



REPORTER

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Representing Teachers and Educational Support Professionals
Affiliated with FEA, NEA, AFT, AFL-CIO

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Pension Case Is Moving Up!

On March 6, 2012, Leon County Circuit Court Judge Jackie Fulford ruled that the state's 2011 law requiring that members of the Florida Retirement System contribute 3 percent of their salaries to the pension fund unconstitutionally breached the contract with existing employees.

Judge Fulford stated that, "The Court cannot set aside its constitutional obligations because a budget crisis exists in the State of Florida."

One of the statements included in her ruling has received less attention, but it is an important one for unions. Under the Collective Bargaining Claim portion of her ruling, she stated that "the right of public employees to collectively bargain over wages, hours and other terms or conditions of employment is constitutionally protected in Article I, section 6 of the Florida

The pension case is now in the hands of the Florida Supreme Court.

Constitution which prohibits the abridgement and denial of the right. Retirement pensions and benefits are mandatory subjects of bargaining".

Governor Scott immediately responded by saying that Judge Fulford had "overstepped her bounds" and filed an appeal to have her ruling overturned. In a surprisingly quick decision, the First District Court of Appeal said it would not rule on the decision. In a short memo, saying that "the issue is one of

great public importance", the appellate court ruled that they will pass the issue straight up to the Florida Supreme Court.

"We're happy that the Court of Appeal understands how important this case is and we hope the Supreme Court will do the right thing and uphold Judge Fulford's decision," said Hillsborough CTA Executive Director, Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins.

While the case seems to be heading towards a favorable resolution for public employees, the battle is not yet over. We must continue to stand for what is right and make our voices heard. Encourage your colleagues to join HCTA and be an active part of their professional organization.

Copies of legal documents related to this case can be found at: <http://www.meyerbrookslaw.com/litigation.htm>



HCTA members and staff participated in the Awake the State Rally in Tampa on January 10, 2012 to support teacher's rights and funding for public education.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What Does The FL Chamber of Commerce Have Against Teacher Unions?



A few Sundays ago, a story in the Orlando Sentinel reported that the Florida Chamber of Commerce is focusing on opposing all candidates who are backed by lawyers or — wait for it — unions. Mark Wilson, the Chamber’s president and chief executive, is working hard to build a united front with other associations that represent corporate and business interests. He said, “You’re going to see all of us work together in a pretty unprecedented way to get the union and trial lawyer influence out of the Legislature.”

Unions. That’s us. Teachers and all kinds of educational support personnel who join together, as professionals, to fully participate in our own profession. The profession we chose, studied and trained for, continue to study and train for, care deeply about, and sacrifice higher salaries for.

I know there are other unions outside of the education profession, but given that we are by far the largest union in each community and statewide, I cannot help but believe that teacher unions are their prime focus. So, if they want to abolish and silence us, and ensure that no candidate supported by us is elected, what must they be thinking?

Do they think we’re smart enough to meet state licensure and certification requirements, and instruct and care for Florida’s children, but not sharp enough to have a say in what we teach, how we teach, and how we run our schools?

Do they believe our motives are suspect if we want to weigh in on working conditions, planning time, and how the learning environment is supported and protected?

Do they think that once we get into the classroom and see firsthand what works and what doesn’t, we should be gagged and follow dictates from politicians and bureaucrats without questioning anything?

Do they think we should gratefully accept whatever salary and benefits they give us and not be concerned about whether the salary and conditions will attract and retain a highly qualified professional workforce adequate to ensure the economic security of a nation dedicated to the principles of democracy?

I’m confused. If we are increasingly being called on to teach critical thinking skills, shouldn’t we demonstrate that we are accomplished critical thinkers ourselves?

The 2012 Florida Legislative Session just ended, and it seemed tame compared to last year’s all-out attacks on teachers, our unions, our pensions, collective bargaining, and the passage of Senate Bill 736. That bill eliminated tenure for anyone who didn’t have it yet, and devalued seniority. It requires 50% or more of a teacher’s evaluation be based on test scores. It also requires districts to create

a new salary schedule tied to that evaluation (and not based on years of experience and advanced degrees) by fall of 2014, and requires that teachers who elect to move to that new salary schedule must give up their tenure. (See article on page 4, for unique exceptions and differences in Hillsborough.)

“We’re...not sharp enough to have a say in what we teach, how we teach, and how we run our schools?”

Yes, 2012 was tame compared to 2011, but Senate Bill 736 remains unchanged. The education budget was not cut further, but we are still well below the budget of five years ago, which at that time was one of the poorest in the nation. They left unions alone this session and didn’t attempt to chip away further on our pensions, but word on the street was they were waiting until after their elections later this year, and will come after us next year.

And now, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, considered the most influential business group in Florida, is trying to make sure teachers and our unions have fewer supporters in the Legislature next year.

