

Random Notes

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Visit our Website at www.akronteach.org

An Open Letter to the Superintendent on Customer Service

Dear Mr. James:

Wow! What a hectic first year you must have had. Building closings, the financial crisis, likely layoffs, a new employee conduct code, sleeveless tops and on and on.

We want to share some thoughts about the Customer Service initiative you and the board have emphasized this year. And by the way, if any of the cynical remarks heard in a few buildings this year have gotten back to you, please don't take them personally. It's just that a few principals out there understand good customer service practices differently than we. For example, we disagree with the notion that we must do whatever it takes to please the parents. It doesn't happen often, but there are times when disgruntled parents can be very offensive, rude and threatening. Under these circumstances, we don't believe it is our responsibility to "bare our throats," so to speak, as some principals would suggest. As you know from your experience with the Erie Island parents, there are times when we can be short and impatient in the face of criticism for doing what is right and necessary.

We know that all students are our customers, but don't feel that fact alone should exempt those who shoplift the rights of others to learn in a safe and orderly environment from the consequences for misbehaving. It is happening in some of our schools that disruptive behavior is being overlooked in the name of customer service.

We know how important it is for our schools to be perceived as having effective customer service skills. We believe—and hope you agree—that we have positive and responsive relationships with most of our customers.

Anyway, congratulations on your first year on the job. We hope next year is a little less hectic, and some time can be devoted to taking a closer look at what are and are not good customer service practices.

Sincerely,

APS Faculty

Take our Customer Service Poll at www.akronteach.org.

BUDGET BILL PASSES HOUSE, MOVES TO SENATE

The Ohio House has passed the Governor's budget bill with some amendments. The bill has moved to the Senate, where Republicans have already restored status quo by gutting the Governor's education model, restoring charter school funding, removing new requirements for charter school teachers, reinstating provisions offering vacant facilities to charter school operators first and eliminating the plan's emphasis on professional development for teachers and administrators. Once the Senate approves the bill, a House-Senate conference committee will attempt to reach a compromise on a final bill. By law, the legislature must pass the budget bill by June 30.

From all of us at AEA, have a safe and relaxing summer recess.

Volunteers Give Countless Hours to Benefit Members, Kids and Community

AEA is an organization of volunteers. Only the two full time officers and two full time staff members are paid. Much of our work is accomplished by volunteers who serve as building reps, officers, board members, committee chairpersons, committee members, building organizers for AEA-sponsored events and members who work on the campaigns of candidates we've endorsed for public office.

Our volunteers for the 2008-2009 school year were:

Sally Hodge ● Monique Binkley ● Kim Joseph ● Kathleen Shippy ● Jim Perge ● Dee Williams ● Carmel Oberdorfer ● Penny Pletikapich ● Connie Kubilus ● Sandy Cline ● Aaron Merz ● Cynthia Rochford ● Amy Salisbury ● Lisa Feist ● Carol Caughron ● Don Mace ● Michelle Hewitt ● Lori Stone ● Linda Tedesco ● John Dever ● Janell Brown ● Bessie Brown ● Kathy Robbins ● Hugh Laughlin ● Anne Griffith ● Marjorie Clements ● Andrea Migdal-Lambo ● Denise Vittum ● Susan Wilson ● Tonia Merlo ● Carl Oberdorfer ● Susanne Grywalski ● Aileen Mullaney ● Tami Semelsberger ● Stephanie Barnhill ● Harry Cameron ● Lisa O'Rourke ● Grace Tome ● Jean Crofford ● Ann Gruska ● Marianne Pramuka ● Pam Toppin ● JudyWhite ● Marv Conner ● Tom O'Neil ● Margaret Labate ● Radonna Mair ● Leigh Conti ● Sue Ott ● Chris Thurman ● Janet Willse ● Margo Works ● Chris Meneer ● Sharon Frounfelder ● Jayne Rine ● Char Tabata ● Joan Frase ● Judy Lalli ● Ranay Hatherill ● Monica Moffitt ● Mick Papp ● Jeff Moats ● Louise Papp ● Kelly Goodpasture ● Kathy Rodgers ● Laura Jatich ● Maria Meeker ● Lynn Fickes ● Patty Bucy ● Lauren Campbell ● Joe DeAngelis ● Christina Domer ● Diane Farmer ● Vicki Goff ● Rena Hakin ● Ernie Sigler ● Pat Bilal ● Mark Reaman ● Bill Beck ● John Cochran ● Sandy Wells ● Denise Pantuso ● Kevin Griggs ● Lisa Hatherill ● Carrie Evans ● Lorrie Schur ● Tracey Robinson ● Andrea Brown ● Chris Mathews ● Diane Ely ● Sherry Fogarty ● Sue Hinson ● Dawne Blackburn ● Margaret Smith ● Alice Sharkey ● Debbie Apsaga ● Ruth Sutton ● Barb Dolensky ● Liana Bell ● Tony Nigro ● Randy Henley ● Dan Bartel ● Jake Thompson ● Pat Jawyn ● Ernie Dontis ● Charlene Panovich ● Mary Mosher ● Dale Hartwig ● Pam Lightner ● Dianna Hendrickson ● Megan Stefanik ● Suzanne Leyerle ● Georgene Kalapodis ● Julia Sues ● Rose Trout ● Doreen Slinger ● Cleo Clifford ● Zoe McClish ● Diane Benner ● Sandy Vielhaber ● Jayne Hammond

