



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

As promised, my column this month will expand on several issues touched upon in the December *Broadside*.

- **District Audit:** The January issue of *Penfield Prestige* included the District's response to the State Audit Report. While the District agrees with some of the findings, it takes issue with the Comptroller's criticism of the District's "conservative budget practices, particularly related to fund balance." Whereas the Comptroller is recommending that the District "spend down" the fund balance, the District feels this would be tantamount to putting us in a deficit situation and is reluctant to do so.

As I mentioned in previous issues of the *Broadside*, it is heartening to see that the school district is financially solvent – but at what cost? The issue I have is with transparency. When the audit results were first released, the question I was asked by members over and over again was, "Did the District bargain in good faith in our contract negotiations?" The legal answer to this question is yes. According to our NYSUT legal team, basically, as long as the District comes to the table and talks, they are negotiating in good faith.

For me, personally, the bigger question is whether having had the financial knowledge we have now would have altered our negotiating team's strategy during the negotiating process. There is no way to know the answer to that

question now, but it is crystal clear that having that information now will be useful to us in moving forward with our next negotiation.

The most important step we can take is to educate ourselves about the total budget process. At the last BOE meeting, a comment was made that “Teachers take up the biggest chunk of the budget.” This statement disturbed me then, and it has continued to disturb me ever since. I believe comments like this set an adversarial tone. I don’t want the public to feel that the school district doesn’t have funds because teachers’ salaries and benefits take up too much money. This presents the wrong picture. There are many facets to this budget, and I feel that teachers end up being the scapegoats for any budget woes.

There are approximately 950 district employees, and 453 of them are teachers. Do our salaries and benefits comprise a large portion of the budget? Obviously, they do. However, it is time for us to ask some serious questions. We are all chasing the same dime, but we don’t all have the same information. There needs to be more transparency as it relates to budget codes. What percentage of the budget is allocated to administrative salaries and benefits, for example? How do they compare to those of teachers?

That being said, what can we as PEA members do now to ensure that we are fully informed when future negotiations take place? We need to encourage Dr. Sansouci to attend our faculty meetings to discuss the budget and to listen to teachers. Each of us needs to feel involved as part of the same team. This won’t happen on its own.

The PEA needs teachers to be present at BOE meetings to listen and to ask questions about budget decisions which will affect all of us. I am asking our PEA officers and building reps to attend these meetings, as well. It is important to hear from different perspectives, and as anyone who has ever attended a BOE meeting can attest, being present is much different from watching the meeting on television.

Pursuant to Section 3-3 of our contract, I intend to ask the District to open our contract negotiations as soon as possible--one year from now—January 2017. Please become involved. Let’s educate ourselves and each other about

the budget process. It is imperative to lay the foundation for those negotiations *now*. The PEA needs your help. Please consider joining your colleagues at future BOE meetings. Help to ensure that transparency becomes the norm for all budget discussions. Your involvement will assist us in preparing for our next negotiation cycle.

- **Social Media:** I am pleased to hear that a district-wide social media committee has been proposed by Bay Trail principal, Winton Buddington. We need to be proactive in addressing this concern. I encourage PEA members to let their feelings on this issue be known. If you have been targeted on social media, please let your building rep know immediately. Cyber bullying is real, and it is a serious offense. No student or staff member should ever feel he or she is alone. The PEA will support you.
- **TERT:** The TERT team met this past Wednesday, January 20. It was decided that a joint communication between the team and the District would be sent to PEA members outlining the information covered during the day-long meeting and how it pertains to APPR. Expect this communication in the near future.
- **Sick Bank:** Currently, there are 72 PEA members who are not enrolled in the sick bank. While signing up for the sick bank is voluntary, you may well benefit by participating because it offers short-term disability benefits to members who are facing serious health-related issues. Emails have been sent to PEA members who have elected not to join the sick bank, and the District has generously offered a one-time opportunity for those members to participate in the sick bank beginning now. In my opinion, a one-time donation of two sick days is a small price to pay for peace of mind in case of an emergency. The PEA fought very hard for a sick bank to protect its members, and for those members who have had to access it, the bank has proven to be extremely valuable.
- **PEA Budget:** Expect a PEA budget report to be sent via personal email in the near future.

As we struggle once again as a community with the untimely death of yet another young person, I am reminded of how we come together in shared grief to console, nurture, and reach out to one another. My profound thanks to members of Penfield's TIG team who have worked selflessly these past few weeks to attend to the needs of students and staff. Your compassion and support have truly made a difference.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for all you do on behalf of our students each and every day.

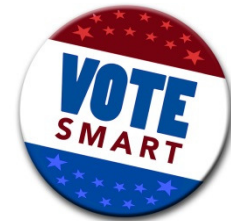
In solidarity, we are **Union Strong**.

Bob Young

All Politics is Local

Russ Byer, PEA Vice-President

As part of this year's negotiations conference, NYSUT is sponsoring training for all members who are interested in getting involved in their school board races and other elections as candidates or as campaign workers for their local.



This year's conference will be held in Rochester on **Saturday, January 30, 2016**. Breakfast **begins at 8:15 a.m.**, and the last session of the day **ends at 2:00 p.m.** In addition to breakfast, lunch will be provided.

This training is hosted by NYSUT's Regional Political Organizer, Paul Hypolite, and will feature two guest presenters—Diana Cihak, political consultant and founder of Women Elect, and Jesse Lenney, Upstate Political Director for the Working Families Party.

If you are interested in getting involved in school board elections or other elections this is the training for you!

- In the first session, we will discuss why you and your local should get involved in school board elections.
- Next, we will look at how to win the right way by setting up a well-functioning campaign.
- Ending with the third session, we will go through the process of running the campaign.

The cost for this training is covered by NYSUT. Let's get ready to transform our communities for a better tomorrow.

To register, let Russ Byer know by Tuesday, January 26th.

Email: *RByerPEA@gmail.com*

Education Inc.: The Movie

For those of you who have yet to see the movie, there will be another showing of *Education Inc.* in our region.

Education, Inc. is told through the eyes of parent and filmmaker Brian Malone, as he travels cross-country in search of the answers and sources behind the privatization of American public education, and what it means for his kids. With striking footage from school protests, raucous school board meetings, and interviews with some of the most well-known education leaders in the country, Malone zooms out to paint a clear picture of the profit and politics sweeping across the nation, right under our noses.

Please join us on Thursday, January 28, 4:30 - 6:30pm at Bird/Morgan School Auditorium in East Rochester (120 East Ave, East Rochester, NY 14445) as Monroe BOCES Professionals presents *Education Inc.*

Here is a Facebook link to the event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1543099426005367/>

