

FOCUS

ON JERICHO TEACHERS

AND THEIR ISSUES

March 2008

President's Message for March

By Maryann Risi

March Madness in more ways than one...excessing teachers, duty questions, medical leave questions, period coverage pay questions... an Exec. Board's job is never done. We are people who thrive on activity and ever watchful of the next hint of impending doom. This month has been particularly daunting as we work feverishly to try to find ways to save jobs while

still accommodating the district's requirement to keep its budget within certain limits. This process is a lot like negotiating. We sit at the table and try to make suggestions that we both can live with. The JTA is also reaching out to other districts for both creative ideas and elementary openings. We have talked with the presidents of other locals and, more often than not, we are finding that they are in the same boat and its leaking! We find ourselves in

tenuous times as we watch our elementary population shrink to the lowest levels in recent memory. In order to be forewarned, we have asked for the seniority lists for all departments. We will share these at a future meeting so everyone will know where they stand as we watch where the growth pattern (or lack of it) guides the hiring practices of the district. Be assured we are working to protect your positions.

Some Notes on Seniority

By Denise Ryder

The day the February Focus went to print I learned even more teachers than we had feared were being excessed. For the first time in over twenty years we are experiencing such a drastic decrease in our student population at the elementary level that teachers in Jericho are losing their jobs.

To those of you who are viewing this as an "elementary" problem, please think again. Cuts at the elementary level extend to the middle school because the certification area being affected is K-6. There is no such thing as "building seniority."

Last June, Pete DeFina, former president of the Smithtown Teachers Asso-

ciation, wrote an article on seniority. I had contacted the STA asked permission to reprint and/or borrow heavily from his article, but hadn't got around to working on it. The following is Pete's article with additional comments from yours truly.

Seniority at a Glance

By Pete DeFina

Seniority is a very specific term under Educational Law. Simply put "Seniority rights are those rights to job security within a school district based on the length of actual paid service within a specific tenure area." Seniority rights apply equally to both tenured and probationary teachers.

The primary use of seniority is that it's the sole criterion that districts may use to

determine the order in which teachers are excessed in the event that teaching position (s) are abolished within a tenure area.

Note from DR: If you are wondering if there is a "seniority list," there is. A teacher's place on the list can change, sometimes drastically because of unpaid leaves of absence, such as maternity. One of our colleagues who is on the list to be excessed just dropped multiple places on the seniority list due to her unpaid leave. This is why it's important to come to the Union office to plan things out first, then go to the District.

Accruing seniority according to Education Law

While most teachers gain seniority credit within a sin-

(Continued on page 2)

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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

Research and Development Grant Funding Process 2008 - 2009

By Denise Ryder

In faculty meetings across the district, the Curriculum Committee announced and explained the funding for Research and Development Grants for 2008-2009. As you all know, a portion of the overall total of R & D money will be going towards offsetting our increased health insurance contribution, thus effecting the overall number of days available for projects.

What exactly is an R&D? Here's my own explanation, not an official "district" definition... I'd first say it's a creative endeavor. It's a project that you work on, outside of school, that will really enhance something you teach. It could be collaborative or interdisciplinary. A good R&D is time consuming to plan and to do. It should be "above and beyond" what you could accomplish during the course of your regular teaching assignment. It must be unique from existing projects or commercial programs. An R&D can be used to develop curriculum for a new course. It can also be used to address a mandatory change in your curriculum. In other words, it doesn't *have to* be creative, it can also be necessary.

The process is broken down into three phases.

Phase I is the non-competitive phase. Two thirds of the total number of days available is divided between the faculty members that express interest by completing a "Letter of Intent to Participate." If everybody participated, everybody would get 2.5 days. Since not everyone applied, the actual number of days to be granted became 3. Phase I proposals are due by Tuesday, April 1, 2008 (elementaries to principals, MS/HS to CAs). Completed Phase Is are due by October 10, 2008.

Editor's note: Phase I R&Ds are *non-competitive* but not *guaranteed*. Put it this way...if you propose something really...um...stupid... it *will* get denied.