As educational professionals, we are smart. We care. We have vision. We know how to plan, strategize, and execute; we do it every single day in our jobs. We are amazingly creative and determined in how we overcome many extraordinary obstacles to achieve success. We are highly effective in what we set out to do. We know how to collaborate and win over the hearts and souls and minds of others.

So why don’t we apply those talents outside our classrooms? Why are we not more successful in electing the candidates who will champion us and our schools, instead of demonize and micro-manage us?

The election cycle has started. Candidates will be screened and pleas made to help the best candidates win. We **can** influence the outcome of this year’s elections.

But not if only 41% of us vote.

That’s how many Hillsborough County voters voted in the last election. I, personally, have come across very few people who thought Rick Scott would ever be governor of Florida. But I have come across many who did not vote.

If we care about our kids, it is not enough to just be great inside the four walls of our classrooms. If we care about teaching, and all the related professions in education, it is not enough to just be great colleagues inside our schools. We need to take that commitment and talent outside the building and work to create the best support for public schools possible.

Our kids. Our profession. Our future.



Over 150 HCTA Reps have attended EET Rubric Trainings hosted and presented by HCTA members.

Legislative Update

by Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins

The legislative session is over and although there were several proposed bills that could have had a huge negative impact on public education in Florida, thanks to the combined efforts of union members, parents groups and, in some cases, school districts, three of the major bills failed to pass.

Given the make-up of the legislature, it is also important to note that several elected representatives broke with party leadership to do the right thing.

Education Budget
Link to budget documents: <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/publications> and click on General Appropriations Act.

While the overall education budget shows a funding increase, the small amount does not even begin to make up for last year’s devastating cuts. Per pupil spending will increase by about \$150 per student, which means that we got back about 25% of last year’s cuts.

School Improvement and Education Accountability
HB 7127 (passed 82 to 31)
Link to text of bill: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/7127/BillText/er/PDF>

This bill was the first half of what was intended to be a “one-two punch” against public education. By pushing the threshold higher, in a radical change to the current grading system, the legislators who proposed this bill intended to increase the number of “F” schools throughout Florida. These changes, coupled with the Parent Trigger bill, would significantly increase the number of schools that could have been handed over to for-profit charter corporations. Although this bill did pass, the full effect of the legislation will depend on the outcome of rulemaking by the Department of Education. The overall effects of the school grade changes were lessened slightly by the fact that the Parent Trigger bill, discussed below, did not pass.

Parent Empowerment (AKA Parent Trigger)
SB 1718 (failed to pass)
Link to text of proposed bill: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/1718/BillText/e1/PDF>

This bill was a bitter anti-public education pill, sugar-coated as “parent empowerment”. The bill would have allowed parents at an underperforming school to petition the district for specific turnaround options, including turning the school into a charter. Legislators flatly rejected amendments to expand the bill to underperforming charter schools. It was, without a doubt, among the most polarizing bills this session in terms of public education, but it was also the most unifying in many ways. Although many organizations representing students, parents and teachers throughout Florida consistently fight for what is right, rarely have we all come together and presented a fully united front against legislators who were intent on passing a bill that would do such significant damage to public education.

2012 Key Bills		
Bill	Purpose	Result
HB 7127	School Improvement & Education Accountability	Passed
SB 1718	Parent Empowerment	Failed
SB 1698 / HB 1115	Teacher Protection Act	Failed
SB 1852 / HB 903	Charter Schools	Failed
SB 962 / HB 859	Credit Vouchers	Passed
SB 2038	Prison Privatization	Failed

Although our joint efforts successfully killed the bill, it was not by a large margin...it was a tie. We know this is not the end of the matter; the same legislators who proposed the bill this year will come back in full force next year, determined to win at all costs. We must continue to be vocal about the danger of passing laws that allow private school operators to get their hands on as much public money as possible without any accountability.

Teacher Protection Act
SB 1698/HB 1115 (died in

“This is not the last we will hear about the Parent Trigger.”

Judiciary and Education Pre-K – 12 respectively)
Link to text of proposed bill: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/1698/BillText/c1/PDF>

As in the past, legislators intentionally picked a misleading name to make a bad bill sound like it would be a great thing for teachers. Ostensibly, the purpose of this bill was to provide “additional legal support to teachers”; a useless purpose given that teachers cannot be named in civil or criminal lawsuit in the State of Florida. And with a price tag of more than \$2 million annually, it would also have been a waste of money that could be put to better use funding public education.

The real purpose of the bill was to undermine unions by combining supposed legal support and exemptions for certain professions. The bill was intended to help PEN (Professional Educators Network), an anti-union group which provides insurance, but cannot collectively bargain for educators.

Charter Schools
SB 1852/HB 903 (died in Budget and Education Pre-K – 12 respectively)
Link to text of proposed bill (SB 1852): <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/0903/BillText/e1/PDF>

The legislature continues to try every trick they can think of to make is easier for charter schools to expand and pull more funds away from public education. Last year the legislature passed a variety of measures designed to expand charter schools, virtual schools and voucher programs. Among other things, the various bills made it a requirement that incoming high school students take at least one online course

before graduating; removed the limitation on tax credits for companies that fund vouchers for low-income students; expanded vouchers under the McKay Scholarship program and allowed more students to qualify to move to alternate public schools by broadening the definition of a “failing” school.

