

UNITER

A Publication of the United School Employees of Pasco

August 12th, 2022

From the President

USEP members,

If you are new to teaching in Pasco, **WELCOME!** If you are a Pasco veteran, **WELCOME BACK!** Hopefully, this is the year we've been waiting on for a "return to normal". I hope your summer was satisfying and relaxing. We have much to accomplish this year with our students and we want you to know that USEP has been working all summer on your behalf.

USEP has been working hard at the bargaining table to see to it that significant salary increases happen this year. We are in the final stages of economic talks and continue to advocate for better working conditions on your behalf. More on that from Lynn and Jeff in another section of this newsletter.

Our density is once again over the 50% requirement to remain the Bargaining Agent for Pasco County education employees. This is a job we take very seriously. Your support and communication to us empowers and motivates us to work hard for you. "U" are the backbone of USEP! "U" are the voice of USEP! "U" are the most important part of USEP! "U" ARE USEP!

Please continue to have conversations with new employees at your worksite. As our organization grows, so does our power at the negotiating table. Collectively, we can make a difference for **ALL** of us!

It is our hope that this year is your **BEST** year. It is our desire that you make a difference in your students' lives and at your worksite. It is our goal for you to **BE PROUD TO BE PASCO!** USEP will work toward that end.

There have been many changes in legislation and curriculum since the Legislative Session ended. USEP will monitor those situations and offer guidance through our Updates. Please read them as important information is shared in this manner.

Hope you all have a **GREAT** year. Thank you for your support of our organization.



Don Peace



Grading Practices Update

Over the past year or so, USEP President Don Peace has spoken at most every School Board meeting regarding taking more off teachers' plates and changing the culture in Pasco. Well, once again, at the beginning of the school year, the District has neglected both. The District rolled out new Grading Practices with little training for teachers and very few answers on how this plays out. USEP met with OLL staff to discuss these changes and expressed concern over this process. Nonetheless, when you came back to school, you were told of changes that were to be implemented immediately.

On July 27, USEP file a "Cease & Desist" letter with the District on these new changes. We have yet to hear back from the District formally, but some changes were offered in a School Board workshop. USEP stands behind our teachers when it comes to teacher autonomy, changes in grading and procedure and how PLC's are intended to work.

It is our intent to seek formal changes in the document and expectations placed on teachers moving forward. In the interim, as you put together and formalize your syllabus, grading categories, etc., please reach out to your administrator to ask how they would like you to handle this in the interim. Work with your administrator – do not be obstinate or insubordinate – until we reach a resolution on this matter.

Instructional Negotiations

The USEP Instructional Bargaining Team has been hard at work on the 22-23 negotiations. We ended last year's negotiations with a plan to get back to the table right away for the new year. This year's negotiations started in June. At this time, we believe we are close to an agreement that would include raises retroactive to July 1, 2022. Also on the table is language that would provide financial compensation for those teachers that choose to volunteer to provide coverage during their planning period or take on additional students due to a substitute not being available. Signed Memorandums of Understanding can be found on the USEP website.

We cannot say enough how much we appreciate the members of our Instructional Bargaining Team. Thank you, Christine Barrett, Gina Coley, Susan Cullum, Diane Cunningham, Kelly Daley, David Hicks, Fai Fai Ho, Lauren Meyer, Gloryvee Ortiz, Karen Pearce, Jan Stern, and Janet Tolson!

Also In This Issue:

PMP Update:

⇒ Update on the outcome of the grievance involving PMP.

UniSig Awareness:

⇒ Clarification on UniSig grants for the new school year.

SRP Negotiations:

⇒ Information on language for the SRP Contract and SRP pay.

Digital Resources Approval Process:

⇒ Information on vetting for digital resources

Guidance on Parental Bill of Rights:

⇒ Critical information you need to know

Pasco Young Educators

Attention young USEP members! We are relaunching the Pasco Young Educators (PYE) in order to empower young teachers and SRP to become politically aware and socially active to make a difference in public education.

