

FOCUS

ON JERICHO
TEACHERS
AND THEIR ISSUES

May 2007



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District Wide Meeting (with editorial comments)

By Denise Ryder

Our district wide JTA meeting held at Cantiague on Wednesday, May 30 was well attended. As a sign of solidarity we were all encouraged to wear our blue "happy" shirts and I am pleased to report that the majority of us did!

Negotiations Our negotiations team has met with the Superintendent. Some feel the district is dragging its feet and things are progressing too slowly, while others feel more positive. In other districts salary increases have been between 2% and 4.5% (the average being 3.3% - 3.5%). Most settlements involve some concession in health insurance in the form of increased employee contribution (districts seem to be looking for 20%), others have agreed to more professional development, extending the work day, and even *adding* a day. It would probably be in our best interests to

roll over the contract.

Our contract expires on July 1. Someone asked what if we don't settle? If we don't settle, everything stays the same. The contract is still in force as is (this is because of the Triborough Agreement which protects provisions in an expired contract until a new pact is in place). Changes are retroactive.

R&Ds Why are the R&Ds taking so long!!! The applicants did *their* thing...the Curriculum Committee did *it's* thing, the Superintendent did *his* thing...but the Board decided to do a *new* thing! They have decided to read all of the proposals. If I'm not mistaken a school board is supposed to set policy. A superintendent is supposed to make sure the policies are carried out. It was the Curriculum Committee's job to recommend

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FOCUS

is the monthly newsletter of the Jericho Teachers Association. We welcome input, articles, viewpoints, and questions from all members. If there is an issue you would like to see addressed or if you would like to contribute please e-mail Denise Ryder, at ryder@jerichoteachers.org

District Wide Meeting *continued*

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the proposals. The bottom line is this: **DO NOT START ANY WORK UNTIL YOU RECEIVE OFFICIAL NOTICE THAT YOUR PROPOSAL WAS ACCEPTED.**

Courses (Professional Development/ERO) Lots of “issues” were brought up concerning course offerings and the ERO system. Although it’s a good idea, I’m not sure if ERO is really ready for prime time. Here are some of the problems we experienced...

We are not able to sign-up for courses that have a part I and a part II offered in the same summer (because technically you have not met the pre-requisite at the time of registration). That needs to be fixed. If you took a course, pre-ERO, that was a prerequisite for another course, the system has no way of knowing you were qualified and locked you out. Not ERO’s fault, but that also needs to be fixed. Another problem is that you can’t be on the wait list for two courses that have overlapping hours/days. ERO needs a little tweaking but it’s still more fair than the old way. Nothing is ever perfect. A big thank you goes out to Laura Staton for handling all of the issues with grace and style!

Regarding the courses... What I am about to say may seem like I am on *their* side, but my intention is to give everyone a little perspective.

Most of us will agree, professional development is a good thing. It can be an opportunity for us to learn something new or to help us keep current. And whether we are taking courses to learn or to keep current, or just to be able to check off that “Highly Qualified” box on the BEDS forms, there’s always that positive effect it has on our salaries!

The opportunity we have in Jericho to take *free* in-service courses is unparalleled. If there is another district that offers more than we do, I’d like to know. A total of twenty nine courses are being offered. There are 302 JTA members and around 610 spots (this is my rough estimate - most courses take 20, one could take up to 50). True, not everybody can take every course, but with twice as many seats as there are, um, members, in theory each of us should have been able to take two courses. One of the problems is that

we are so concerned with getting closed out, or worrying that the class we really want will get cancelled and we won’t get into another, many of us sign up for two or three and sit on waiting lists for still more! Last year I neglected to log in at the precise moment the database was opened. I was closed out of everything I was interested in and everything that fit into my schedule. I could have taken something I didn’t want to take. I could have rearranged some things. I could have proposed something of my own to fulfill my 15 hour obligation (yes, this is a possibility, read Article IV,

letter B on page 7 of the contract). I didn’t do that either. This year I logged on at exactly 6:30 pm and signed up for one of the 9 classes that counted toward the 2006-2007 15 hour requirement, and then I signed up one more course to fill this year’s requirement.

Here’s something else to keep in mind: of the 302 of us signing up for in-service courses, only 165 of us *have to* take district sponsored courses (that’s how many are MA+75 and above). The rest have more possibilities. And we all have the “choose your own adventure” option.



Jackson teachers wear their blue shirts to show solidarity.
L to R: Laurie Oddo, Cathy Rosh, Fran Rivera, and Martha Bertolini.

As if having free in-service courses that teach us new things, keep us current, guarantee that we are “Highly Qualified,” or just help us advance up the pay scale, isn’t enough, we also have the opportunity to teach courses. I hate to have to keep saying this but there is *nothing* in our contract that says that the administration has to select in-service course teachers from our faculty. Of the twenty nine courses being offered, eighteen will be taught by our colleagues, eleven by outside consultants.