This year there were a number of bills that proposed to continue the expansion of charter schools. Some would have increased accountability in minor areas, but most were intended to expand charters without accountability, which would result in even more money being diverted away from traditional public schools.

The main bill, SB 1852/HB 903 (being pushed by the new industry group, Florida Charter School Alliance), proposed to revise the restrictions on the establishment of new charter schools and authorize certain charter schools to increase student enrollment, expand grade levels, submit quarterly financial statements, consolidate charters, and modify charter terms.

Fortunately, both bills died, but be assured that this is not the last we will hear about these proposals.

Credit Vouchers
Originally SB 962 – Final bill was CS/HB 859 – Passed on 3/9; Signed by Governor on 3/16.
Link to full text of bill: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/0859/BillText/er/PDF>

Despite the lack of evidence that students perform better in private schools, HB 859 siphons even more scarce tax dollars away from our public schools by increasing the tax credit cap from \$140 million to \$229 million, an increase of \$54 million over the expected cap. The credit voucher system continues to funnel money to private schools that are not held financially accountable for the use of public funds. Moreover, private schools are not subject to academic accountability measures, may limit enrollment, maintain exclusive admissions policies and charge tuition and fees above the amount provided by the voucher.

Prison Privatization
SB 2038 (failed)
Link to text of proposed bill: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2012/2038/BillText/e1/PDF>

Although this bill wasn’t directly related to public schools, if it had passed it would have set a precedent for privatizing public services and laid the groundwork for similar steps with public schools.

Welcome to Our New HCTA Staff Members

David Peacock



David joined HCTA at the beginning of February as the new Member Services Specialist for Cluster 5. He brings almost 20 years of teaching experience to our group and has an excellent understanding of the challenges teachers currently face.

David has been teaching in Hillsborough County high schools since 1992 and has been an active union member from the very beginning.

He is National Board Certified and is a certified rep who has served as the site rep for two schools. He has served on various district committees and has participated in union activities, such as lobbying and representing us as a delegate to the FEA Assembly. David was elected to the HCTA Board of Directors in 2011, but resigned his seat to take a position as HCTA Staff.

Sue Morgan



Sue joined the staff in January as our Communications Coordinator. She has an extensive background in data and project management, and implementation of programs used for communication purposes.

In 2009 Sue left the corporate world to find work doing something that actually did some good. Being fluent in Spanish, she began working for SDHC as a member of the ESOL team at her daughter’s elementary school, where she is also very active in the PTA.

The combination of Sue’s professional background and her involvement in the school district as a parent, employee and union member gives her a good grasp on what should be done to improve communication with our members.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Grass Is Greener Here In Our Yard

It's a tough time to be a teacher – especially in Florida.

That's why it's good news for students, parents and educators that here in Hillsborough we've decided to take the future into our own hands. We're leaders, not followers. We're building for the long term, with a focus on great results for students and fair treatment for professional educators.

If you listen to the rhetoric coming out of Tallahassee, you'll hear people say we can't have both. The teacher-bashers say the only way to help students is to hurt teachers, by cutting our pay, gutting our contracts, squashing our tenure and weakening our unions.

That's ridiculous. You can't help students get ahead by

dragging teachers down. That's why we'll continue breaking new ground at HCTA – finding innovative ways to give our students the education they deserve, while still winning protections for teachers that are as good or better than anything you'll find anywhere in Florida.

Winning justice for our members doesn't start in the union headquarters. It starts in our school buildings all across the district. Our relentless focus on growing this organization has paid off, with membership increasing from less than 5,000 in 2002 to more than 9,000 today.

With more members, we have a stronger voice, more influence, and more ability to create positive outcomes for teachers, ESP, students, and families. By being an active participant in school reform

in our county, we've ensured ourselves a seat at the table, which means we get to help set the agenda, instead of having our rights taken away from us by others.

We still have many challenges ahead of us. EET is a work in progress, and we have to make sure HCTA members have a voice in defining what "progress" means. We know it has to mean fair treatment of staff and supportive working conditions, or else we won't be able to perform our best in our classrooms. We'll never back down from those objectives.

In this regard, we are acutely aware that our members have concerns and not a day goes by that we aren't working to address those concerns. At the same time, I think it is

important to consider context in discussing EET.

We are aware that there are teachers who are anti-EET and feel the program should be abandoned for one reason or another. While people are entitled to their opinion, I think we need to remember that SB 736 fundamentally altered Florida law in a variety of key areas. Hillsborough secured some limited exemptions based on EET; but in the absence of EET, the law under 736 would prevail, meaning there is no way to go back to the systems we had in the past.

The table below shows a comparison of where we are vis-a-vis other Florida districts. While things are by no means perfect here, I hope you will see that we are in a better place than others districts.