Our goals are to:

- * Help education professionals become more politically aware and socially active at the local, state, and national levels.
- * Build capacity of USEP membership to ensure the contractual rights of our future.
- * Challenge the legislative status quo.
- * Address the needs of newer educators.
- * Provide opportunities for young education employees to network socially.
- * Build a network, providing opportunities for school employees to relate to others.
- * Develop and create partnerships with other existing organizations that impact public education.

Be on the lookout for more information on PYE in the near future!

IA Trainings

New for 2022, the district has invited many Instructional Assistants (Discipline IA's, Behavior Assistants, Basic/ESE/DHH/DJJJ/ESOL/PT Adult Ed/Kindergarten IA's, Instructional Lab Support, and Phys. Ed. Paraprofessionals) to attend various professional development trainings on a multitude of subjects throughout the year, primarily on Early Release Days. While these may well be beneficial, it was not made clear by district communications that attending these trainings is NOT mandatory. As such, do not feel obligated to participate in them. If you do wish to partake, but do not have the district-assigned technology to do so, you may seek a computer from the school lab and/or view the sessions in a room/group together with other IA's.



PMP Update

You spoke and we listened! One of the outcomes of our grievance was the organization of work groups at all three levels (Elementary, Middle, and High School) that met several times in the spring to discuss the 21-22 PMP process, procedures, and rollout. These groups included USEP members, USEP staff as well as district staff. These work groups brought about some changes to the PMP procedures for the 22-23 school year that will help streamline the process and lessen the time spent doing double the work. Some of this includes better communication of the processes and procedures, merging of information, teachers having the say, and batching students to eliminate redundancy. Throughout the summer, we have met with and will continue to meet with district staff to continue to improve the PMP expectations.

Thank you to the USEP members that gave their time and input on the work groups. We appreciate it very much!

SRP Negotiations

As we closed out negotiation last May, both the Union and the District agreed to get back to the table as soon as possible for the 21-22 negotiations. We kept that promise, as our first session for the 21-22 school year occurred in late June. This may be the earliest we have begun to discuss money in the last 20 years.

As every SRP knows, the \$15.00 per hour minimum is set to be effective in October. There is so much more than that to ensuring raises to all. Language is currently on the table to make all raises retroactive to July 1, 2022. And although we are very close to agreement, we are working together on the details that will provide the start of equity among new and long-term employees as well as equity among all the employee groups represented by USEP.

Language and updates can be found on our website at useponline.org. I would like to take this opportunity to thank your representatives on this year's bargaining team. This year's SRP team members are Maryann Brini, Marvin Coleman, Anita Dienes, Ed Garza, Natalie Legg, Mona Stafford, Phil Sullivan, and Karen Zummo. If you work with any of these folk or see them around, please thank them for the significant time they give on your behalf throughout the year.

What's so Special about August 23rd?

August 23rd is the date of the Florida Primary Election. This year, the ballot will include an item that could directly impact you! On or before August 23rd Pasco voters will have the opportunity to vote on a referendum for education. If approved, this referendum would provide salary increases for teachers and other non-administrative employees. Vote by mail is happening now. Early voting takes place from Saturday, August 13-Saturday August 20th at various locations around Pasco County. To learn more about Early Voting, visit <https://www.pascovotes.gov/Elections/Ways-to-Vote/Early-Voting/About-Early-Voting>. To learn more about the referendum, visit www.liftuppasco.org.

UniSig Awareness

Recently the District sent out an email regarding UniSig schools and supplemental pay for working at those schools. UniSig grants are not new to the District. We have addressed this situation in the recent past, however, with fewer schools involved. This year, due to a number of factors, 13 schools in the District qualify to be on the list for UniSig grant funding.

