

# UNITER

A Publication of the United School Employees of Pasco

August 15, 2017

## From the President

Dear USEP Member,

Welcome back! I hope you had a restful summer. As your new President, I have been working hard to establish an atmosphere of collaboration with the District. I have had several meetings with the Superintendent, School Board members and various District staff to try to establish a working relationship. It is my goal to put Pasco first in priorities as we move forward. Everyone needs to work together if we are going to give our students a world class education.

We at USEP have been working diligently all summer on your behalf. Due to Legislative decisions, this appears to be a challenging year financially, however, we have been trying to work through this year's negotiation process, dealing with the transfer & reassignment language from last year's impasse, District based assessments, and putting some new programs of our own in place.

As we look at the budget, we will monitor and assess the financial situation to see what is available to bargain. This year, through HB 7069, instructional personnel who scored Highly Effective or Effective on last year's summative evaluation qualify for salary bonuses. We will be looking to see how the remaining employees can be helped financially as well.

You are our voice at your worksite. We need every member to take a stand for Public Education, especially now that we are under this most severe attack from Tallahassee. Let your voice be heard; in an email or letter to your Legislator, a letter to the editor, or visit your local Legislative Delegate in their home office to "tell your story". We also have partners with our affiliates: NEA, AFT, FEA and AFL-CIO. Through collective efforts, we have a large voice to advocate for our profession.

Thank you for what you do for our students and our profession. If I can be of help to you, please let me know. HAVE A GREAT YEAR!



## USEP Bargaining Update

Welcome back to all returning teachers and SRP! We trust you all had an enjoyable and restful summer break!

USEP's Instructional and SRP Bargaining teams have been busy over this summer trying to craft new contracts for this school year. As you will recall, the Union and District went to Impasse last year which resulted in an increased settlement of 3.0% for all employees but took until mid-April to finalize. The parties would prefer to avoid this late settlement again this year and have been actively meeting to attempt an earlier settlement.

Hopefully you have all been reading about the Florida Legislature's 2017 session and the new House Bill 7069 which will have a significant negative impact on the public school system. Specifically and most importantly, this new law has mandated how teachers will receive pay increases, which are actually "bonuses" that will not be credited to the FRS and therefore will not improve any teacher's retirement benefits. This is a drastic change in how teachers are compensated and is clearly an attack on the public school system in Florida. According to this new law, teachers will receive these bonuses based entirely on their performance evaluations for the 2016-2017 school year. A teacher rated "Highly Effective" will receive a \$1,200 bonus and teachers rated "Effective" will receive up to \$800. This may mean effective rated teachers will receive whatever money is left over after compensating the Highly Effective teachers and that could mean considerably less than \$800.

In terms of the major issues being addressed in our local contract negotiations, the Teacher Evaluation memorandum that ran for the past 2 school years is now up for renewal and significant efforts by a dedicated USEP/District workgroup has been underway. The process may look considerably different than the past but this is still a ways off before being finalized. However, due to the serious nature of any significant changes to this process (bonuses now attached), it is, unfortunately too early to state how this process will look this year. It is possible that we will agree to extend the current MOU one more year to allow more time to adequately and effectively modify the process to ensure fairness to all teachers.

On the SRP side, efforts have been underway to address the "Transfer & Reassignment" process that will enhance an SRP's ability to transfer to the same position (cont. on page 2)

## Also In This Issue:

### House Bill 7069 & Its Implications:

- ⇒ Shift away from pay raises and toward bonuses
- ⇒ "Schools of Hope"
- ⇒ Best & Brightest

### SRP Compensation Committee:

- ⇒ Salary Ranges

### Classroom Supply Assistance:

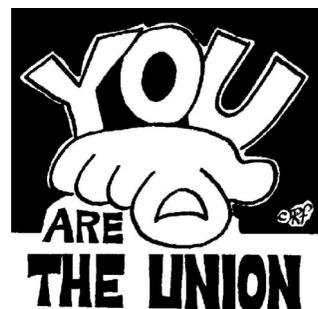
- ⇒ Teacher Lead Funds
- ⇒ Electronic Expense Reports

### New Pharmacy Benefit:

- ⇒ Elect Rx

### Next Issue:

30th Anniversary of SRP Unit!



## Teacher and SRP of the Year Time!

Even though the recognition of the Teacher and SRP of the Year is not until January, the process begins NOW. USEP will be sending a reminder on August 17th to all Building Reps reminding them that a committee needs to be formed at each school and worksite. USEP needs the names of the committee members and chairpersons to ensure release time for an orientation meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 1:00 – 3:00pm at the USEP offices. If you have any questions, please call USEP at (813) 996-2119.