HILLSBOROUGH

All tenure type protections are built into our contract, protecting the due process rights of educators.

No layoffs, no reduction in pay and no furloughs. Pay raises in two of the past three years, and a \$750 bonus for teachers and \$400 for ESP this year.

40% of a teacher's overall evaluation score is based on multiple measures of student learning.

Funding, via the Gates grant, for training and other resources, during the rollout of a state mandated comprehensive evaluation process.

Productive dialogue with our district to negotiate improvements on a daily basis regarding our practice, evaluations and professional working conditions.

THE OTHER 66 COUNTIES

Tenure or continuing contract protections were abolished for anyone who didn't have it by 6/30/2011.

Teachers in other districts around the state are seeing layoffs and furloughs, as well as give backs, resulting in smaller paychecks or no paychecks at all.

50% or more of a teacher's evaluation score must be based on student test results.

No funding for personnel, training or resources for implementing an evaluation process.

Less input and influence regarding decisions made about their practice, evaluations and professional working conditions.

HEA-R Grant Winners!

Hillsborough Educators Association - Retired (HEA-R) recently funded several \$100 grants for educators to purchase items that they would use to enhance student learning. While HEA-R originally planned to offer two grants, there were so many excellent proposals submitted that they voted unanimously to fund four additional grants.

Congratulations to the following teachers:

- * Donna Sabatino, Intensive Math Teacher at Rogers Middle School
- * Susan Paredes, Third Grade Teacher at Dickenson Elementary
- * Gale Crowe, Science Teacher at Freedom High School
- * Faye Cook, Fourth Grade Teacher at Wilson Elementary
- * Melanie Driscoll, Band Director at Brandon High School
- * Carolyn Shoffstall, Reading Teacher at Erwin Technical

The grants were awarded at the HCTA Representative Council meeting on March 8th, 2012.

Your local retired members continue to support and appreciate all educators.

If you are nearing retirement and wish to maintain all of your benefits as an HCTA member, please consider joining your colleagues in HEA-R. Applications are available on the HCTA web site.

HCTA Works For You!

Your HCTA Leaders and Staff...

- * Required prior notice rules for informal observations.
- * Prevented automatic mark-downs for wearing jeans (2.13.1)
- * Provided HCTA Reps with numerous trainings related to the new evaluation rubric and opportunities to meet with the Superintendent and her staff to address issues and concerns regarding the EET process.
- * Assisted teachers in having students removed from their class. (4.3.8)
- * Curtailed mandatory meetings on days other than Tuesdays. (3.7.3)
- * Represented members in Professional Standards investigations.
- * Ensured that at least three days' notice was given before changes were made to a school's bell schedule (2.8.3)
- * Attended HCTA site meetings, faculty meetings, and EET information meetings.
- * Ensured that FUSE teachers would not be pulled to substitute for absent teachers. (3.4.4)
- * Provided attorneys for members when appropriate.

Elementary Issues Focus Committee

Last November a group of elementary teachers from several schools met with HCTA Staff Representative Missy Keller to share their current issues and concerns. In December, Missy met with Barbara Hancock, Director of Elementary Education and Tracy Schatzberg, Supervisor of Psychological Services, to ensure that the district is aware of how our teachers are feeling in this current climate.

Below is a summary of the key issues that were presented along with responses to each one. HCTA will continue to address issues as they arise to ensure that our members have an ongoing voice in issues affecting the classroom environment and the daily activities of elementary educators. Special thanks to Sue Creekmore, Denise Cona, Vivian Rothstein, Barbara Haggerty, Amy Murphy, Pam Militello, Tracy Foster and Faye Cook for taking the time to gather documentation and assist us with this process.

Issue: In order to schedule weekly interventions, schools have had to eliminate teaching subjects like social studies and teacher-directed PE. However, they are being told that they need to sign the FTE reports indicating that they have taught the state-required minutes for all subjects.

Response: Teachers cannot be forced to falsify reports. Specific subjects such as science and social studies will all be integrated when the district moves to Common Core Standards next year. The district will be scheduling

three hour orientations on Common Core at every school over the next few months.

Issue: No training or materials have been provided for RtI tutoring.

Response: There is no expectation for additional materials to be used beyond what is available for core curriculum. There are training modules that can be accessed through the RtI icon on IDEAS by clicking on PSLT Training Information.

Issue: When students are sent to work with other teachers or consultants for RtI, the regular teachers are not receiving feedback from the teachers and/or consultants who are working with their students.

Response: This should not be happening. If it is, we need to notify Tracy Schatzberg.

Issue: There isn't enough planning time to fill out the RtI packets, and members of the PSLT frequently talk about "data" and "fidelity", but no one seems to know what fidelity is when having an RtI group. The measurement of effectiveness is an on-going challenge.

Response: These issues will be addressed at trainings that will be held in each of the district areas. The forms have been redesigned to better reflect the problem solving process at tiers 2 and 3 and to facilitate team decision-making for intervention support. The RtI contacts at each school have been invited to attend the meeting(s) and will take the information back to individual schools.

