

October/November, 2017

Akron Education Association
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AEA *briefs*

THE AKRON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION IS A UNION OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS ADVOCATING FOR SHARED LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WE ARE COMMITTED TO USING OUR VOICES TO MAKE EDUCATING ALL CHILDREN A PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITY. OUR BELIEF IS TO PUT CHILDREN AT THE CENTER OF EDUCATION. WE ENDEAVOR TO WORK TOGETHER WITH PARENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS AND SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL EDUCATION.

Dear Colleagues,

Much has happened across the district during the past few months. Our office has heard from countless members regarding innumerable items of concern impacting our classrooms. Most, quite frankly, are very alarming and definitely not new concerns. In many, many cases, we have been in talks with the district voicing your concerns and challenges for far too long without any real positive acknowledgement or solutions from the administration. This "non-reaction" has become a common theme which, honestly, has gotten to a point which is no longer tolerable or sustainable for our students, educators or families.

One extremely important example is the state of student behaviors in our buildings. We again must underscore the fact that the student behaviors which our teachers are most concerned about, those which are hurting our students in the most negative ways, are caused by a very small percentage of students. That being said, those habitual, chronic behaviors by a small group of students are, in our opinion, not being addressed by the Board in the manner they have agreed upon, through negotiations, within the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

This simply has got to stop. AEA has filed a grievance with the Board on behalf of several members which involve both physical and verbal assaults on staff members resulting in the Board not following language within our agreement. This is the exact response from the Board which caused AEA members to strike in 1989 and resulted in the development of the exact Code of Student Behavior which the Board is now discounting. In the few short weeks since we filed this grievance, we currently have multiple additional student verbal and physical assaults on staff members to add to the original grievance. AEA is committed to protect the students and educators of Akron Public Schools. We are committed to restoring a safe and nurturing learning environment to our classrooms. We are committed to stopping outstanding students and families from leaving our district because of safety concerns in our buildings. And we are certainly committed to working together to shine a light on all of the positive aspects of our district by addressing this enormous roadblock in a realistic and open manner.

While we will continue our work addressing other areas of concerns, including special education issues, testing and assessments, autonomy in the classroom for our educators and retrieving much needed instructional time, we believe that until this Board legitimately supports and follows our Collective Bargaining Agreement, we stand little chance of truly giving our students the education that they deserve.

AEA Leadership is calling on all of its members to unite in solidarity and support as we move forward advocating for all of you. Please join us in returning our classrooms and schools to the nurturing learning centers our community deserves. We will be notifying all of you about ways which you can show your support. Please do all you can to join your colleagues in solidarity.

Pat
Pat Shipe, President
Akron Education Association



STUDENT BEHAVIORS

Keeping Our Schools and Classrooms Safe



It is no surprise to our members that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of verbal and physical assaults by students against teachers and other students reported to us over the course of the last few years. This year, more than any recent year, the rate of these reported assaults to AEA has noticeably intensified. AEA has used multiple avenues trying to work with the Board to prioritize the safety of our students and staff in our buildings. The Board's decision to, thus far, dismiss the rising concerns of our members is no longer tenable. The Akron Education Association is taking the following actions

The Collective Bargaining Agreement clearly includes language which addresses specific actions the Board is to take in cases of physical and verbal assaults on staff members. Language includes, but is not limited to;

"No teacher or class is ever required to tolerate any act of gross misconduct, including flagrant discourtesy, abusive and vile language, acts of violence and/or deliberate insubordination."

"Any case of assault, verbal or physical, suffered by members shall be reported immediately in writing to the principal. Physical assault is purposely causing or attempting to cause physical contact with a staff member with the intent or potential to harm the staff member, or interfere with the staff member's performance of duties. Verbal assault is any threatening or abusive language directed at a member. Abusive language includes harsh, coarse, or insulting words, which are injurious, improper, hurtful, offensive, or reproachful. They may include the degrading of a person based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or handicap. Threatening language includes an express declaration or the implication of an intention or determination to inflict injury upon a person, upon a member of that person's family, or property."

*"In the event that an assault has occurred, the pupil shall be removed immediately from the class and the school and referred to the Director of Student Services for reassignment to another building or expelled. In the case of a physical assault, a recommendation shall be made to the Superintendent for expulsion. In all cases of physical assault, **the principal shall notify the Akron Police department to enable the member to file a police report.**"*

"In no case shall a member be required to readmit a student to class following an assault."

During the last several school years, and in particular the current school year, it has become clearly evident to AEA that the Office of Student Support Services and the Board are not adhering to CBA language in 3.22 and 3.23. The CBA includes specific language which outlines procedures and protocols the Board must follow in cases of verbal or physical assault on staff members. In just the last several weeks, there have been numerous cases of staff members being victims of a verbal or physical assaults in our school buildings. In all of these cases, investigations were conducted at the building level during which a physical or verbal assault was confirmed and the student was referred to the Board. In each case, the Board's hearing officer acknowledged that the assaults had, in fact, occurred but decided to disregard contract language specifying required penalties under the Code of Student Behavior.

