



# NEWSBREAKER

Volume 6, Issue 2

September 2010

## Calendar

## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

*By Melanie Driver*



9/13 Eboard 4pm

9/27 Rep Council 4pm

10/4 Eboard 4pm

10/18 Rep Council 4pm

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Many of us are already counting the days to our first break. There have been so many changes and unit members have endured many frustrations and challenges. It is evident that everyone is being pushed to their limits. You are to be commended for standing up to the challenges and providing a level of service far beyond what is required. We often do not get immediate rewards or gratification for what we do but by the end of the year we see that all of the hard work has paid off. I know that we all have had students come back and thank us years later for what we did for them while they were our students.

We had many unit members that were involuntarily transferred. According to Article 18.6.d: Unit members who are involuntarily transferred shall be allowed the daily per diem rate of pay equal to three (3) days. If you were one of those individuals who were transferred from your site involuntarily and have not submitted a time sheet, you can submit a timesheet to your administrator and get paid your per diem rate for three days. A timesheet must be submitted for the payment to be made. Article 18 is being followed and this is a change from last year. Many individuals had limited selection of positions during the rounds of picking positions. If unit members are not happy with positions that they have chosen, please use this opportunity to watch and apply for positions that would be a better fit.

There are currently about 140 individuals on the rehire list. This includes individuals that are currently in temporary positions or long term substitute positions as well as individuals that had their positions reduced. There is currently a list of positions that have gone to the rehire list as well as positions that are being posted at sites and in the district. There will soon be more positions on the way to the rehire list.

I met with Kris Corey to look at the elementary bell schedule. The instructional minutes at elementary sites were not standard. I asked for the bell schedules of all elementary sites and calculated the instructional minutes of regular, minimum and collaborative days if they applied. I found that some sites had more minutes especially on minimum days than other sites. Kris Corey and I went through each site and determined ways to make changes to those that needed to be changed. There will be several sites that will have their minimum days shortened preserving the work time in the afternoon which is intended for writing report cards or conferencing with parents.

There are many surveys that have been sent out. Please take the time to respond to each one. We need to have this information in order to know what you want and to determine how to represent our membership. We appreciate the time you take to fill them out. Thank You!!

All committees were asked to submit an article for this Newsbreaker. This is an opportunity for each to report what the committee does or highlight contract language. If you would like to get involved in one of the committees, please contact the committee chair. Some committees are by appointment only and are limited in the contract. These committees are Calendar, Bargaining and Catastrophic Leave. You can always submit your name and let the committee chairs know that you have an interest if a position becomes available.

# ***CATASTROPHIC LEAVE BANK REMINDER!***

The Catastrophic Leave Bank was created in 1993. Catastrophic Leave Bank participants, whose sick leave is exhausted, may withdraw from the Bank for catastrophic illness or injury, Article 23.3.c.1 of the contract.

All unit members on active duty with the district are eligible to contribute to the Catastrophic Leave Bank. The contract requires that an additional day of contribution is required if the Bank falls below 1,500 days at

the beginning of the school year for individuals that were already participants. All unit members were notified last Spring that all unit members would need to donate a day for the 2010-2011 school year to remain eligible. Thank you to everyone that turned in their donation so that it could be processed during the summer.

If you haven't donated your day and wish to be eligible for withdrawal from the Catastrophic Leave Bank, please

turn in your donation form as soon as possible. We currently have several members who are on Catastrophic Leave that are benefiting from the donations. There is a waiting period of thirty (30) days after joining the Bank before becoming eligible to withdraw from the Bank. You can find all of the rules and regulations of the Catastrophic Leave Bank in Article 23.3 of the contract.



## **A MESSAGE FROM STEPHANIE COBB, F-SUTA BARGAINING CHAIR**

In last month Newsbreaker, information regarding the Weingarten Rights was included. If you didn't take the time to read it, continue reading. The Weingarten Rights state that any union member has a right to have a union rep at any meeting with the administration. However, the request for a rep must be made either before or during the meeting. Once you made such a request, the interview must stop to obtain a rep, deny the request, or give the unit member a choice to continue the meeting without representation. If the administrator denies the request for a rep and continues to ask questions, F-SUTA can charge FSUSD with an unfair labor practice and the union member has a right to refuse to answer. FSUSD may not discipline any member for such refusal. The rep is of your choosing. Administrators cannot pick out your rep. Your rep can be the site rep at your campus, a rep at another site, another union member, any executive board member, or the President of the local association. If this has occurred, please contact either Art Aronsen (Armijo High) or Melanie Driver (President).

Over the summer you received a letter from the District concerning possible reduction of pay for this year. As of now, negotiations are progressing normally. At the present time, no reduction in pay or work year has been agreed upon. The Executive board understands that we have already agreed upon a reduction of pay with giving up two Buy Back days this year. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) expires at the end of the year. Do let your site rep and executive board member know how you feel regarding extending or not extending this MOU.

