



November 13, 2008

www.feamembers.org

Dear Colleagues,

We are now twelve weeks into the 2008-09 school year and I hope that you have settled in well thus far. At the time of this newsletter, we are getting ready for Finals in December as the first semester winds down. This edition of *The Advocate* contains three sections:

1. FEA President News
2. FEA Local News
3. CTA News relevant to our FEA local.

FEA President News

New FEA President

As you know, as of July 1, 2008 I started my term as FEA President. I am honored to serve in this role; I look forward to serving the membership. Although I cannot guarantee we will always agree with one another, or with CTA as the larger organization, I have and will continue to dedicate myself to working with all FEA members to maintain our strength as a professional association.

Thanks to our new **webmaster Jon Fey**, our association's website, www.feamembers.org, has been updated and on it you will find the names of each site's FEA representation. Although each school has dedicated and thoughtful site representation, I always welcome questions, comments and concerns. If you should ever feel the need, please feel free to contact me via email (joseph_kelly@fuhd.org) or you may call me on my cell phone: (408) 835-9181.

Upcoming FEA President Site Visits

November 17-20, I will be visiting your staff rooms during lunch to be available for questions, concerns, or just general conversation. The times & days are listed below:

Monday, Nov 17 – FHS 11:10am-11:50am & CHS 12:25pm-1:05pm

Tuesday, Nov 18 – HHS 11:55am-12:35pm

Wednesday, Nov 19 – LHS 12:45pm-1:25pm

Thursday, Nov 20 – MVHS 12:35pm-1:15pm

FEA Local News

Financial Update

As you may be aware, the state budget is in question yet again, with the recently approved budget already in a deficit of billions of dollars. The Governor's proposed mid-year cuts would affect all public school districts significantly. Even though our district is "basic aid", meaning that our finances come from local property taxes, it is quite likely that basic aid districts will have to take the same dollar hit that revenue districts will take. At this time, it is too early to tell just how drastic the financial cuts will be, and how we will be impacted. With that said, we need to remember that we will not have final revenue allocation until the early months of 2009. FEA will continue to work with the District to shape long-range strategies that will help ensure competitive salaries, preserve programs and at the same time address growing facilities needs. The district will be working with its consultants starting this spring to plan the next Parcel Tax campaign, and our help as FEA will be greatly needed. Once that process begins, FEA will also solicit money from CTA to support the Parcel Tax campaign on our behalf.

Medical Benefits

We have several resources to help answer any questions you might have regarding your benefits. Members may contact our health benefits broker, Allison Barrett-Smith at Vita Benefits Group at allison@vitamail.com or (650) 968-8811; you can also call our account technician Toni Mari (408) 522-2221 or Tom Avvakumovits (408) 522-2228, Coordinator of Human Resources at the District Office.

CEUs – Continuing Education Units

In June of 2007, through negotiations between our negotiating team and the district, the following language was added into the 4th revision of the 2005-2008 CBA.

Article 15 – Compensation, IV. Salary Schedule,

B. Placement and movement on the regular salary schedule,

6. Horizontal movement ... academic semester units... etc.

D. Course work that provides **Continuing Education Units** or professional growth/development hours, that are *not degree eligible* but nonetheless contribute to improved practice, skills, and knowledge, provided that such units *must be pre-approved*, that no more than two units will be credited for any single conference course, that attendance must be verified by a log sheet showing time, dates, and titles of all sessions attended, that the unit member submits a one-paragraph summary of each session describing its value, and subject to a limit of no more than 15 such units total for any unit member.

There have been many questions by our membership recently to Human Resources at the district regarding this portion of the contract. HR is checking all CEU requests diligently and pre-approval is one of the basic requirements we must meet when using CEUs for salary advancement. To be frank, this portion of the CBA was added to curtail inappropriate classes being used for salary, as that is not only unfair to other members pursuing serious studies but also hinders us as a professional organization. As an organization and professional body, we want to encourage and foster professional development and growth in our members. I encourage you all to read Article 15, IV. of our CBA carefully. You can find the current 2008-2001 CBA on our website, www.feamembers.org. Pages 108-133 are most relevant to this topic. PLEASE NOTE: this concern applies only to CEU/professional growth hours such as one might acquire at a conference or other setting, and NOT, for example, to graduate level university course units that count toward an advanced degree.

www.feamembers.org - Discussion Forum

Our e-mail system is a valuable communications tool, but not always the best avenue for airing FEA issues. We will from time to time have topics that may be of a sensitive or controversial nature, and these items are typically not best “talked out” or discussed through district email. In fact, it is in our better interests as an association to not use district email in these types of discussions. Our association website, www.feamembers.org has a discussion board forum specifically created for this purpose. At our website, you can log into the discussion forum and start a new discussion thread, or respond to an already existing thread. You can also click a box that allows you to receive an email notification when a new thread or comment is added.