The Akron Education Association has, or will be, filing a grievance in all of these cases. As of 11/9, the Board has not responded to the grievance. AEA is firm in its position that the Board's continued disregard to follow negotiated language in the Agreement puts all of our students and staff on an indefensible path to harm. We must, and we will, advocate for our students and colleagues.

We will be informing our AEA Building Representative as we proceed with these actions. They will be notifying you of areas where your support and solidarity will be needed. Please see your AEA Representative with any questions you may have.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICIES/CONCERNS/ACTIONS

Following are some examples of recent student discipline issues. These incidents are only a few of the assaults and student behaviors reported to AEA.

April, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

An elementary student began fighting and verbally assaulting another student. When asked to leave the classroom for a buddy room in order to deescalate, the student pushed the teacher into a wall and punched her twice in the stomach.

May, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

A high school student was using her cell phone in class. The teacher took the student's cell phone charger and placed it beside her for the remainder of the class. The student approached the desk and while grabbing for the charger, pushed the teacher causing her to fall off her chair and resulting in a 4"-5" laceration to her lower rib cage area.

September, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

An elementary student did not wish to engage in a lesson. When the teacher asked him to sit down and follow along, the student began chasing the teacher around the room, hitting/kicking/biting her. The student has repeated behaviors of hitting/kicking/punching/biting/and spitting at both the teacher and other students.

September, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

A student verbally assaulted a teacher in January, 2017. The student was sent to another building. This school year, the student was returned to the building at which the verbal assault occurred, in violation of the CBA. Not only was he returned, he was assigned to one of the classes of the teacher who he assaulted in January. The student then physically assaulted the same teacher which he initially verbally assaulted. The student was again referred to the Office of Student Services for physical assault. The student was again sent back to the same building where he has twice assaulted the same teacher.

October, 2017 - Threat of Physical Assault of a Staff Member

An elementary student did not want to participate in a lesson. He began shouting, laying on tables, kicking chairs toward classmates, pushing classroom furniture towards other students, punching another student in the stomach, kicking the classroom door and started slamming it and began using profane references toward the teacher. The entire class had to be removed to another location for their safety. The student was removed to a counselor's office. During discussions with the counselor the student threatened to physically assault the teacher and indicated that he had access to numerous weapons at home. A threat assessment was done at the building level and it was found that the student did, in fact, have the ability and intent to carry out his threats. The hearing officer did confirm that the student made the threats, however, the decision was made to return the student to the building.

October, 2017 - Threat of Physical Assault of a Staff Member

A middle school student was handling a metal object during a lesson. The teacher asked the student to hand the object to him. The student said the teacher was being disrespectful to him for asking for the object, and the student was going to have his parent come to school and hit the teacher. When this incident was reported, the teacher was told that it was his fault due to lack of classroom management skills and there was no infraction against the student.

October, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

A middle school student moved his desk into an aisle in the classroom. The teacher went over to him and asked him to move his desk back. The student pushed the desk toward the teacher, hitting her several times. He was asked again to return the desk, and again he pushed the desk into the teacher. When he was asked a third time to stop his behavior and return the desk to the row, he referred to the teacher using profane names, and again hit her with the desk several more times. The principal referred the student to the Board after determining that a physical assault had occurred. The hearing officer found that the student "did not do it on purpose" (five times) and returned the student to the building.

October, 2017 - Physical Assault of a Staff Member

An elementary student was violating classroom rules during math class. The teacher told him that she was going to change his behavior chart. The student charged at the teacher, pushing and hitting her. The hearing officer ruled that the physical assault had occurred, however, the student was returned to the building.

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TESTING AND ASSESSMENTS

Because of the recent district changes to testing and assessments, an overwhelming number of our members, both elementary and secondary, shared with us the opinion that these changes were unnecessary, burdensome, redundant and, quite simply, not helpful to informing their instruction in the classroom. In addition, as the State of Ohio removes some of these tests to alleviate the burden on our students, we believe the district has chosen to keep the same tests, and increase the frequency, in order to acquire additional “data” on our students to utilize in PLC meetings.

Because we believe many of these decisions are made without authentic input by the educators and classrooms which are impacted the most, AEA recently convened two panels of classroom teachers, totaling close to 100 educators, from across the district to the AEA offices to voice their concerns to Assistant Superintendent Ellen McWilliams-Woods. We appreciate the involvement of the Assistant Superintendent in these meetings.