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P.O. Box 1098  
Land O' Lakes, FL 34639  
Phone: (813) 996-2119  
Fax: (813) 996-6693  
Email: USEP@useponline.org  
Website: www.useponline.org

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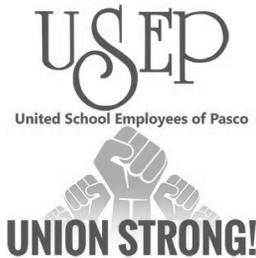
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*(cont. from page 1)*

at another school based mostly on district seniority. This was a significant objective last year which also went to the impasse process and our concept endorsed by the Special Magistrate (judge) who heard our case. We are also seeking to address inequalities in the Sick Leave Bank program between the Instructional and SRP banks.

Finally, the recent Legislature's budget for public schools left little to nothing for non-instructional salary increases. As stated above, teachers will now receive somewhere between \$1,200 and \$800 based on performance evaluations but there was very little additional money for other salary improvements. The District is also opening 2 new schools this year (Bexley ES and Cypress Creek MS/HS) which is further depleting any additional funding received. USEP has been meeting with District staff to review budget adjustments and District actions (including the elimination of 24 district office positions) in an attempt to balance the District budget and provide a salary increase for non-instructional employees. This remains a difficult situation, at best, and both the Union and District are trying to do the right thing.

Stay tuned to future E-Mail announcements and visit the USEP website ([www.useponline.org](http://www.useponline.org)) for updates as the negotiation process continues!



### **House Bill 7069 and Its Implications**

This year's Florida Legislative session resulted in one of the worst new laws being passed for public education. This bill was designed primarily by the current Florida Speaker of the House, Richard Corcoran, who is a state representative from, of all places, Pasco County. In order to get this bill passed, he combined a large number of individual education bills into one large bill which made it almost impossible for individual state representatives to vote down.

Essentially, the most significant ramifications of this bill are:

- Diverts capital funds for construction from traditional public schools to charters;
- Moves approximately \$240 Million from what would normally be "general operating" dollars to provide state mandated "bonuses" to teachers based solely on their performance evaluations last year;
- Creates "Schools of Hope" which are Charter schools, supposedly established for a minimum of 2 years with a track record of success, and provides another \$180 Million to these schools who will set up shop near what are described as failing public schools;
- Extends the highly contentious "Best & Brightest" program for teachers, and incorporates administrator bonuses tied to it;
- Expedites the district "turnaround option" from 3 to 2 years and gives more authority to principals to make employment decisions on teachers working or seeking to work at their schools.

### **SRP Compensation Committee**

In order to provide better and more understandable salary increases to all SRP in the District, USEP and the District agreed during contract bargaining in 2015-2016 to eliminate the numerous salary schedules and create salary ranges. This would make it much easier to explain and understand future salary increases since these increases would be based as a percentage on each employee's hourly salary vs. salary steps that ranged from 10 – 75 cents per hour.

Therefore, the Union and District have held several meetings in an attempt to get these ranges established for use by all employees. Unfortunately, negotiations broke down last year and the parties ended up in impasse and the compensation changes did not proceed.

Now the District and Union are trying to move this process along and are seeking a date for a full committee meeting in the early Fall. Stay tuned for information as this process moves forward for all SRP!

### **Classroom Supply Assistance**

Teacher Lead Funds will again be released to qualifying classroom teachers in a direct deposit made no later than September 30<sup>th</sup>. Teachers will be required to upload receipts through the electronic expense reports in Employee Self-Service to document appropriate use of funds. Though the amount of this year's Lead Fund deposit has not yet been determined, teachers may use receipts dated from July 1, 2017 to document expenditures for classroom supplies.

### **New Pharmacy Benefit**

As has been reported to our members many times, the District's health insurance plan is experiencing the largest increase in overall cost due to its "pharmacy plan" and the continual introduction of specialty meds. In an effort to address the ever increasing pharmacy increases, the District's Insurance Committee, on which USEP is a full voting member, is introducing a new prescription drug program called "Elect Rx." This program will enable eligible employees to import medications from Canada, Australia and other countries at a drastically reduced cost. The medications available are what are called "maintenance meds" that a person takes regularly such as a med for high blood pressure. You will be hearing about this program during this year's Open Enrollment and USEP believes it will be a cost savings program for you, the employee/member, and the District overall.