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● Barb Dawson ● Juanita Giles ● Jodi Miller ● Jane Mariani-Walker ● Darlene Hensley ● Gary Rhodes ● Stacey Rice ● Emily Parker ● Nora Jones ● Reggie Warner ● Michelle Whitehurst ● Barb Baltrinic ● Patty Arthurs ● Jo Dickey ● Diane Zupke ● Rich Cola ● Nicole Delahanty ● Janis Sarver ● Alisa Gross-Dann ● Suzanne Nixon ● Deb Firtha ● Melissa Finefrock ● Steve Culp ● Nancy Camburn ● Mary Austin ● Maria Milec ● Diane May ● Stacey Ambrose ● Alice Davis ● Rebecca Green-Pallotta ● Sue Caperones ●

In addition to the above, Kathy McVey ● served as the Strides captain for the administration. A huge "Thank You" to all!

Jennings Leadership Ventures into the World of Entertainment

It's been more than a decade since we last named a building administrator in *Random Notes* for doing something really around the bend. After all, we think everyone (ourselves included) is entitled to make a mistake now and then without mention of it in the *Notes* or anywhere else. We owe our break from this tradition to the modern day Abbott and Costello-like tale written and directed by, and co-starring Jennings Middle School principal **Nicki Embly** and assistant principal **Lisa Allen**.

The story begins rather inconspicuously when two Jennings students are referred to Ms. Allen's office for gross insubordination (that's when a kid ignores direct instruction from a teacher for the umpteenth time in the presence of others). Ms. Allen suspends one student out of school, but assigns the other an in-school. The teacher, believing that both students should have been suspended out of school as a result of their deeds, seeks confirmation of that belief from the union. Looking into the matter, the union notes that on the referral, Ms. Allen responded that she handled the matter as just insubordination because officials in Student Services, during a visit to Jennings to explain the Code of Behavior to the staff, advised that, "...gross insubordination SHOULD ONLY BE USED IN CASES WHERE DANGER OR HARM EXISTS." Now, we've had our differences with Pupil Services over the years, but we couldn't believe anyone there would come up with that spin on gross insubordination. So we write Ms. Allen, asking just who in Pupil Services was responsible for making the remark. Ms. Allen promptly furnishes us with two names; the one we

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Association Demands Arbitration in Two Grievances

For the first time in recent memory, the Board is forcing the Association to resort to grievance arbitration to resolve two very serious issues. The first involves special education caseloads and is a classic example of how the administration uses compliance rules when it is to their advantage, and ignores them when it isn't. The second relates to the lewd conduct of a middle school student who was neither disciplined under the Code, nor investigated under Board policies governing student behavior, specifically with respect to sexual harassment.

Prior to the start of this school year, the State Department of Education found the Board to be out of compliance with standards limiting the number of IEP students an intervention specialist may serve. The finding was pursuant to a member's formal complaint to the State Department and a subsequent ODE investigation. In response to the ruling, the Board submitted, as directed by ODE, a "Corrective Action Plan," a move one could reasonably assume acknowledged the member's complaint and the State Department's ruling. However, repeated attempts by AEA throughout the school year to resolve the identical compliance issue for teachers in the same building were met with adamant denials that the district was out of compliance by Board General Counsel **Rhonda Porter!** At the same time, a few senior staff members were all but admitting, albeit rather sheepishly, that the district is out of compliance. Needless to say, making reasonable assumptions about what this administration does or might do has become a risky business.

Nowhere is that more evident than in the case of the middle school student who, in the presence of his teacher, a student teacher, a visiting artist and his classmates, exhibited what is most politely described as lewd behavior. In response to this conduct, the interim principal did virtually nothing; it might be too aggressive to describe what she did as "counseled and warned," that dread catch-all popular among some principals for any Code offense short of assault.

What is particularly bothersome about both grievances is that efforts to resolve them short of arbitration have involved administration officials at the highest level, and in the case of the middle school student, a member of the Board.