Many concerns, observations and classroom narratives were shared during these meetings. Our members voiced their unease regarding the negative impacts these district changes are having on the “realities of the classroom” and their students. They expressed overwhelming belief that PLC meetings are simple meetings of compliance to fill out the 5-step form, and which have no real value to our teachers. And finally our teachers, without exception, voiced great alarm and distress at the overwhelming and burdensome workload that the district is placing on them, which requires them to work an inexcusable and outrageous number of hours outside of their contractual workday, all the while still not keeping up with what is expected of them.

AEA has scheduled follow-up meetings in the next few weeks at which Ellen will report to the teachers any changes or modifications the district is willing to make to these mandates. We will certainly inform all of our members what the outcome of those meetings may, or may not, change.

We would like to thank all of the educators who took part in these meetings and, again, would like to thank Ellen McWilliams-Woods for here participation. Hopefully the district will make some positive changes as a result of these meetings.



Elementary teachers meet at AEA on October 19th to discuss testing and assessment concerns.



Secondary teachers meeting at AEA on November 1st to discuss testing and assessment concerns.

IEP REVIEW AND RECONVENE WEEKS

The District recently implemented a new mandate for all secondary intervention specialists and general education teachers. This "IEP Review and Reconvene" initiative requires Secondary Intervention Specialists to reconvene the IEP teams of any student receiving a "D" or an "F" on their report cards. This reconvening of hundreds of IEP meetings is to happen four (4) times a year. The district has stated that this process is not new, however, the Association disagrees. The IEP teams have always had the option of reconvening an IEP for review if needed, however, the mass reconvening by the district solely on the basis of a grade is absolutely a new procedure. In our opinion, this is an attempt on the district's part to subtly pressure teachers into assigning a grade of "C" or above to all students. We have addressed this issue with the administration, stating our concerns as follows;

"Our concerns are threefold. First, we are again talking about Student Action Plans to track student progress. In the three years we have been addressing this issue, as referenced in the summary listed above, we have discussed the use of these additional forms of progress monitoring as being unnecessary and redundant to the work performed by all of our educators in their weekly PLC meetings. In addition, individual student information is discussed at every interim report card session with the parents of the student. As I stated above, we came to an understanding and you stated in February of 2015, "the forms were NOT to be distributed to teachers to complete, but rather to be filled out by the administrative team." Our educators, both general education teachers and intervention specialists, are the teachers we were talking about.

Secondly, as stated in IDEA regulations, any member of the IEP Team can call for a reconvening of the IEP meeting. It is our opinion that the district's indiscriminate attempt to make a "blanket" policy to reconvene any IEP team based solely on the basis of a student receiving a "D" or an "F", without knowledge surrounding the reason for the student's grade, is arbitrary and careless. We maintain that the IEP team should be the sole discretionary body to make that decision based on their knowledge of what was discussed in previous IEP team meetings and evidenced in the goals within the IEP which the student may, or may not, have yet reached. For the district to infer that the mere presence of a "D" or an "F" on a report card is the sole indicator of progress, quality of instruction or, may I dare say, student effort, I believe is reckless.

Finally, the district's decision to require these action steps be taken by the teachers making the decision to give students the grade they have "earned" in their coursework would appear to us to be a shrouded attempt to subtly encourage our teachers to give all of their students at least a grade of "C" or above. Should the teachers not attain this district imposed benchmark, they will then be required to explain what "the teachers" are doing wrong in the classroom when they have any students receiving a grade of "D" or "F". For the district to execute these unmitigated actions on all teachers based solely on a grade is, in our opinion, not only completely disregarding the difference between achievement and progress, but also ignores any behaviors the student is contributing to their own lack of achievement, which could include a decision on their part that they simply do not want to put the effort forth in the classroom regardless of the quality of the instruction they receive.

We are asking that these "mandatory" IEP Review & Reconvene Weeks be stopped and that the district allow individual IEP teams the autonomy to make these types of decisions based on their knowledge and understanding of their student's IEP. We are also requesting that the requirement for Student Action Plans and any documentation of collaboration by our teachers or intervention specialists be stopped per our agreement outlined in this email."

The Association has reserved the right to file a grievance in this matter as we review any actions we will take. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this district mandate, please see your AEA Building Representative or call this office. (330-434-2181).

SPECIAL EDUCATION CONCERNS

The Association has some serious concerns regarding the policies and procedures the District is implementing surrounding many areas within Special Education operations. We will be addressing many of those concerns in the near future. One particular issue revolves around teacher/pupil ratios within certain areas of disability defined in the Ohio Operating Standards for serving children with disabilities (ORC 3301-51-09). The standards are as follows. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding these requirements, please see your AEA Building Representative, or call this office. (330-434-2181).

