

Unity

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Institutionalizing Performance Incentive Measures or Merit Pay

*By Olga Addae, SEA President and
Brian Lindquist, SEA VP*

On November 18th, 2009 the Seattle School Board introduced a recommended motion to institute a performance incentive measure for the Superintendent. The Superintendent's employment agreement provides the School Board the opportunity to determine "whether or not to additionally compensate the Superintendent up to 10% of her annual base-salary for the attainment of incentive goals set by the School Board and based upon student performance, measures of educational achievement, financial condition of the district and other goals and measures as may be prescribed by the board...The board identified 17 of the academic measures upon which to determine the Superintendent's receipt of performance incentive compensation; three received double weight, for a total of 20 academic measures" (School Board Action Report 11/16). 14 of the academic measures set by the School Board are the percentage of students passing the WASL per grade level.

According to this metric, in 4 of the measures the Superintendent exceeded the target goal. The amount of the proposed Performance Incentive is \$5,280.00 for the academic year of 2008-09.

This type of "Merit Pay" is called "Pay for Performance", especially "performance" as it relates to student achievement. All should be aware this could be an attempt by the School Board to institutionalize "Pay for Performance" across the district.

Each of our members holds their own beliefs on Merit Pay, but the Seattle Education Association has a long standing resolution denouncing Merit Pay:

State Budget Cuts to Wreak Havoc in 2010 Public Education Could Suffer

Washington is one of 47 states which is dealing with a deficit budget this coming year. The latest figures show that our 2010 state legislature will be greeted with a 2.66 billion dollar deficit and the numbers continue to climb. The most unfortunate victims of these numbers are education and health care. Both have the potential to take huge cuts.

With the budget in crisis mode, education will most likely see more cuts after the already devastating cuts we saw this past year. There is talk that anything not connected with basic education will be on the table for discussion. This means we have the potential of losing major programs and dollars. Some of the items already being discussed are: the removal of all I-728 (class size) funds; K-4 enhancement dollars beyond basic ed that funds teachers; taking away the last Learning Improvement Day funded by the state, which means one less day of pay for all certificated staff; the suspension of National Board Certification incentives; and even lowering the allotment of health care dollars to make employees pay a percentage of their own premiums. If we lose a portion of our health care dollars, we may never gain it back; and the loss of I-728 funds has the possibility of lay-offs being even greater this year than last year.

Our schools cannot afford these hits! It is important for all of us to contact our state legislators and ask them to put forth a new revenue source to adequately fund public schools. After all, public education is the paramount duty of the state. The time is now!

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Institutionalizing Performance

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Merit Pay: *The Seattle Education Association vigorously opposes subjective rating as a means of determining salaries. It stresses that experience to date has shown that basing salaries on subjective ratings destroys professional relationships and morale, creates strife and discord among the teachers, impedes the cooperative improvement of education by teachers and administrators, and leads to deterioration in the quality of education of children.*

The bottom line: The students of Seattle are more than test scores! They are individuals, with individual aspirations. They should not be pawns used for the economic incentive plans subjectively applied to anyone in the district. I personally *do not* believe the Superintendent has any personal merit in the increase of the WASL scores, if I did, I would say she should also be awarded a "demerit" in the 3 areas that the arbitrarily set metrics/scores dropped in for 08-09 as compared to 07-08.

According to the employment agreement, the Board is to review the financial status of the district before applying this incentive. We still have teachers and educational support staff that have not been reemployed. As of October 30 there were still 28 certificated teachers, 13 paraprofessionals, and 9 office personnel on the Reduction in Force list.

I must ask, "Where are the School Board priorities"? The Board should be looking at ways to limit spending on management and return the employees who provide direct student services back to the classrooms and school buildings.

The School Board will vote on this motion at its Dec. 9th meeting.



Nominations for WEA R.A. and NEA R.A. will open December 14th.

Be part of the future

Seattle educators and their counterparts across the state and nation are facing unprecedented pressure to alter public education. We face controversies over how to address struggling schools, inclusion, and dwindling budgets. Two conventions in 2010 will be pivotal opportunities for discussion and decisions about our direction and priorities: the Washington Education Association Representative Assembly is May 13 - 15, 2010 in Spokane and the National Education Association Rep Assembly is July 1 - 6, 2010 in New Orleans. These are the highest decision-making bodies in our Association.

On December 14, nominations will open for members to put themselves forward to be candidates for delegates to both these meetings. If you are interested in representing Seattle at either of these events, pick up a nomination form from your Association Rep or download one from the SEA website at www.seattlewea.org after December 14. Nominations close on January 25 and voting occurs February 22 through March 2, 2010.

Be part of the future. Our priorities will be determined by the members who step forward.

New SEA Employee



SEA has a new face behind the reception desk, along with a new voice answering the phone.

Richard Fisher was recently hired on with SEA in an administrative assistant position.

Richard takes the place of Cynthia Walker who retired in June after thirty years. He comes to SEA with a strong background in customer service. Working in customer service with multiple companies and positions, such as banking, airlines, and retail, has given him a great wealth of knowledge. His knowledge will be an asset to SEA. Richard stated, "I look forward to my future with SEA and with the great members and staff as well." SEA would like to welcome Richard to a great organization.

Know your contract:

Snow Day expectations:

When a snowstorm occurs during nonschool hours, the District's transportation office will survey road conditions, monitor projected weather patterns, and provide an operational recommendation to the Superintendent before 5 a.m. – hopefully early enough to get the word out to parents/staff in time to plan for the day. That decision is immediately communicated to major radio and TV stations. You can also use the www.schoolreport.org to get emergency school district information. (You can sign up for emails from the district(s) of your choice in the event of an emergency announcement.)

