

A Negotiations Update to the Membership of the
Paterson Education Association

January 27, 2009

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While Nero Fiddles, Rome Burns ...

Or something like that. After thirteen months of negotiations, the parties continue to s-l-o-w-l-y inch towards a settlement, mainly upon the insistence of Fact-Finder Martin Scheinman to cut excessive proposals away from the “priority” issues.

The **District continues to insist** that you, the members of the P.E.A. help to bail itself out of the fiscal mess in which they find themselves by paying **1 ½ % of your salary towards their health benefit costs. They indicate this is their top priority.** Your Team has held firm in our conviction that Paterson will not be the first large urban local to pay into health benefits.

Yet, they ignore the fact that millions of dollars were thrown away on excessive overtime payments to the Absolute security guards; they ignore the bloated administrative ranks that the Glascoe administration began and the State has allowed to continue, and, by the way, they have not even attempted, as far as we know, to recoup the \$76K gift they gave to their phony curriculum writer for plagiarizing other curricular efforts even though their every move is watched over by a state appointed fiscal monitor. They also ignore that they **saved millions** of dollars when the insurance plan was unilaterally switched from the State Health Benefits Plan to the School Employees Plan. Even worse, when they saved that money, they apparently chose to set aside none of that money for employee raises, and now claim there is no money for us!

The District Team has stated that the health benefit demand comes from the Governor and the Commissioner. We’ll see about that. But that doesn’t help resolve the log jam we face.

P.E.A. has tried to impress upon the fact-finder that there are issues remaining that are important to us because of the heartless actions of the Glascoe administration. For example, there was no excuse for the denial of bereavement days for a step-relative who passed away, BUT, now that they did this, we all face the consequences.

Scheinman has realized that there are proposals on the table that should have been resolved months ago. As a result, he has directed that the parties sit down together, without his presence, to try to get some of these issues resolved. The parties have agreed to meet during the day at the P.E.A. office on February 23 to try once more to deal with some of these issues. **The fact-finding session scheduled for February 23 at the Board offices at 5:00 pm, with the fact-finder present, will be held as well.**

Our job becomes more difficult as the frigid weather brings complaints of lack of heat in the buildings, and Glascoe appointees try to demoralize the staff every single day. These diversions force us to spend precious time on these matters instead of being able to focus on their shenanigans at the table. BUT, we will not be forced to ignore the problems that face you in your classrooms every day. We will support you in your efforts to teach our students, and in doing so, make Paterson into a “real” school system after the three years of disaster that was the Glascoe administration.

We will not stand for the further demise of the Paterson Public Schools by those who want to make us the scapegoats for their inability to lead and succeed. **They have fiddled here for 18 years. Paterson is “burning”. It’s time to get a contract that we can accept, and put the fires out!**

Your continuing support of our efforts at the table is most appreciated.