For three days during the week of August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the F-SUTA executive board, bargaining team, FSUSD administrators (site and district level) trained for the Interest Based Bargaining (IBB). Traditional Positional Bargaining is largely based on the outcome of negotiations where there are winners and losers. Each party states their position and tries to get the other side to give in. In IBB F-SUTA and FSUSD identify problems that need to be resolved. Together, we offer and consider many possible solutions. From these options, we select a mutually acceptable solution to each problem. Instead of advocating for their solution, we work together to solve problems. Since this is the first year of Interest Based Bargaining, bargaining will take a long time. F-SUTA will still continue to advocate for your issues.

# Recommended Reading

By RANDY COOK

Review © 2010

Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*, New York, Basic Books, 2010.

I first read Diane Ravitch during the 1980's. As a young teacher with a natural affinity for the then-popular "whole language" movement, I was initially skeptical of the ideas of a conservative educational scholar who seemed more interested in *preserving* rather than in *reforming* the American public school system. I didn't especially want to be told how the last hundred years of educational reform in America had followed the same dismal pattern of hope followed by disappointment and then by the next wave of reform. I wanted to believe that *this time* we'd get it right.

Two decades later, I find myself more receptive to Diane Ravitch's ideas. School reform has taken a pretty nasty turn since the 80's. Politicians and the media seem ready to send our schools to the chopping block. Close them down! Cut their budgets! Fire their teachers! Pay parents to send their kids somewhere else! Rather than arguing about the best way to teach reading and math, you and I should be concerned about the very survival of public education. Not reform--preservation. In the middle of this new,

Stalinesque round of school reform, I have had the good fortune to become reacquainted with the writings of Diane Ravitch. *'The Death and Life of the Great American School System'* was recommended to me by a friend who directs early childhood education programs for the County of San Mateo. I am very grateful to her. I needed this book!

***"...she [Ravitch] seems like a voice of reason in a madhouse, reminding us how the Business Model is inappropriate to education, since education is about communities, not markets; cooperation, not competition. How did we ever forget these things?..."***

Diane Ravitch doesn't seem so conservative to me now. Rather, she seems like a voice of reason in a madhouse, reminding us how the Business Model is inappropriate to education, since education is about communities, not markets; cooperation, not competition. How did we ever forget these things?

It's easy to do. When everyone around you is using the same jargon, it's easy to think like they do. Diane Ravitch tells how she herself was swept up for a time with the market-inspired ideology of choice and accountability. She served as Assistant Secretary of Education

during the first Bush Administration. She helped launch the national voluntary standards movement, only to see it "hijacked" by the testing movement. Then, when high-stakes testing became the measurement instrument of No Child Left Behind, Diane Ravitch became one of its most passionate critics.

She writes about how inadequate standardized tests are. They only measure basic skills that can be quantified. They don't measure all the important things that an educated person needs to know. She writes:

"Yet at the same time that scores go up, the youngsters may be ignorant of current events, the structure of our government and other governments, the principles of economics, the fundamentals of science, the key works of literature of our culture and others, the practice and appreciation of the arts, or the major events and ideas that have influenced our nation and the world....And so we may find that we have obtained a paradoxical and terrible outcome: higher test scores and worse education."

She also has some choice things to say about the big foundations that promote educational

reform. "The Billionaire Boys' Clubs," she calls them. When the Gates Foundation and the Broad Foundation fund the arts, they don't tell artists how to paint. But when they fund education--they tell teachers how to teach, and principals how to run their schools.

She tells the story of school district reorganization experiments that took place under authoritarian superintendents in New York City and San Diego during the 90's and early 00's. Neither of those experiments produced the desired outcomes, but they certainly closed a lot of schools, angered parents, and drove veteran teachers into early retirement. Reading about them, I begin to understand some of the things that have been going on in FSUSD. Nothing happens in a vacuum.

In a chapter called, "What Would Mrs. Ratliff Do?" she recalls her own favorite high school English teacher--a truly inspirational woman who wielded a red pencil like a laser-gun and hardly ever gave an A

grade. Sadly, Mrs. Ratliff would be hopelessly out of step with current "data-driven" pedagogical trends, since she never gave a multiple choice test, nor taught her students any test-taking strategies other than to study hard and learn how to explain yourself. "I believe Mrs. Ratliff was a great teacher, but I don't think she would have been considered 'great' if she had been judged by the kind of hard data that is used now."