The \$7,500 and \$15,000 supplements come directly from the state and are not a part of the negotiations process. USEP has no bargaining power over these payments. There are also stipulations that must be adhered to in order to qualify for the grant money:

- You must have an Effective or Highly Effective VAM score
- This rules out brand new teachers
- You must be an Instructional classroom teacher tied to a student roster and meet certain criteria

If you wish to pursue employment at one of the 13 District schools that qualify for grant money, please make sure you inquire about your particular situation **PRIOR** to accepting the job offer to be sure you meet all qualifications to be hired, are not placing yourself out of field, etc. If you are unsure of a situation or have further questions, please contact the Office of Leading and Learning at (813) 794-2256.

WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA LABOR COUNCIL

Family-friendly Labor Day picnic is back

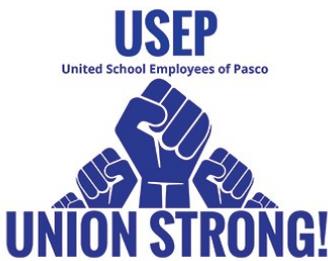
MON, SEPT 5TH FROM 11AM-3PM
 Suncoast Youth Conservation Center (6650 Dickman Road, Apollo Beach, FL)

Join together with union members and their families to honor "the holiday that Labor made!"

- Fishing
- Exhibit hall and sea turtle rehabilitation center on-site
- Listen to live music
- Mingle with endorsed candidates and elected officials
- Bring your lawn chairs, sun screen and bug spray
- BBQ pork & chicken includes sides and drinks (no alcoholic beverages permitted or sold)
- Water slide

Free event. Meal tickets available onsite for \$20 each.
 Questions, contact Cheryl Schroeder @ 813.368.7124 or via email at cschroeder@wcfl.org

WCFLC.org
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UNITED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES OF PASCO

Back to School 2022 - UNITER (Early Enrollment)

EMPLOYEE ID	PRINT NAME (LAST NAME, FIRST NAME)	WORKSITE	JOBTITLE
ADDRESS		CITY	STATE ZIP CODE
HOME PHONE	PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESS (not your @pasco.k12.fl.us e-mail)		
USEP CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION			
<input type="checkbox"/> PAYROLL DEDUCTION I authorize the District School Board of Pasco County to deduct membership dues from my paycheck to be remitted to the United School Employees of Pasco. I understand that I may terminate these deductions by officially notifying USEP in writing and following the revocation process.			
Signature		Date	
By submitting this membership application to USEP and receiving the incentive, I agree to remain a USEP member through August 2023.			
For USEP Use Only Date Received:			

Recruiting Member (please print)

IRS TAX DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT

Dues paid to United School Employees of Pasco may not be deductible for federal income purposes; however, under limited circumstances, dues may qualify as a business expense.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY AND RETURN THROUGH THE COURIER



Parental Bill of Rights aka Don't Say Gay Law

All of us can agree that educators work hard to create a safe and caring environment for all who work and learn in our public schools. We also believe in protecting LGBTQ+ students and staff from being silenced or marginalized. Unfortunately, certain politicians are attacking LGBTQ students and staff to divide communities and to divert attention away from Florida being near the bottom in the nation in school funding and educator salaries. But we will not lose focus on making sure that every student feels safe, welcome, respected, and loved while at school — no matter their race, income, ZIP code, sexual orientation or gender identify.

Together, we will make sure that every student in Florida attends a school that is worthy of them. The law was intentionally written to be confusing and vague. School districts have received little to no guidance on how to implement the law. The state of Florida's most comprehensive response so far to concerns about the law's implementation was issued in response to a lawsuit against the bill, but official rules and guidance have yet to be provided. In short, from what we know right now, you can continue with the same practices and procedures you used last year unless given a directive to do otherwise.

That being said, you should follow any directive given to you by an administrator. You should also reach out to your local union if you believe a directive you have been given is unjust. Your local union will review the complaint and determine a suggested course of action. The best way to change these policies is to vote for politicians who will uphold our values and are committed to protecting all of Florida's students and educators.

