratic process is used to make decisions."

– Mary Mercier, Special Education Head Teacher, Roosevelt MS

TEACHERS' VOICE



albuquerque teachers federation
professional progressive unionism

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Common Core

It's time to talk—actually to blog about the Common Core. Join our new ATF blog about the Common Core: Teachers Own the Common Core (TOCC).

TOCC  atfunion.org

Access TOCC on the ATF website at www.atfunion.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



Need Assistance? CALL PAR!

Do you struggle with lesson planning?

Do you have serious discipline and classroom management problems?

Are you worried that you have inadequate content knowledge to teach your students the required topics?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may need assistance from a PAR Consulting Teacher. PAR CTs work with teachers who are interested in becoming better instructors in a confidential partnership. Need help? Contact the union at 262-2657 or the Mentor Program Coordinator at 880-8249 X 174 and request a volunteer application.

**HOMEWORK MIGHT BE A CHALLENGE,
BUT SHOULDN'T BE A STRUGGLE**



344-3571
MON-THURS 5:30-8:30 PM

Remind your students to call for free homework help.
¡Se habla Español!

 **sharemylesson**

BY TEACHERS | FOR TEACHERS | FOR FREE

The AFT Share My Lesson site includes more than 200,000 resources across grade levels and subject areas and has a section devoted to the Common Core. It's a tool that helps teachers find the free, high-quality resources they are looking for to help them do the best job possible with their students.

www.sharemylesson.com

Voting Was Just the Beginning



By Sara Attleson, Chair
Committee on Political Education

The votes are counted. Roadside candidate signs are being harvested. Mail volume has returned to normal. Television ads are again about food, soap, and fun, not candidates. The election season has closed for now.

My deepest appreciation goes out to all those who volunteered their time for our endorsed candidates. And, to all who exercised their right to vote, I want to thank you. But, just as importantly, I want to remind you that our work did not end on November 6th. Actually, marking your ballot was just the start of an ongoing process necessary to make your vote meaningful.

That process consists of staying informed on the issues important to you, your profession and your students. It means writing to your returning or newly-elected legislators about issues important to you before they head to Santa Fe in January. It is not too early to make those contacts now. And, when the next session begins, this process involves timely calls and letters to lawmakers about legislation that will greatly impact your work and your family.

The next legislature will decide so many critical issues affecting public education. The most important of these is funding. We must concentrate on the fight to raise sufficient revenue for schools. Teacher evaluation, and other questions that were not decided in the last session, will return for consideration and action by lawmakers. They need to hear from you. If you remain silent in the legislative process, all these important questions will be decided for you—and you will probably not like the answers.

PED Watch

Update: NMTEACH

NMTEACH is the "New Mexico Teacher Evaluation Advisory Council." This task force of 18 is charged with helping implement the new rule Hanna Skandera and the PED created around teacher evaluation. While she and the governor would have preferred legislation, their teacher evaluation bill failed to pass during the last legislative session. Rather than take a proper course of action and work with ALL stakeholders to design a better plan to address the shortfalls of our teacher evaluation system, the governor and secretary-designate took advantage of—and in our opinion, overstepped the intended purpose of—the rulemaking process and put their evaluation plan in place anyway.

The Advisory Council continues to hold open meetings and is working to iron out the details of the evaluation system while a pilot is conducted in 68 schools around the state. There are still unanswered questions about not only the student outcomes component, but about the how much money this will take and how they plan to fund it. Again, this new evaluation system is defined in rule, but it is not in statute. That means it is easier to change, and we will continue to fight to change it.

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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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John Adams Middle School

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