

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS for 2012



1. With the power of the vote, our Legislators will feel the results of the consequences of their bills.
2. Our School Board will know that the teachers who made Seminole County great are at their breaking point.
3. Our administrators will take responsibility for the stressful climates that are in their schools.
4. I will face our community leaders to let them know that teachers do vote.

What a year of mandates and changes! Teacher evaluations, PLCs, Kagan, NCUST, Skyward, and plan books, for examples, have swamped us and stressed us to the max. As we sit at the bargaining table, all parties are concerned about keeping good teachers and managing the consequences of SB 736. Meanwhile, teachers are feeling the pain of the legislation every day in their pocketbooks and in their classrooms.

The new legislative session is going to be starting in January, and we have been told "they are going after teachers and unions again." Even with Governor Scott saying he wants to put more money back into the education budget, it is not enough. Why do I feel politicians get elected and spend their first year demoralizing teachers and cutting education to the bone? Then, for the next three years, they give us back a crumb at a time, saying "See, we care about education." They are counting on teachers to not remember the pain of that first year.

Knowledge is power, so do you know that the lines that identify the legislative districts are being redrawn? Since this strengthens the position of the Republican legislators, we must let both parties know how we feel.

Do you know new updates of the session will be posted on the SEA website (www.seminole-educators.org)? Keeping updated will allow us to quickly mobilize for rallies, demonstrations, campaigns, etc.

Do you know more members mean more power – in Tallahassee, at the bargaining table, and at your worksite? You are the face of teaching and the SEA, so it is your story that will move for change and engage others. Tell your story to nonmembers and build our association.

Take the time this holiday season to relax, to rest, and to recoup with your families and friends. I wish you the happiest of seasons and a joyous New Year.

K.T. Caldwell, President

Happy Holidays!



Bargaining Update

Negotiators for the SEA and SCPS have been meeting through the school year on several evenings and most recently for a full-day session on November 29th. The first goal in bargaining has been to negotiate certain impacts of SB 736, the “Student Success Act,” such as teacher evaluation and workforce reduction, while addressing a few additional issues such as involuntary transfers and the grievance procedure.

The parties have been making package proposals including all language items thus far, and while no tentative agreements have been forged officially, progress is being made on a few fronts involving observation pre-conferencing and investigations. Another full day of bargaining has been scheduled for December 19th, as your SEA team is hopeful that the language issues can be completed and set aside so the parties can consider compensation early in the new year.

...and a little about Teacher Evaluation

While the bargaining team is addressing the impact of having a new evaluation system, it is important to understand that the SCPS Teacher Evaluation Committee, comprised of 32 teachers chosen by the SEA, has been working since last Spring to provide input and feedback on the development of the new teacher evaluation form. Teachers in their first year of SCPS employment are required to be evaluated once per semester, which means that the first evaluation must be completed no later than December 23rd. Administrators have had 5 days of evaluation training for the new system thus far and teachers will be trained at the building level by their own administration prior to being evaluated.



The Teacher Evaluation Committee recommended, and the Superintendent agreed, that only 17 of the 60 indicators in the Marzano model are prioritized in the 2011-12 school year. The form this year will consist of 60% of the overall evaluation, while the other 40% (the minimum required by law) will be based upon student growth, as measured by FCAT Reading and FCAT Math scores.

For teachers who do not have students who take the FCAT or do not teach an FCAT-tested course, school-wide FCAT scores likely will be used to determine the “value-added” calculation. In future years, more tests will be created so that reliance upon the FCAT will diminish for the non-FCAT teachers and growth can be measured more fairly.

There is no question that the current evaluation system has flaws that question the validity and accuracy of student test scores being used in the evaluation process. Our state affiliate, the FEA, has filed a lawsuit against the State on the premise that these legislated changes circumvent the local bargaining process, and it remains possible that a challenge on the value-added calculation itself could materialize. Until future legislation or lawsuits modify the “Student Success Act,” the SEA Teacher Evaluation Committee and SEA Bargaining Team are working very hard to create a system that not only complies with the law but also is fair. Please stay tuned for more updates!

A+ Money?

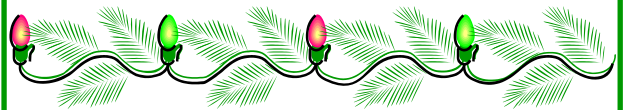
Last year, the DOE distributed A+ award money in two phases with qualifying elementary and middle schools receiving their awards in early fall and the qualifying high schools receiving their awards in January. For the current year, the Department has decided to have one calculation and one distribution for the 2011-12 fiscal year. This single distribution will occur after high school grades are reported later this month.



The reason for the change is to account for the likely increase in the number of qualifying high schools. Waiting until all school grades have been calculated will allow the Department of Education to prorate accurately the available funds.

The District Lottery and School Recognition Program allocation is funded at \$119.5 million. These funds are available for School Recognition awards in an amount of \$70 per student in each qualifying school. If the Department information is correct and more high schools qualify for the program, the amount per student would be prorated to slightly less than \$70 per FTE to cover the increase in the number of qualifying schools.

Funds are to be used for nonrecurring bonuses to the faculty and staff, nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials, or for temporary personnel to assist the school in maintaining or improving student performance. The school's staff and SAC must decide to spend these funds on one or any combination of these three purposes. If the school's staff and SAC decide to provide bonuses, they determine who is to receive them and how much each person will receive.

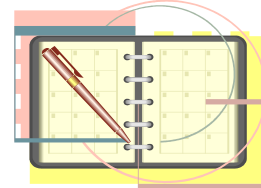


In the spirit of the Holiday season, SEA, in conjunction with Seminole UniServ, again this year is making a donation to *Families in Transition*. Instead of using funds allocated for "traditional" holiday cards, gift cards are being purchased for needy families in Seminole County whose children attend SCPS. Also, SEA Board members are personally purchasing gift cards on behalf of SEA for Families in Transition.



Families in Transition

Important Dates



December 13, *School Board Meeting*

December 15, *SEA Fac Rep Meeting*

January 10, *School Board Meeting*

January 12, *SEA Board Meeting*

January 24, *School Board Meeting*

January 26, *SEA Fac Rep Meeting*