You and your students are protected under federal law

Federal law trumps state law. As such, public school employees are protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII), which prohibits discrimination against employees based on numerous characteristics, including sex, inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation. Employers cannot consider an employee's sexual orientation or gender identity when deciding who to hire, fire or promote, or in assigning responsibilities, setting salary, providing benefits, or determining any other significant aspect of employment.

Furthermore, employers cannot harass employees based on their LGBTQ+ status or allow others to create a hostile work environment for LGBTQ+ employees. If you believe you have been discriminated against or harassed based on your LGBTQ+ status, you may file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [<https://www.eeoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination>]. Because Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, you also have the option of filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) [<https://ocr.eeoc.gov/>].

Title IX also protects students from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and protects students and educators from retaliation for complaining about such discrimination or harassment. That means schools cannot discriminate against students by, for example, prohibiting access to extracurricular activities, school sports, bathrooms and applying dress codes consistent with a student's gender identity.

For steps schools can take to confront anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination and harassment in schools and examples of such harassment, see guidance [<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocr-factsheet-tix-202106.pdf>] from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice. You can report such harassment and discrimination to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, [here](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html),

[<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>] or to the U.S. Department of Justice, [here](https://civilrights.justice.gov/) [<https://civilrights.justice.gov/>].

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations for keeping your classrooms safe and welcoming for all students while recognizing the challenges of the new law.

- Use only materials for instructional and educational purposes that have prior approval through state standards or the school administrator. Having material previously approved by the district or school puts the member in a better position.
- Nothing in the law prohibits the display of Pride flags, stickers, or any other LGBTQ+ symbols. If you receive a directive from an administrator to remove any inclusive symbols from a classroom, ask for the directive to be put in writing, follow the directive, and contact your local union immediately. We will have your back. Anti-bullying efforts have long been critical to our work as a union, and we will not back down when it comes to making sure every student feels seen, heard, and respected on their school campuses.

Making your voice heard

- If you are engaging in protest activity, do so outside the classroom and school and, preferably, with one or more of your union colleagues. Acting with other colleagues provides an additional level of protection, as you are engaging in a union-organized activity.
- While students may engage in student-led and organized walkouts and protest movements at school, school employees should not use their position in school to participate in, encourage or discourage student activism.

What do I do if a parent objects or complains under the new law?

One aspect of the law that didn't generate as much media coverage is that now schools must adopt a complaint procedure through which parents may raise "concerns" with the principal or principal's designee regarding student welfare. There must be a process for resolving those concerns within seven calendar days after notification by the parent.

If your administrator notifies you that you are the subject of a parent complaint, contact your union representative right away. Because of the strict timeframes laid out in the law, your administrator may try to force you to meet without your union representative, but it is essential that you enforce your Weingarten rights.

- **Remember:** If a reasonable person would believe that discipline could result from the meeting, you have the right to representation.
- **Ask:** "What is the purpose of the meeting?" Could discipline result from the meeting? If so ...
- **State:** "I want union representation." You can ask for representation at any time during the meeting.
- Do not be insubordinate if denied representation. Attend the meeting.
- Keep asking for union representation.
- Take good notes.
- Do not sign or agree to anything.
- Do not make or write statements.

Call the USEP Office immediately for assistance.

Digital Resources Approval Process

As a result of a letter received from Commissioner Diaz, our District will require the vetting of all supplemental instructional digital resource materials as well as non-instructional digital resources such as communication applications. For curriculum resources, please follow the [Print and Digital Instructional Materials Approval Process.pdf](#). For non-instructional resources, please follow the [Non-Instructional Digital Resources Approval Process.docx](#). Should you have any questions, please feel free to submit a Web Help Desk ticket and choose Digital Resources as your Request Type.

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE THE MATERIAL YOU WISH TO USE IS APPROVED OR NOT, PLEASE USE THIS PROCESS!