The discussion forum is also a great tool to discuss CTA matters that you may or may not agree with. These are internal association discussions that should take place through our discussion forum and not through our district email.

Did you know that our FUHSD_certificated@fuhsd.org emails also go to certificate non-members such as administrators? For example, anything e-mailed to the “MVHSCertificated” list (or similar lists for the other sites) will also go to the principal, APs, and deans. Especially when expressing concerns, it is always good to be aware of your listening/viewing audience.

EL Certification

As many of you know, last year the Board of Trustees approved a Board Policy that requires all FUHSD teachers to possess EL Authorization by July 1, 2009. The policy was in response to requirements on providing proper instruction to English Language Learners set by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education following the settlements of *Williams, et al., v. State of California, et al.* Tom Avvakumovits recently sent out a reminder email to all FUHSD certificated staff outlining our options. Currently, there are about 80 of us that need this new certification. *Please note that if you are not a classroom teacher, the requirement does not apply to you. However, if you might teach in a classroom assignment, or summer school, in the future, then you need to have this certification.

School Loop

As you are aware, the district is encouraging, though not mandating as per the CBA, that our membership use School Loop as a communication tool for our students and parents. Some of our members requested that I check into our liability responsibilities as users of School Loop. The greatest area of concern was the following statement in the user agreement, "However, if we (or anyone else) suffer any damage due to the unauthorized use of your account, you may be liable." I recently sent the School Loop user agreement to Bill McMurray, our CTA Primary Contact Staff, for review. Bill reviewed the entire document and has indicated that this clause "is not onerous because a ‘reasonableness’ test under the law would, for the most part, be sufficient to handle any potential concerns." He further indicated that if a member's use came into question, CTA would definitely assist in that matter, and he said it would be highly likely the district would defend its employee as well (which I confirmed with the district), since School Loop is a tool that they are encouraging its employees to use.

CTA News relevant to our FEA Local

CTA Campaigning

As you may or may not know, there were a number of controversial propositions and candidates up for election this past November 4. CTA, being one of California's largest "Special Interest" organizations is one of the key players in the state's political process. Accordingly, the CTA State Council donated millions of dollars to different campaigns for this past election. Because of the controversial nature of some of the endorsements, many of our local FEA members have called into question how CTA chooses to use its (our) money for such endeavors. Here are a couple of things you can do:

1. Did you know that you can tell CTA not to use your fees on campaigning of any sort? On our membership application, there is a box that we can check to indicate not to use our dues for campaigning purposes. If you do not recall if you marked that box, you can fill out a new FEA membership form with that box marked and CTA will make the adjustment. If you would like a form, please inquire with your site president or association president.
2. Would you like to express your opinion to CTA, or CTA members, but are not sure how? You can submit a letter to the editor of the "*California Educator*" magazine that all CTA members receive. This is a great avenue to express your views to a large CTA audience. Refer to your recent issue of the magazine, or CTA.org, to find contact info for the publication to make your submission.

CTA Scholarship Opportunities

Did you know that the CTA, California Teachers Association, offers numerous scholarship opportunities for its members, as well as opportunities to sponsor student projects and scholarship opportunities? If not, check out CTA.org (lower right of main page) for more info including what they are and how to apply. Here is a brief list of Opportunities:

- 2009 CTA Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Education Awards Program – Group Project
(application/project deadline – January 30, 2009)
- 2009 CTA Scholarship for Members – 5 \$2500 Scholarships will be awarded
(application deadline – February 6, 2009)
*Are you planning additional college coursework?
- 2009 CTA Scholarship for Dependent Children – up to 25 \$5000 Scholarships
(application deadline – February 6, 2009)
*Do you have children heading off to college?
- 2009 NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence
(application deadline January 30, 2009)
- 2008 CTA State Gold Awards – application deadline – January 9, 2009

It's a pleasure to work on your behalf. Please let me or your Rep know if there is anything we can do to serve you better.

Sincerely,

Joe Kelly
Fremont Education Association President
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