Issue: Strict daily schedules are being imposed on teachers; if anyone walks into their classroom and it says "math" on their schedule, they had better be teaching math. There is no longer any flexibility or teacher choice in what to teach. Teachable moments have to be sacrificed to protect evaluations.

Response: The district's perspective is that it is important to have schedules, but they are cognizant that things occur that will offset a schedule. However, it should not be occurring on a regular basis. Peer's schedules are more restrictive and they need to be able to see the lesson or the scheduled time that they are observing. So it is important that every effort be made to stay on schedule for at those times.

Issue: Why is a new Social Studies series being purchased by the district when teachers don't have time to teach social studies?

Response: The new series will serve as supplemental material for the new streamlined Common Core curriculum.

Issue: Something needs to come off our plates. Teachers are feeling burnt out at the beginning of the school year.

Response: The district is hopeful that the new streamlined curriculum and new RtI forms will do just that. We (HCTA) were able to get the district to agree to postpone having district supervisors do informal observations and we will continue raising this issue.

Issue: Schools do not have the necessary number of ESE teachers to provide a continuum of services (by law). Services are restricted to certain types (support facilitations rather than co-teach because there is no planning time).

Response: Joyce Weiland has initiated a pilot program at Clark Elementary to address this issue. The program will be assessed as to its effectiveness for use at other schools with similar needs.

Issue: The Elementary Writing Department requires schools to send teachers to the Writing Contact Meetings, which are held once a month. No sub is provided, so the school has to absorb the cost, provide coverage, or split classes. The Writing Department also requires one or more teachers to come for a Writing Review, where the supervisor or one of her designees rescues every 4th grade paper and scores are overridden without discussion. So that is another trip that teachers make from school to ISC with no sub provided. These trips cost the teacher personally (gas) and leaves students with less instruction from their teacher.

Response: Focus schools are generally done every month. Teachers are not required to come, but have reportedly found it very helpful.

Issue: Every time a district department calls for teachers to come to meetings, a sub should be provided by that department.

Response: Barbara Hancock will look into the feasibility of providing subs.

Don't Miss This Great Event!

Join us for a private screening of



on Saturday, April 14, 2012

RESERVATIONS

\$10 advance/\$15 door
SEATING IS LIMITED (first come, first served)

LOCATION

FAMOUS TATE Distribution Center: 6401
N. 54th Street, Tampa 33610

Doors open at 10:00 a.m.
Showtime – 11:00

**All proceeds will benefit the
Mary Gonzalez Scholarship Fund!**

Please contact Hillsborough CTA if you have not received a reservation form and would like to attend.

Inspired by one of their own, Daniela Robles, NBCT, twenty educators at Mitchell Elementary School in Phoenix, AZ, stepped up to the challenge of the rigorous, self-directed professional development of National Board and Take One! Before Robles and a colleague at a neighboring school achieved Certification, the District only had one National Board Certified Teacher in its history.

Robles believed in her colleagues and in the National Board process. She wanted her fellow teachers at Mitchell to share in the empowerment she'd experienced. And, she wanted to disprove the notion that talented teachers work in wealthier, suburban school districts, and those who teach in the inner city and rural areas are there because they are less capable and less sought after.

Motivated by Robles' vision of a cohort supporting one another to reach for excellence, her colleagues responded. They were even more impressed by the transformation they saw in Robles, who had gone into the National Board process as a good teacher and emerged as a true teacher leader. From Amy Coyle in her third year of teaching, to Billie Williams in her 22nd year, the Mitchell 20 formed a unique and remarkably diverse cohort all focused on a single goal—enhancing their classroom performance.

Watch the trailer at <http://www.mitchell20.com/>

EET Forum Q & A

Recently HCTA has hosted two EET forums that gave HCTA Reps the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the Superintendent and her staff to discuss questions and concerns about EET. Below are a few of the redacted questions and answers from the last meeting.

Q: What type of data do you collect and review regarding observations? Is it in the form of average scores or looking at particular observations? For example, how many are “Accomplished” or how many “Exemplary”?

A: We’re doing both. We look at how many overall for the district for each category and then look at each level to see if they are out of the realm of everyone else. We look at each observer to see how often they mark each category. At the end of the year we’re all looking at same body of knowledge for evaluations. Part of each principal’s and peer’s evaluation is how well they correlate with each other and the correlation becomes part of their evaluation too.

Q: Are there differences in the calibrations for peers and administrators?

A: It’s the same when they go through calibration through Cambridge. We get ratings and feedback from outside evaluators. The difference with peers is that we are calibrating constantly. The average now is eighteen times. They’re calibrated in the classroom all the time and you have two people in your classroom then - your assigned peer, the one rating you, and the other one, the calibrator, who is just doing it for comparison. It is successful if less than three components are marked differently.

Q: What is best practice and protocol regarding conversations between peers and principals?