All of the courses offered except one count toward 90, but even that one can be used to fulfill the 15 hour requirement.

The untimely notification for courses that did not run was unfortunate, as was the seemingly random decision to cut others out. Notification that your proposal for a course was not accepted was sent the day before the catalog came out. Some teachers had already started creating their courses when they were notified it was a no-go. When the catalog did (finally) come out and the other teachers saw their names listed, that’s how they found out their proposals had been accepted. That “system” certainly needs improvement.

(Continued on page 3)

District Wide Meeting *continued*

Dues Increase Our dues will be going up \$19 next year. This increase is due to raises in AFT and NYSUT dues which are paid out of our JTA dues.

Unity Days We are asking everyone to please wear blue every Wednesday until the end of the year (June 6, 13, and 20) to show our solidarity. It gets noticed!

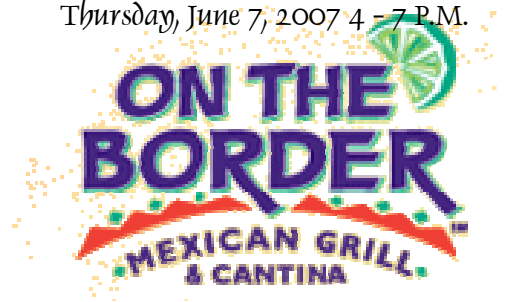
Personal E-mails for JTA Communications Maryann reminded us that when you send messages to, for example "Jericho Teachers" or most other groups of teachers, using our school e-mail, administrators, Curriculum Associates, and a whole host of other interested parties are secretly part of that group. Also keep in mind that everything is backed up nightly and saved. We tried collecting everybody's personal e-mail address for "official" JTA communications once before. The effort was moderately successful (if memory serves, Jackson cooperated 100%). I am going to try to set up a listserv, which is like a big mailing list which everybody will have to subscribe to (by answering an e-mail).

JTA Jackets The New Enterprise jacket (or as many referred to it, "the long one that covers your butt") received the most votes. We will be putting out a big order ASAP. It would be a Fashionista's dream if we could have them for homecoming!

Blood Drive There will be a blood drive on Wednesday, June 13 in the Sam Springer Gym (HS/MS campus). Every drop counts!

End of Year Celebration

Thursday, June 7, 2007 4 - 7 P.M.



1401 Broadway Mall, Hicksville

In our continuing efforts to satisfy *everyone*, we designed our End of Year Celebration to be affordable (a bargain at \$25), convenient (in nearby Hicksville), and as close to "right after school" as possible (4-7). The good news and the bad news are the same news; "well attended" quickly translated into sold out! What to do?!

For those of you who are unable to *officially* attend, our advice to you is to go to the bar, buy yourself a fancy drink, and give JTA Linda a "contribution" toward the gifts - \$5 or \$10, whatever you want - just don't ask for change!

See you there!

Chew On This (or How to Get an Attendance Policy the Hard Way)

By Denise Ryder

A colleague was recently speaking (read "venting") to me about attendance. The number of absences a particular student had was exorbitant, especially for a half year course (I hate to mention that the number was in the 20s)! I [innocently?] inquired. OF COURSE attendance is addressed in the Board Policy Manual (FYI all 446 pages are available at: http://www.jerichoschools.org/BoE/JERICO_POL20070420.pdf) HOWEVER it has a built in escape clause! It's not a clause, actually, not even a phrase - it's a word, and the word is...*may*. Here is the policy:

The District believes that classroom participation is related to and affects a student's performance and grasp of a subject matter and, as such, is properly reflected in a student's final grade.

Any student absent from a class more than 15% of the time, for any reason, (including legal and illegal absences), **may** not receive credit for the course. Generally, more than 27 absences in a full year course **may** result in loss of credit.

For courses meeting ½ year or 1/4 year, the same policy will apply. The 14th absence in a ½ year course and a

7th absence in a 1/4 year course **may** result in loss of credit and the procedures followed will use ½ and 1/4 of the absences, respectively, as guidelines.

Transfers and students re-enrolling after having dropped out will be expected to attend 85% of the scheduled class meetings during their time of enrollment. The procedures followed will be prorated according to their possible number of class meetings.

And we all know, where there's *may*, there's a **may not**. If you get caught exceeding the speed limit you get a ticket. Could an instance arise that you get caught exceeding the speed limit and you do not get a ticket? Good reasons for going 90 in a 30 are few and far between, but they do exist. Well written laws (and policies) are appreciated by all. On the occasion that a student has extenuating circumstances that cause him or her to miss one too many classes, **an** exception could be made. Right now what we have is all exceptions and no rules.

Maybe some real attendance statistics would make this point clearer. OK high school teachers...start your engines!

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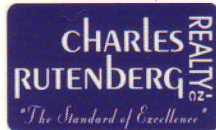


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Wanted

Baby or kid's furniture for our new addition due in August. Any leads please contact Jim Shotter in the High School



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