<u>Disability Category Assigned</u>	<u>Maximum Nbr. To be served by School Level (Caseload)</u>		<u>Maximum Number to be Served During Instructional Period</u>		<u>Age Range per Instructional Period Shall Not Exceed</u>
	K-8	9-12	K-8	9-12	
Cognitive Disabilities	16	24	12	16	60 months
Specific Learning Disabilities	16	24	12	12	60 months
Hearing/Visually/Orthopedic Impaired, Other Health Impaired	10	10	8	8	48 months
Emotionally Disturbed	12	12	10	10	48 months
Multiple Disabilities	8	8	8	8	60 months
Autistic, Deaf Blind, Traumatic Brain Injury	6	6	6	6	60 months
Cross Categorical	12	16	12	16	60 months

SECONDARY STUDENT LOAD SIZE (SECTION 3.08 - PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO)

The contractual daily student load size for secondary teachers (grades 7 through 12 inclusive) is 170. This load size is applied to any secondary student/teachers ratio.

The load size does not change if you are assigned an additional teaching period, nor does it change in specific subject areas or buildings.

The daily student load size for all secondary teachers is 170, period.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you student load size exceeds these limits, please see your AEA Building Representative or call this office at 330-434-2181.

AEA ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY



MAKE SURE TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL AEA MEMBERS CHRISTMAS PARTY SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY DECEMBER 9, 2017.

THIS YEAR'S EVENT WILL INCLUDE THE FIRST ANNUAL

"REINDEER GAMES"

PLEASE WATCH YOUR MAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION AND MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS EARLY!



PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

Please find current Principal Evaluations below. The AEA Principal Evaluation Team has recently revised this process to make it a more timely, impactful and useful resource for our members. For the 2017/2018 school year, principal evaluations will be done electronically, with the results being disseminated to our members "prior" to the close of the transfer process. If you have any questions regarding these changes, please see your AEA Building Representative or call this office.

1	Michelle Marquess-Kerns	Ellet	93.65%
2	Larry Johnson	Firestone	93.63%
3	Cheryl Connolly	Akron Early College	82.71%
4	Dina Pope	STEM High School	82.50%
5	Rachel Tecca	North High School	79.14%
6	Doug Faris	Kenmore High School	76.11%
7	Frank Kalain	Garfield High School	69.11%
8	Byron Hopkins	Buchtel CLC	57.91%
9	Vyrone Finney	East CLC	54.36%

2016/2017 PRINCIPAL SURVEYS

ELEMENTARY HEAD PRINCIPALS

<u>RANK</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE SCORE</u>
1	Regina Llewellyn	Pfeiffer	96.34%
2	Mary Dean	King CLC	95.81%
3	Kim Wilson	Portage Path	91.68%
4	Kim Summers	Betty Jane CLC	90.18%
5	Kristen Booth	David Hill CLC	88.24%
6	Anthony Lane	Robinson CLC	85.37%
7	Brandi Davis	Schumacher CLC	85.32%
8	Tammy Brady	Resnik CLC	84.90%
9	Jennifer Douglas	Voris CLC	84.26%
10	Jennifer Moff	Seiberling CLC	82.60%
11	Sharon Hill-Jones	Firestone Park	82.05%
12	Anna Panning	Sam Salem CLC	81.89%
13	Rebecca Cacioppo	Rimer CLC	80.68%
14	Greg Blondheim	Forest Hill CLC	80.22%
15	Sherry Bennington	Findley CLC	78.58%
16	Darcy Forshee-Candido	Hatton CLC	77.12%
17	Lamonica Davis	Helen Arnold CLC	73.33%
18	Jennifer Lucas	McEbright CLC	70.86%
19	Laxmi Chari	Bettes	70.78%
20	Philomena Vincente	Leggett CLC	66.31%
21	Nancy Ritch	Glover CLC	64.70%
22	Megan Lee-Wilfong	Windemere CLC	64.49%
23	Ione McIntosh	Ritzman CLC	63.92%
24	Andrea Aller	Harris	59.00%
25	Tara Bruce	Crouse	58.10%
26	Ranea Williams	Barber CLC	49.82%
27	Angela Harper	Mason CLC	45.91%
28	Danjile Henderson	Case	36.81%

MIDDLE SCHOOL HEAD PRINCIPALS

<u>RANK</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE SCORE</u>
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1	Larry Bender	Hyre CLC	96.12%
2	Amanda Morgan	STEM Middle School	93.09%
3	Stephanie Davis	Bridges	91.83%
4	Dyan Floyd	Litchfield CLC	79.81%
5	Charles Jones	Jennings CLC	74.32%
6	Kathryn Rodocker	Innes CLC	71.36%
7	Dawn Wilson	Miller South	52.21%
8	Jeannie Yost	Roswell-Kent	33.45%