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The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

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Fax 215-568-8270 - email (act@act1776.com) - website (www.act1776.com) **JANUARY 2022**



From the President's Desk

MUTUAL AGREEMENT IS THE KEY

On Thursday, January 13, 2022, the Secondary School System violated the Labor-Management Agreement, especially Article I, Section 8 and Article XXI, when it unilaterally promulgated a policy concerning the use of classroom cameras. The System's policy violates your fundamental rights in the workplace and changes your working conditions. In addition, after everything that you have done over the last two years to provide a quality education to your students, after putting your as well as your family's health and safety on the line every day, the System's policy dumps one more thing on your already overflowing plate.

I know you are not happy with the System's policy. However, what is more disturbing is that the System believes it has the unilateral right to fundamentally change your workplace and your working conditions without the mutual agreement of the Association, which is guaranteed by the Labor-Management Agreement.

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As I said in my January 13th letter to you, the System is attempting to get, in a breach of the contract, what it could not get through negotiations. Therefore, the Association must address the System's egregious violations of the Labor-Management Agreement through the provisions contained therein. The contract defines the rules under which you work. It prevents you from having to look over your shoulder as you go throughout your work day. It provides the means by which violations of the mutually agreed to language can be addressed. The Grievance Procedure is the mechanism by which justice can be rendered.

However, justice is not always swift. It takes time. For instance, the Association filed a grievance in September, 2020, when a teacher with at least a decade of seniority was laid off while teachers with less seniority or no seniority were hired to fill permanent positions in the System in the laid-off teacher's competency. Since the permanent position also involved the appointment of a department head, the Secondary School System argued that its right to appoint a department head superseded any rights that a laid-off teacher had to a permanent job.

This grievance worked its way through the various steps of the Grievance Procedure, finally reaching the Diocesan Appeal Board Level on November 17, 2021. After a full day of arguments, followed by many hours of deliberation, the Diocesan Appeal Board issued its decision on January 6, 2022. The Board upheld the grievance. In part, the decision reads,

"The System has the discretion and right to appoint the Department Head, but within certain limitations. the Agreement prohibits the System from hiring an employee with 0 years of seniority, i.e. a new lay teacher, while other current teachers are still within their first 3 semesters of lay off. Further, the System is prohibited from retaining a non-tenured teacher while a tenured teacher is laid off, The contract language could not be clearer. If the System is permitted to essentially bypass the seniority and tenure provisions of the Agreement, those provisions would be rendered meaningless."

While it took some time to resolve the issue, this decision shows how important it is to have a negotiated Labor-Management Agreement, especially a delineated Grievance Procedure. In the current situation, as soon as the policy concerning classroom cameras was released, the Association filed two grievances against the System. The contractual violations include the unilateral modification of the collective bargaining agreement, the change in working conditions, making rules that are not consistent with the terms of the Agreement, as well as disparate treatment and several other violations.

In the meantime, please keep in mind that the System's unilateral implementation of a policy concerning the use of classroom cameras does not bode well for the upcoming negotiations. How can any of us trust a System whose representatives, by their signature, agree to wording in Article XXI, "Any modification of this Agreement can be made only by mutual written agreement between the System and the Association." and then blatantly ignore that same mutually agreed to wording when it suits them?

The Association will update you as the grievances move through the Grievance Process.

Please continue to remain safe during this very challenging school year.

Irene

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



The following Legislative Report was submitted by ACT Legislative Representative, David Sommers, at the ACT November Executive Board Meeting held via zoom on January 20, 2022.

I. HB1332: Online Curriculum Availability

The bill would provide parents and guardians the ability to review all curriculum being taught in PA schools via online access. The information would include: course standards; course materials and texts; assessments; syllabus.

Last action: Vetoed by the governor on December 22, 2021.

II. Act 91 of 2021 (formerly HB412): Substitute Teacher Shortage

The law allows special provisions for substitute teachers for public, private, and parochial schools. Provisions include for retired teachers, inactive certificate teachers, out-of-state teachers, recent qualifying college graduates, and those with paraprofessional experience to be hired.

Last Action: The bill was signed into law on December 17, 2021.

III. SB 937: Immunization Exception

No child shall be required to be immunized for COVID-19.

Last action: Referred to the House Education Committee Dec. 14, 2021.

IV. SB931, SB932: Educational Tax Credits

In educational tax credits, further providing for definitions: "Household Income" in determining eligibility, etc.

Last action: Referred to the House Education Committee on Dec. 15, 2021.

V. HB951: Statutes of Limitations for Sexual Abuse Victims

w/ A00786 (Amendment) providing for language changes

-No change in status since October 2021.

VI. SB846: "Parental Choice Regarding Mask Mandates in School"

The bill would allow for face covering and or mask mandate opt out option.

Last action: Removed from the Senate table on Dec. 13, 2021.

"Removed from the Table" ---up for possible consideration and may be placed on the Chamber's legislative calendar at a later time.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING UPDATE

In the midst of all of the challenges that this school year has presented, the misinformation about instructional coaching being disseminated by the System continues. As the Association has said several times over the last few years, the Union has always supported instructional coaching. However, during the professional development days with the department heads, every presenter has made it very clear that instructional coaching is all about trust, and that the words “mandatory”, “evaluative”, and “disciplinary” would jeopardize the benefits of coaching for the teachers.

In addition, the two-page Instructional Coaching Policy is very clear. The Policy does not contain any language about instructional coaching being “mandatory”. Nowhere does the Policy contain any language that states you will receive negative comments on your evaluation and/or be disciplined if you choose not to be coached.