We expect hearings on both grievances to be held during the summer recess.

Jennings...

talk to denies the statement was ever made. Having resolved the "who's on first?" question, we ask HR to interpret the Code and the contract as it applies to gross insubordination for Jennings leadership. The story should end here, but it doesn't.

A few days pass before the dedicated building rep at Jennings emails the union president, relaying a challenge from Embly and Allen that he, "show them in writing where violations requiring mandatory suspension (such as gross insubordination) must be a minimum of one day out of school." The incredulous union president wonders if this is a belated April Fools' Day joke, but learns that it is not. Faster than Indiana Jones ever found anything, he answers the challenge, dispatching language from the contract AND the Code to HR with a challenge of his own—that THEY try to explain it to the Jennings challengers.

While there is a bit of humor in this story, it is incomprehensible that a building principal and assistant principal could be so unaware of what the district expects them to do when kids break certain rules.

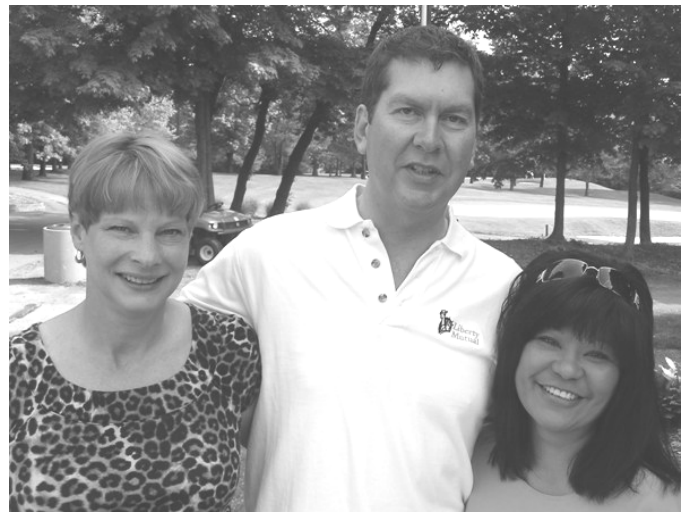
STRS Mulls Benefit Changes

Due to heavy losses during the now two-year old bear market, STRS earlier this spring began considering **potential** changes in pension benefits. Among the scenarios given consideration were raising the retirement age to 60, using the highest five years instead of the highest three to calculate FAS, increasing contributions by 2%, reducing the COLA to 1.5% and deferring it until age 65 and changing the retirement formula to a flat 2.2% for the first 30 years and 2.5% for years beyond 30.

STRS used these scenarios for illustrative purposes only. No policy decisions have been made, and any changes would require legislative action before being enacted. The Ohio Retirement Study Council has directed staff to work with all public retirement systems, making it likely that PERS and SERS will also begin studying potential changes. STRS is expected to continue its deliberations and could possibly make a recommendation to the legislature in the fall.



Sue Goddard, shown with hubby Chris, has missed only one AEA Night at the Stadium...on the night of her wedding rehearsal dinner. How dare she.



Liberty Mutual's Bruce Robishaw poses with hostesses Mikelann Adams and Kristina Thompson. Liberty Mutual Sponsors a hole-in-one contest (which no one has ever won) at the Scramble in addition to raffling prizes.

Over 300 Attend Annual Year-End Outings

More than 300 AEA members, their families and friends participated in this year's Golf Scramble at Brookledge Golf Course and AEA Night at the Stadium.

The events are planned for members to get together one final time before leaving for summer recess. This year marked the 28th consecutive May trip to Cleveland to picnic and watch the Indians. The tradition started at the old home of the Indians, Municipal Stadium. The first AEA Night at the Stadium featured a "tailgate" party in a cinder parking lot and was attended by approximately twenty members. When tickets were hard to find during the Indians' run of consecutive division and league championships, nearly five hundred members attended, and waiting lists were pages long.

The annual golf outing attracts a core of dedicated players. This year's scramble (May 23) included fast greens, great food and outstanding weather.



Ernie Dontis (Garfield) stops for an Italian sausage sandwich, or two, before challenging the back nine. Nice shades, Ernie.



Is that Jack Nicklaus??? Nope, it's AEA attorney Larry Vuillemin, whose foursome won the Scramble, shooting a nifty 6-under.



Lisa O'Rourke (Leggett) puts the finishing touches on a dog exquisitely prepared by Chef Bill Sieferth and sous chefs Jeff Moats and Mike Rusnak.



Is that Tiger Woods????? Nope, it's East's Robin Bryant teeing off on hole 10. The form is almost there, though!



Janell Brown and Ranay Hatherill have mastered the art of placing a hot dog in a hot dog bun.