A: The peers are taught that there is no conversation with principals until the cycle is completed. The only exception would be if the peer feels like additional support needs to be provided to a teacher. We don’t want to leave a teacher without support if we feel they need it. But there is a clear protocol if the principal tries to say who they think is good or not in their building.

Q: What is the district doing to ensure that trainings that are being offered through professional development match the Danielson framework, so that are specific to what our needs are?

A: Professional Development is reviewing every course and re-writing courses that aren’t in alignment. It is an ongoing effort and they are committed to that. We’ve also offered training on how to read and understand the rubric.

Q: Are we doing the same thing with curriculum? For example, elementary schools have very specific curriculum for subjects like math and science and the peer may not be familiar with it.

A: Yes. If the peer is not in alignment with the curriculum, we provide training. The supervisor comes out and does training for kindergarten, reading, etc. and works with peers and mentors who do know the curriculum to train other peers.

Q: There is a perception of scores being lower overall this year. Have you seen any trends in the data to support that?

A: We are seeing, as the training gets done more, that both peers and administrators are better equipped to evaluate “Exemplary”. We still mark Exemplary more often in the district than other researchers who are doing similar evaluations. Training has emphasized the finer points and observers are doing better job of picking out the differences.

Q: People are often told “Exemplary” isn’t a place where people reside – they only visit. Have we considered basing overall scores on something less than 100%? Why use “Exemplary” if that’s a place people will rarely get to?

A: We absolutely already do that. We could have invented a scale score, but it would have added more complexity. We have no cut scores for different levels because we have to look at the frequency table. What does a master or advanced teacher look like? We need two years of data in order to begin determining that. On an individual component it’s difficult to get more than 40 out of 60. On the 100% scale, 11% scored 71.5 or higher. Those were the top marks and we understand that. One principal, when they got their score of 88 was immediately inclined to feel awful. But it was the highest score in the district, so it’s all relative. We take into account that “Exemplary” is hard to achieve. Thirty-one percent made it two years ago and this year it was around 66 or 67 percent.

Q: Can you explain exactly what the Bucket consists of?

A: The Bucket has several sections. The peer or mentor puts in data for formals and informals in the electronic portfolio. The administrative team, principal or AP, put in their formals and informals. What is not in there are details from department heads, pop-in walkthroughs, etc. You can put in additional items, such as awards you’ve won, some type of accolade you received, committees you served on, certificates of trainings. You can also respond to areas that need clarification – that you feel weren’t rated correctly. Keep

in mind there is no notification to the administrative team or peer when you add something to the Bucket, so you need to email that. You also have to remember to make it public, which just means that both evaluators, peer and administrator, can read it. The Bucket is looked at just before final evaluation is done. We print it out and every journal, note, etc., including all of the ratings, and all of it is read.

Q: What is the schedule protocol for flow of pre-observation, observation and post-observation? Is it appropriate to have them all in one day?

A: It is not the norm, but it is requested by some teachers. They don’t want to wait for the post-observation; they want it later that day. But it’s different depending on the peer. If I’m an elementary peer with multiple teachers at 15 schools, my schedule is very different than a music peer who covers 45 schools. Peers can schedule it all in one day of that’s the teacher’s request and it can be worked into the peer’s schedule. If peer requests it, it’s up to the teacher. But it is not our norm. Many teachers request the pre-observation before the school day begins, then they have the observation and have the post-observation at the end of the day.

Q: A lot of teachers are stressed about informals. For example, if you aren’t on schedule, say you’re not doing math at math time because a custodian is leaving, so we’re writing thank-you letters and it spills over into math time...does that go against you?

A: The issue of teaching something different than what’s on the schedule is something we are addressing with the peers. If the peer shows up and you’re doing reading instead of math, they will observe what you are teaching and there’s no penalty for that. As far as letter writing goes, you could address that with the peer, let them know what’s going on and, assuming you would still be making it academic related, they’ll observe anyway.

Q: I was given a five day window and never observed. How will that be handled?

A: That’s part of the difficulty of scheduling. Let’s say we estimate that a peer can do 4 informals per day. But there might be people out unexpectedly those days, so the peer overschedules because they still have to get 8 done. If at the end of the two days the peer got most of them, then they’ll just need to re-schedule the rest. We know it’s not perfect, but 2 or 3 day windows are better than a whole window for a whole semester. We understand that if you get window and it doesn’t happen it’s frustrating.

Q: The state has mandated a new evaluation system for all the districts. I know our district and HCTA had a lot of people on committees to help get this together. Is there an ongoing committee to look at the tweaks and modifications that are needed or is emailing GreatTeachers the way to go?

A: There is a Teacher Advisory committee and there are specific ones on evaluation, the different parts of the process, peer and mentor issues, etc. Many of you sat on focus groups and survey groups. We bring new people in all the time because people leave, retire etc. There are also teachers on the principal evaluation committee.

Q: How much research does a peer do before just dropping in? For example, in reading there may be a lot of diversity in where the children are at. How much does the peer need to know about the program and the kids in order to make an objective evaluation of what’s happening?