Phase II is the competitive phase. One-third of the days are available for "creative, mandated, or necessary" research and development grants. A formal application must be completed. READ THE APPLICATION CAREFULLY. The application is due to CAs by April 11, 2008, to Principals by April 16, 2008, and to Dr. Hunderfund by Monday, April 28. On or about May 19, 2008, faculty members will be notified about funding.

Editor's note: Actually, this is more of a **Curriculum Committee member's note:** Get all the signatures. Use the right colored paper. Make the deadlines. Be clear. Sweat the small stuff. The small stuff is the easiest way we (the committee members) can "thin the herd." This is the competitive phase. We have less days to grant so be brilliant in your writing and reasonable in the number of days you request. Here's another piece of advice. Letter B of the application calls for "a brief description and/or outline of your plan, and the specific timeline (e.g. 2 days for research, 2 days for compilation, 1 day for word processing and 1 day for editing, etc.) necessary to achieve the project's objectives/expected learning outcomes." Two days to compile, one day for word processing, and one day for editing is a lot. That phrase is probably left over from typewriter days, before word processing and e-mail and spell check. And for goodness sake, don't multiply those days by the number of applicants!

Phase III is the "clean up phase." If there are any days left over, "mini" R&Ds can be offered.

Editor's note: I wouldn't count on this phase occurring.

Some Notes on Seniority *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

gle tenure area, it is possible, by teaching 40% or more in two tenure areas at the same time, to accrue seniority in both tenure areas simultaneously. For example, if a teacher teaches 3 classes of health and 2 classes of physical education for 8 years, that individual would have 8 years of seniority in both the health and physical education tenure areas.

There are also specific tenure areas, such as science and LOTE, which could be affected by individual teachers' certification within his/her tenure area. For example, you could not transfer the least senior LOTE teacher to a building that needs a French teacher if that person is only certified to teach Spanish. You would have to transfer the least senior teacher

Dates to Remember

District Wide Meeting
May 7 at Catiague, 4 pm
End of Year Celebration
June 12 from 4pm-7pm
Jericho Terrace, Mineola

who is certified to teach French. The contract allows for that type of exception.

Teachers who leave one tenure area to begin a new probationary position in a different tenure area have their seniority frozen in the old tenure area and they begin to accrue seniority anew in their new tenure area. If the teacher returns to his/her old tenure area at some point, they resume their accrual of seniority from the point at

(Continued on page 3)

Some Notes on Seniority *continued*

(Continued from page 2)

which it was frozen.

What does not count toward seniority credit?

Time spent on unpaid leaves of absence does not gain seniority credit. This includes unpaid sick or personal leave, leaves for "good cause" or "no cause," and FMLA based leaves of absence. Also, there is no "seniority" for part time teaching. The only exception to this part-time rule under Education Law is if someone taught part-time kindergarten when the District had a half-day program. Those Kindergarten teachers will then accrue "seniority."

Seniority credit prior to probationary/tenured status:

All full-time employment as a regular substitute prior to being appointed as a probationary teacher is required to be counted toward a teacher's seniority status when probationary status is achieved. There is no limit to credited service attained as a regular substitute. This is different from, and should not be confused with Jarema Credit,

which allows for up to 2 years of regular sub service to be counted as probationary time served toward tenure.

Bumping Rights

If an excessed teacher happens to have frozen seniority based on prior service in another tenure area they may bump back into that former position, assuming that there are other less senior teachers on the list. If that occurs the least senior teacher on that other list is then excessed and placed on a Preferred Eligible List.

Another Maternity Leave Question

Q: If you take maternity leave from May until the end of the school year but come back in September. Would you be docked time on the seniority list? In other words ...do you lose seniority time over the summer? I was also wonderingdo you lose any seniority time the 6 weeks that you can take off?

A: Summers no longer count, only the *unpaid* leave. If you go out June 1st and use 3 weeks of sick days and return in September, no days are taken from your seniority.

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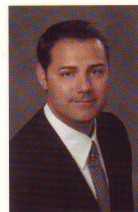
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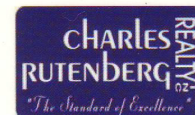
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