Surprisingly enough for an ex-Bush administration official, Diane Ravitch has good things to say about teachers unions, reminding us how they protect our right to think, speak, and teach without fear. Though they are often accused of favoring the interests of adults over children, unions actually serve to empower the adults who are closest to the children and know them best--us! And as far as "student outcomes" are concerned, Southern states, where teachers' unions have historically been weakest, have always had the poorest student performance on national

examinations. In the final chapter, "Lessons Learned," Diane Ravitch makes a passionate argument for the value of our profession and for the vitality of the public school system which, for all its failings, has been central to the development of our nation and the standards-bearer of its ideals. She asks us to reawaken our educational vision, and to make a comprehensive liberal arts education our goal. Though she acknowledges that it may be impossible for us to reach consensus about a national curriculum, she calls upon the states to ensure that every child receives an education that includes history, geography, literature, the arts, the sciences, civics, foreign languages, health, and physical education. "Every state should have a curriculum that is rich in knowledge, issues, and ideas, while leaving teachers free to use their own methods, with enough time to introduce topics and activities of their own choosing."

I'll say "aye" to that!



## CONTRACT WAIVER

Is your school interested in a new and exciting reform proposal which modifies teacher's working conditions as described in our contact? Did you know that restructuring is not just for collaborative planning? Article 31 (page 93) of the F-SUTA contract offers a way to waive or modify contract provisions in order to meet the needs of students and teachers at each school site.

The process begins by obtaining the Restructuring Proposal from the FSUSD website. Look under Frequent Links and you will find the [District Restructuring Proposal](#). This document takes you step by step through the process.

Be sure to complete all of the requirements on the Restructuring Plan Checklist. This will help to ensure that you have a complete package for consideration. Send the completed proposal to Laurie Parrish at Oakbrook Elementary, and I will schedule an appointment for the committee to meet and review your package. A representative from the site must present their proposal at the assigned District Restructuring Committee Meeting. Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of every month. Feel free to contact me at Oakbrook Elementary if you have any specific questions about restructuring.

**By Laurie Parish, *Restructuring Chair***

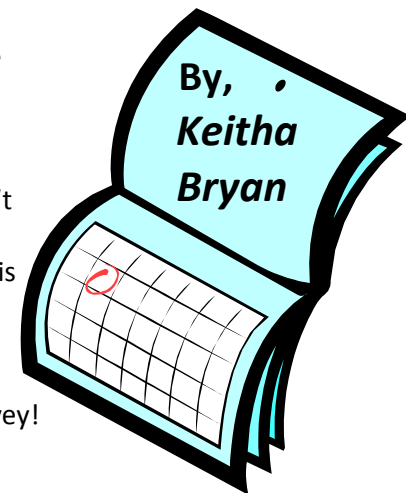
# CALENDAR COMMITTEE

The calendar committee will be meeting with the district at the end of September. You will soon be receiving a survey to provide us with your input regarding the calendar for the 2011-2012 school year. To help you with this, we want to give you a better insight to the parameters we work under to prepare the calendar each year.

First, let us start with the winter and spring breaks. We know some of you have a dislike for the length of the winter and spring breaks we agreed to. However, in preparing the calendar last year it was agreed that these breaks would remain the same for 2 years to give the staff and students time to adjust and experience these breaks. In the 2011 – 2012 school year we will revisit these breaks to see if adjustments will be necessary for the 2012 – 2013 school year. In addition to the winter and spring breaks the committee is responsible in making sure that the following parameters are met from our contract: 2 Prep days at the beginning of school, 2 days for report card prep (currently these are at the middle and high schools) at the end of the semesters, the 2 days for elementary are currently being used to conduct conferences. \*\*According to the D.A.M. sheets you filled out last year, for the 2011 – 2012 calendar year the 2 days will be used for the first and second trimester report cards this year and 8 of the minimum days will be used for conferences. The last minimum day is on the last day of school. There will be no minimum day for the third trimester report cards.\*\*

There are 9 minimum days at the elementary level which currently are used for conferences, report cards, end of school (middle and high schools do not receive these). However, they receive minimum days to make up for night time activities that go above and beyond the required 16 hours of adjunct time. The calendars are built with 184 work days, 180 of those days must be student contact days. We also place back to school nights for all levels to avoid conflicts. In addition, the semesters are supposed to be divided so that they are as equal as possible and the first semester ends by winter break. We also place days to maximize the ADA money, avoid breaks that would interfere with testing, make sure holidays are placed appropriately, try to get out of school early in June and start school at a time that everyone can agree upon.

Finally, we have to take into account the provisions of the CSEA contract, and administrative needs. We don't want to work on days that our secretaries, paraprofessionals, maintenance and custodial staff do not work. As you can see there is quite a bit to think about when we build the calendars, and we know that we can't please everybody. However, we hope this helps when filling out your survey. Next month... the results of the survey!