If your local administration is telling you that instructional coaching is “not optional”, that there are “consequences” for not participating, that you could be “written up” or that failure to comply will result in “progressive discipline”, **THAT INFORMATION IS NOT TRUE.**

If your administration tells you anything other than what is printed in the Instructional Coaching Policy, please get to your Senior Delegate and/or contact the ACT Office.

IT'S TIME TO START THINKING SABBATICAL!

It's time to start thinking about whether or not you want to apply.
Applications for sabbatical will be posted in each school in February.

**Applications for sabbatical leave must be submitted
no later than March 1st.**

PENSION UPDATES

For teachers new to the System in September, you will automatically be enrolled in the Archdiocese's Vanguard 403(b) plan very soon. On each pay day, a pre-tax deduction of 3% of your salary will be automatically placed in a Vanguard account with your name on it. This automatic deduction will increase 1% each school year until it reaches 6%.

Teachers also have the option of making voluntary contributions to your individual Vanguard 403(b) plan. Please see your school's accountant if you want to make voluntary contributions.

Also, for those who are currently enrolled in the Vanguard Institutional Target Retirement Funds, the expense ratio charged by Vanguard to administer these funds will be reduced from .09% to .08%.

If you have any questions about your Vanguard account, please contact a Vanguard Participant Services associate at 800-523-1188 Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 9:00 PM. You can always access your account online at vanguard.com/retirementplans.

2022 ACT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

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The ACT Executive Board & Office Staff wish all of our members a happy, healthy, and blessed new year.

2022 ACT SENIOR DELEGATES

James Vernon – Bonner/Prendergast	Tom Imburgia – Cardinal O’Hara
Lou Valenti – Archbishop Carroll	Eric Wahl – Pope John Paul II
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Anthony Perrucci – Father Judge	Frank Costantini – Bishop Shanahan
Anne Boland – Little Flower	Teresa McGill – West Catholic
Harry Olafsen – SS Neumann-Goretti	Joe Webb – Archbishop Wood

INFORMATION FROM INDEPENDENCE BLUE CROSS ON COVID19 TEST KITS

Independence Blue Cross is working diligently to implement the Biden Administration's OTC testing program, within the limited time provided. They are reviewing all the requirements and determining how they can optimize the process for members to obtain OTC COVID 19 tests without cost or to obtain reimbursement, if needed.

IBC is advising members to keep receipts for any OTC COVID 19 tests purchased on or after January 15, 2022.

We should have more information concerning OTC COVID 19 tests within the coming days. As soon as we get updated information, we will pass it along to you.

The Biden Administration is Sending Out 4 FREE Test Kits to all Households

Residential households in the U.S. can order one set of 4 free at-home tests from USPS.com. Here's what you need to know about your order:

- Limit of one order per residential address
- One order includes 4 individual rapid antigen COVID-19 tests
- Orders will ship free starting in late January

To get your free COVID19 Test Kits, go to www.usps.com/covidtest

Stay Healthy – Stay Safe

ACT WEBSITE

All teachers are asked to logon to the ACT Website (www.act1776.com) and verify your personal information. It is critical that we have your current information and that it is accurate. It is important that we have a **PERSONAL** email address for you, since Executive Board Minutes, Newsletters, and other pertinent information will be sent via email. We cannot and will not send email to a school email address.

Every teacher was provided with a username and password for the ACT Website. (New teachers will receive their logon information in an email.) If you do not have this information, please contact Ginny at the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 or email her at ginny@act1776.com and she can provide this information to you. To update your personal information, logon to the ACT Website and, in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage, click on member login. Type in your username and password and then verify the information on file. Any changes made will be sent to the ACT Office automatically.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Dental Plan: As of January 1, 2022, you and each of your family members have \$1,000 in dental benefits to use for covered services in calendar year 2022. A list of your dental benefits is listed on the ACT Website at www.act1776.com.

Medical Plan: A reminder that you will need to meet your annual \$100 individual deductible and/or \$200 family deductible for calendar year 2022. You may begin receiving bills for services requiring that a deductible be met before payment can be made. **These services include the following:** Outpatient laboratory and pathology, home health care and/or hospice, skilled nursing, chemotherapy, radiation, dialysis, outpatient Private Duty Nursing, and physician/surgeon charges that require a deductible.

Voluntary Vision Plan: For those who signed up for the Voluntary Vision Plan, your benefits became effective on January 1, 2022. You should have received a vision cards in the mail. If you are in need of ID cards for the vision plan, please contact Ginny at ginny@act1776.com.

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2021 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should be exhausted by December 31, 2021. Any funds that remain in your account after December 31, 2021 will be lost. However, this does not mean that all your eligible expenses have to be submitted by December 31, 2021. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2021. All eligible expenses for 2021 must be submitted by March 30, 2022.

Happy Retirement!

The Association of Catholic Teachers congratulates Joseph Muto on his retirement from the Secondary School System. Joe taught for forty-three years at Archbishop Ryan High School. Best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement, Joe!

2021 TAX INFORMATION

Union Dues for 2021

January 2021 – June 2021 = \$350.09
(For those who retired or resigned as of June 2021)

January 2021 – December 2021 = \$586.73

+ Rest in Peace +

“And May Perpetual Light Shine Upon Them”



Walter Belovitz, retired, St. John Neumann High School

Patricia Biello, retired, John W. Hallahan High School

Maurice “Buddy” Hamel, taught at various high schools

Michael Kenig, retired, Cardinal O’Hara High School