A: That’s why we do the formal first, so the peer has a feel for the teacher, the class, and the school. They may be assigned to a number of teachers at one school for that reason. The hope is that, since they’ve been there, they have foreknowledge when they do the informals.

Q: What is the objective of informals?

A: A lot of teachers said, “I’m good at this, so just come watch me teach” and with informals we thought we would see more authentic teaching. We want to see multiple things in the classroom. A teacher may try things on a formal evaluation that they don’t normally do. With informals, what we see is a moment of hesitation, but then they just move on and we see great teaching.

Q: I had my administrative post-observation and haven’t received feedback and it’s been almost a month. Is that an issue?

A: Yes, a month is too long. We need to look into it. Each one of these issues is handled individually and there are circumstances that can’t be helped. We had a principal out for surgery, for example, so the post-observations were delayed. So it may be for unforeseen reasons.

Q: Is there a window if you’re emailing them after the observation? We’ve been told to email in 48 hours or else it’s no good.

A: Yes, that is our protocol. If you were out sick we’ll look into that. And we will address that with peers at the next PLC.

EET Forum Q&A Continued...

Q: If it's marked "not observed" it's not supposed to be a negative. But the EET liaison at our school is saying it's a penalty mark against you.

A: It is absolutely not a negative rating. If your peer, mentor, principal or AP gave you a negative rating, let us know.

Q: A peer came and stayed forty to forty-five minutes for a couple of teachers for the informal. Isn't that too long based on the protocol?

A: That came up recently in a meeting with the peers. The peer said "I was in a co-teach classroom and the teacher I wasn't evaluating was giving a lesson. The one I was there to evaluate was about to start teaching finally after I had been there twenty-five minutes and I didn't know if I should stay". I told her to stick to protocol unless you ask the teacher and the teacher is fine with you staying.

Q: Several times it has happened where they came in and saw only ten or twelve minutes and then it was time for the class to leave for lunch. So then they came back after lunch and saw a full lesson on something.

A: Definitely tell the peer if you only have ten minutes left of a class. We've asked for updated schedules, so we can try to avoid those situations, but there are a lot of schools. We do recommend that you let them know right away, "Hey, we go to lunch in ten minutes", so the peer can move on.

Q: Our ELL department is concerned about the final evaluation they received culminating with all the stuff last year. They felt the formal didn't show them well. The problem was that LYA students did not show very much in terms of gains. The teachers were dispirited. Is there a correlation of written scores and value-add for ELLs?

A: We always give consideration for LYA because we do comparisons. What you're describing – we did not see that in our first run analysis and I would love to know your school, so I can look at it. Overall in the district we saw a strong correlation between value-add and higher written scores. We definitely want to continue improving and look for anomalies like this.

Q: We were told in the first meeting in the fall that no one can get anything but "Developing" in Domain 4 if they don't show something in every single section.

A: That is not correct. We look at the preponderance of evidence and we're training principals on that too.

Q: Attendance is marked present at home room or 1st period. In a school such as mine, there's a high incidence of skipping or coming to home room and then leaving. And second period has high attendance absenteeism because students are in the office, in time out, at court, skipping, are out for behavior issues, etc. So according to value-add they're present, but according to my individual attendance they aren't there. Are we going to eventually take that into account?

A: It's a difficult balance. We want accuracy, but on the flip side – back to paperwork issues – having to do period by period attendance would be very difficult. We already use prior year attendance to identify trends. If you have a student who is out a lot, we get those trends and use that in value-add.

Q: Pretend I'm a 5th grade science teacher. FCAT for me is based on K-5. During a formal I may add a 4th grade standard in because I know what it is and I know my students need it. Now I'm marked as "Requires Action" because "I don't know my own grade level standards". Really effective teachers know when they need to go back over something from a prior year in order for their students to get the current year standard.

A: There's a lot to be said about this because generalization can occur. It's really about the knowledge of the students. If you're teaching the prior year's standard to students who need it – good. But if you're just doing it because you think "all my kids will all need it every year" – that's not good. I would hope that if you communicate that with the peer in post-conference, they will understand that you're teaching the standard because they need it. It's also different if you teach it to the whole class, who may not need it, instead of one student who might not get it.

Q: I'm a VE teacher, music, and the only ESE teacher in my school and I cover all 5 grades. For evaluation I'm considered a classroom teacher, but I don't have a classroom; I have a rolling cart that goes with me. I can't post stuff on the walls, so I can show things like "Developing Cultures". I'm a square peg in round hole. How can I meet these criteria in the rubric?

A: We have a lot of teachers who float and peers have communicated that it's not an issue. What's important is what you bring with you and how you utilize it. Many peers have not had classrooms as well, so they understand it. We can easily use that rubric on teachers who float.

HCTA Communications

One of the key suggestions we've heard over the past year or so is that we need to significantly improve the methods we use to communicate with members, with a focus on making important information available in an easily accesible and timely manner.