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## Grievance Report

Arthur Aronsen, *F-SUTA Grievance Chair*

The year has started and the rush to meet the needs of the students and getting out of PI status is number one on everyone's mind. However, many times there is little collaboration.

Along with this effort is administration's desire to do it "my way" without any consultation with teachers and consideration for the contract that we have signed. We mutually agreed to work under this contract, which takes precedence over LEA and T4S.

In addition, there are two areas in the contract that administrators find easy to convince someone to violate by usually saying "it's in best interest of the students".

The first area is the one about lesson plans (**Article 10.3.7.e.3**). According to our contract and the arbitration that was done a few years ago, teachers have the right to control the lesson plans as to how they are written and what is put in them, as they are for the teachers use, not the administrators. Yes, they can be used on evaluations, but as designed by the teacher, not the administrator. The administration may not demand that you include anything in YOUR lesson plans, as they are YOUR lesson plans. (**Article 10.3.7.e.3**) So, when you are being told to "include everything but the kitchen sink"

*(Continued on next page...)*

*Grievance Report Continued...*

into your lesson plans, that is only a suggestion, not direction, as YOU control what is in your lesson plan and never give that up.

The Ed. Code does not demand that teachers write specific types of Lesson Plans. The Contract does not demand it either, therefore, neither can the Administration. Please let me know if this is happening at your site, as it is a violation of our contract (some sites have more problems with this than others).

The second area that is popping up is the one where the administration uses department heads (team leaders) as “quasi administrators”. Department heads (team leaders) **are not** “quasi administrators”.

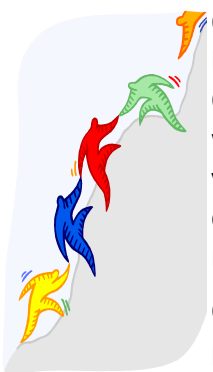
The department head’s responsibility is to convey to the department’s teachers, the site administrators ideas, budget guides, etc. Department heads (team leaders) are not to engage in any form of evaluation or evaluative endeavors. This means that

department heads cannot demand that teachers write lesson plans in a specific way, nor can they send a teacher down within their department to see what another teacher is doing and report back. **(Article 10.3.h & 10.h.4)** It is not within the department head’s scope of duty to do this, as one teacher shall not evaluate another. Department heads can provide teachers with pacing guides and other things that may provide information for the teacher to use in planning their lessons, but cannot demand it be used.

It is also the department heads’ (team leaders) responsibility to provide the administration with the concerns and opinions of the teachers within their departments. If they are not doing that, then the department head and site administration might not understand PLC and collaborative management.

We have worked hard to obtain our teachers’ rights to control their lesson plans...do not let this slip away.

## LET’S GET ORGANIZED F-SUTA!



One of the main goals of organizing is to connect every teacher in the district with union leadership. We need your help in representing all our teachers in the best possible way. One place is at rep council. It is a great group of dedicated people who try to make the working conditions of all teachers the best it can be. If your school doesn’t have a rep, volunteer for the job. It is hard work but very rewarding. There are many other F-SUTA committees that need your help too. These committees do make a difference. Contact me if you are interested.

Organizing is planning to have small group meetings at each school to create a teacher plan for school reform. We often are upset at what the state and federal government and the school district make us do to improve student learning. We want to tell the ‘powers that be’ what we teachers think works. Let’s be proactive. The small group meetings will be your chance to help make change.

Finally, if you haven’t already, join list serve today. You can keep up with what’s happening in Sacramento in regards to education. Keep informed of the latest news from F-SUTA. To join, send an email from your home computer to [listservfuta@comcast.net](mailto:listservfuta@comcast.net). Please include your full name and your school. Thanks to all of you for your hard work. Your dedication makes teaching such a noble and productive profession.

– Earl Handa, F-SUTA Vice President



### RECENT ARRIVALS!

MANY OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE WELCOMED NEWBORNS IN RECENT MONTHS. OUR CONGRATULATIONS GO OUT TO THEM ALL! HERE ARE SOME OF OUR NEW MOMMIES!

**FROM K.I. JONES - SHADIA JONES, MICHELLE WARD, AND TINA REACH**

**FROM CRYSTAL – BETH ROBINSON**

**FROM CORDELIA HILLS – DINA CHUN-REMICK**

**FROM FAIRVIEW – KRISTEN JONES**



DO YOU HAVE AN IMPORTANT EVENT THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHERS? FROM ENGAGEMENTS TO GRADUATIONS, HERE IS THE PLACE TO SHINE! LET US KNOW SO WE CAN CELEBRATE YOUR HAPPINESS! 😊

SEND YOUR ANNOUNCEMENTS TO STACIE RYAN AT [LILREADER1@YAHOO.COM](mailto:lilreader1@yahoo.com)