If an announcement is necessary, however, it will be limited to one of the following. Schools open on time – buses operating on snow routes; Two hours late – buses operating on snow routes; Two hours late – buses operating on regular routes.

New contract language stipulates that if school starts late, staff is expected to arrive 30 minutes prior to student start time. (This is a change from the previous practice that demanded staff arrive at school at the regular time despite late start for students.) This is for both certificated and classified employees with no loss of pay.

The 4th situation is that there is no school. Staff does not report to work. JSCEE employees are to still arrive at their scheduled time, although they may choose to arrive two hours late and make up the time at the end of the day.

NOTE: The safety of employees is as important as that of the students. Please be careful and advise your supervisor (as possible) of your circumstances if you will be delayed. Schools should develop staff (and parent) communication trees.

If it begins to snow during school hours, the district will evaluate weather conditions and will decide to:

1. Close schools early.
2. Maintain normal operating hours.
3. Delay bus departure time until traffic conditions improve.

Designated schools in each cluster will serve as receiving centers for students if conditions become severe enough to make completion of bus routes unsafe. Bus drivers are instructed to proceed to the nearest designated receiving school at any time they need assistance or if they cannot complete the route by 7:00 P.M. If this occurs, the receiving school will contact the student's school and home.

SEA Building Visits

SEA staff and SEA leadership have been scheduling building visits to hear concerns and issues that members want SEA to hear concerning the bargain that is coming up. As all of you know, we have a one year contract and we will soon be at the bargaining table again. SEA feels that we need to hear from the membership early on and begin building our organizing efforts to build our capacity for power at the bargaining table just as we did last year. We need to be able to have a meeting at all our school sites. We need to hear from all of the members.

Here are just some of the issues that have been brought up from some of the 31 schools that have already held meetings:

- “We need more information about merit pay and how it’s working in other school districts in the country.”
- “No to merit pay if it’s tied to testing scores. It also needs to be equitable for all staff.”
- “Why is SEA protecting “bad” teachers?”
- “What is going on with the stimulus money?”
- “Workload should be the number one issue, class size second, and compensation third.”
- “Workload is killing us, something needs to go, and can’t we bargain that no new initiatives be rolled out until the ones from this year have been proven to work?”
- “Why don’t administrators do a better job of evaluating, don’t get training on how to evaluate?”

Other issues are also discussed at the meetings. The above are the issues we hear repeated at most meetings. Please contact your AR if your building has not had a meeting. Some buildings have already scheduled them. Find out from your AR when your building is scheduled to have one and be there so your voice can be heard.

There will be Focus groups held January 14, 21, 28, and February 4th to further discuss and develop certain issues so that the bargaining team knows what the members are wanting. Members for these focus groups will be randomly selected from the SEA membership list of all its members. They will be notified by a special invitation to attend one of these focus groups. Be on the look out for the invitation in case your name is drawn.

Organizing ourselves builds our capacity to be strong at the bargaining table again this year as we did last year. So attend your building meeting and if invited come to the Focus group meeting.



Association Representatives Leading the Way

All across the district in our school buildings and programs Association Representatives have been and are being elected. There are only 15 buildings remaining, out of 88, that haven't held an election and turned in the results for their Association Representatives. We are getting close to our 100% goal of Association Representatives in every building and program by December 18. Please get this done first. This is the first step in building our foundation for this year's bargain.

Association Representatives continue to schedule and organize for school visits from Governance and Staff for bargaining and education reform conversations.

Thank you for the visits already scheduled and conducted. If you haven't hosted a school visit or scheduled one yet, contact SEA today. Dates are filling up fast.

Our Association Representatives are actively constructing Building Action Teams (BAT). If you are interested in helping your AR please contact them today.

We can't expect our AR's to do it alone. Every BAT needs a WEA-PAC leader, Home e-mail Leader, Phone Tree Leader, PARA and SAEOP leader.

Together with an action team in every building we can accomplish much more.

Association Representatives continue to hold monthly meetings with members and additional meetings with their Administrators. A 10 minute monthly SEA meeting with your colleagues is a good way to provide information and check in with members. Many of our AR's are holding longer monthly meetings with Administrators to discuss and solve issues at the building level. This is a great way to build the labor management partnerships we need to ensure the success of every educator and child.

Also, when I am visiting buildings I am seeing updated and attractive SEA boards. Nice work!

We continue to hear about AR's advocating and solving issues for members at the building level. Thank you for your leadership. Whenever our AR's are able to handle an issue early, sometimes on their own and sometimes with staff support, before it becomes a bigger issue, we are all better off.

Our goal is to continue building a strong foundation for this bargain and beyond. We are actively constructing a visible power base in every building and program so that our membership and the administration can see and feel our energy and commitment to public education. Our working conditions are our students learning conditions. Thank you to all of the Association Representatives and the Building Action Team members for their dedication and hard work. You are appreciated!

Calendar



Upcoming Association Meetings:

SEA Board meeting: Mon., Dec. 7th, 4:30 p.m. at SEA.

To address the body in the Speak Out section, email: redmond@washingtonea.org.

Parapro Meeting: Tues., Dec. 8th, 5:00 p.m. @ SEA.

Rep Assembly: Mon., Dec. 14th, 4:30 pm., at Washington.

Sub Meeting: Tues., Dec. 15th, 4:00 at SEA.

Upcoming Interview Training:

Interview Training- Thurs., Dec. 10th, 4-5pm, JSCEE, Rm. 2010. Register by contacting Richard at 206.283.8443, or rfisher@washingtonea.org.

In Memory...

Sandra Kim - Teacher
Wing Luke Elementary

Penny Patterson - SAEOP
Broadview-Thompson

Nelida Morillo - Student Services
JSCEE



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