With that in mind, we're working on getting several building blocks in place that will bring HCTA communications into the 21st century.

In the next few months we'll be rolling out a new web site with searchable content that will put a lot more valuable information right at your fingertips.

We're also rolling out a new email component that will let you opt-in and opt-out of receiving specific types of emails from HCTA, such as electronic newsletters, legislative updates and petitions.

Stay tuned for more information!

In the meantime, you can stay up to date on HCTA activites and news via social media:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HillsboroughCTA

Twitter: www.twitter.com/HillsboroughCTA

YouTube: www.youtube.com/HillsboroughCTA

If you have suggestions for the web site, please email them to sue.morgan@floridaea.org.

HCTA Picnic!

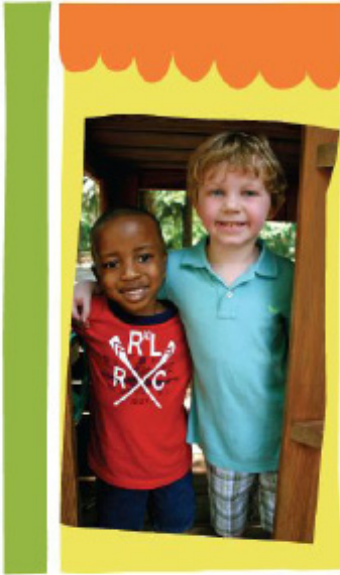
Save the Date!

CTA Membership Picnic

Saturday, May 19th

11AM to 3PM

Luptons Boggy Bottom Ranch



Stay tuned for more information...

Tax Worksheet

The purpose of this worksheet is to help you organize your tax deductible business expenses. In order for an expense to be deductible, it must be considered an “ordinary and necessary” expense. You may include other applicable expenses. Do not include expenses for which you have been reimbursed, expect to be reimbursed, or are reimbursable.

Description	Amount
Classroom Supplies (awards, prizes. plants, etc.)	\$ _____
Clothing, Shoes, & Access. (for gym or lab)	\$ _____
Continuing Education	\$ _____
Credential Renewal	\$ _____
Depreciation of Equipment – To IRS Form 4562 (piano, camera, projector, file cabinets, etc.)	\$ _____
Equipment (such as calculator, film, & processing)	\$ _____
Entertainment/Meals	\$ _____
Meetings and Conventions	\$ _____
Occupation License and Renewals	\$ _____
Office Supplies, Postage, Stationery	\$ _____
Printing and Copying	\$ _____
Professional Society Dues and Expenses	\$ _____
School Functions and Admissions	\$ _____
Teaching Aids (Films, Slides, Etc.)	\$ _____
Telephone, Pager, Fax	\$ _____
Trade Publications and Periodicals	\$ _____
Travel Expenses (attend meetings at other schools, transport students to sporting events, or field trips)	\$ _____
Typing and Clerical Services	\$ _____
Uniforms	\$ _____
Union Dues	\$ _____
Union Meetings and Expenses	\$ _____
Writing and Publishing	\$ _____
TOTAL	\$ _____



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Jean Clements President
Marilyn Dupree Vice President
Faye Cook Secretary/Treasurer
Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins Executive Director
Sue Morgan Editor

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Dates to Remember

- Satruday, April 14th
Private Screening of “Mitchell20”
- April 16th through April 25th
Election Period for FEA Governance Board seat.
- April 26th (tentative date)
Community Showing of “American Teacher”
- Spring transfer dates
Instructional: May 2nd through May 23rd
Support: May 9th through May 23rd
- Spring Pool (at Armwood High School)
Support: afternoon of June 8th
Instructional (and leftover support): June 11th
- Saturday, May 19th
HCTA Member Picnic
Lupton’s Boggy Bottom Ranch
- Monday, May 28th
Memorial Day - No School!
- Friday, June 8th
Last Student Day
- June 30th - July 5th
NEA Representative Assembly
Washington, DC

JOIN CTA TODAY OR INVITE YOUR COLLEAGUES TO JOIN

Last Name

First Name

Middle Initial

HILLSBOROUGH CLASSROOM TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, INC. PAYROLL DEDUCTION ENROLLMENT CARD

I authorize and request the School Board of Hillsborough County to deduct Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association dues and assessments from my bi-weekly pay, and to transmit the deducted amounts to the Association office. I understand the School Board will discontinue dues deduction upon 30 days’ written notification to the Association and Board. I understand that dues, assessments, contributions or gifts to the Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association are not tax deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes although a portion of the dues may be tax deductible under other provisions of the Internal Revenue Code. For 2010-2011, teacher dues are \$31.58 per pay period, and ESP dues are \$15.82 per pay period.

Lawson ID _____ Phone# _____ Teacher _____ Paraprofessional _____ Clerical _____

Name _____ Work Location _____

Home Address _____ ☐ Signature ☐ _____

City _____ Zip _____ Date _____

Personal E-Mail Address _____ Association Representative _____

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