



CLEVELAND TEACHERS UNION

The Halle Building, 1228 Euclid Ave. Suite 600 • Cleveland, Ohio 44115 216/861-7676

fax: 216/861-4113

David J. Quolke, President

www.ctu-279.org

January 6, 2016

Quolke's Corner *Reflections in the New Year*

The end of each year is filled with all forms of media looking back at the events of the year. For educators, things are a little different, as August signifies the beginning of the new year and May is a time for reflection on the successes of another year. However, as I think about the year 2015 from January to December, I would be remiss if I did not look back and note many of its successes.

Most recently has been the celebration of the newly-announced CMSD preschool classrooms that earned the top 5-star rating, as ranked by Ohio's 5-Star Step Up to Quality preschool rating system. It involves a rigorous process to earn this rating: curriculum in place and using it, licensing requirements and more, community involvement, evaluating use of classroom space and how to improve it. The four newest classrooms to earn the 5-Star ranking are: Mary B. Martin, Miles, Newton D. Baker, and Willson. These schools join Adlai Stevenson, A.J. Rickoff, Anton Grdina, Charles Mooney, Memorial, and Tremont. About every six months, the state descends on four to six schools in CMSD to visit and review preschool classes in the Step Up to Quality rating system and issue a final star rating. These 5-Star ratings would not be possible without the paraprofessionals who spend all day working with and helping students in and out of the classroom; the SLP who comes to the classroom to improve students' communication skills; the OTs and PTs who travel to schools and preschool classrooms to provide therapy in the educational environment; and the preschool teachers who do the hokey pokey and turn themselves around to do everything they can to provide an excellent preschool experience for CMSD's youngest students; and I could go on and on. Congratulations!

The State of Ohio passed a law several years ago known as the Third Grade Reading Guarantee that requires students in third grade to pass the annual state reading assessment, which has been the OAA and is now the NWEA. The cut scores for passage are established by the school district. In 2015, 86% of CMSD third graders passed with the required scores. When that school year began, only 26% of CMSD students were on track to pass, but by the end of the school year there was a 60 point gain. That is an incredible gain and one that could not be achieved without the teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers who are in the classrooms working directly with the students. It took the expertise and professional skills of the reading teachers; the one-on-one time with paraprofessionals; the interventions aided by school psychologists; the need for glasses diagnosed and sought out by the school nurses; and I could go on and on. Congratulations!

Graduation rate is one of the most significant factors highlighting the success of the school district's academic direction. The graduation rate in CMSD is at a record high (Ohio began tracking graduation rate in 1995). In 2015, CEO Gordon was invited to the White House where President Barack Obama himself highlighted CMSD's increase in graduation rate. To me, the graduation rate is one of the most significant numbers (note graduation rates are always behind--2013-14 data was released in 2015) that shows ultimate student success: a diploma that has prepared them for further education or a career. This cannot be achieved without the people in the schools and classrooms. It takes the guidance counselor attending to students individually to ensure the proper credits are

acquired; the teachers who provide excellent instruction in the classroom then at home grade endless papers and write letters of recommendations to colleges; the paraprofessionals who aid individual and small groups of learners; and I could go one and on. Congratulations!

These successes are not possible without the CTU teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers who are in the schools working elbow-to-elbow with students each and every day. The District does have the responsibility to provide competent administrative leadership and prudent financial oversight of its funds. The District has to be able to provide us the resources and conditions under which to do our jobs, yet no matter what, the bottom line is that **without the CTU teachers, paraprofessionals, and RSPs who work with our students in the classrooms and schools, this success is not possible.**

Human capital is what keeps moving the line of success forward. “The Cleveland Plan is essentially a bet on people,” the CEO stated in his State of the Schools address. “The bet is that if we have the right people in our classrooms and leading our schools, and if those educators are given the resources and autonomy to make the decisions they know are best for their students, then we will achieve our mission of high academic achievement across the District.”

We agree. **IF** we have the right people in our classrooms and leading our schools. And **IF** those educators are given the resources and autonomy to make the decisions they know are best for their students. Then, we can deliver on the promise of what the first paragraph of the Executive Summary of the Cleveland Plan states: ***“It [The Cleveland Plan] aims to create an environment that empowers and values principals and teachers as professionals and makes certain that our students are held to the highest expectations.”***

The fact is, CTU members are the educational professionals ultimately responsible for the academic successes of the District. No matter how often you hear the success of the our schools is because of “The Cleveland Plan,” we all know it is the incredible work that you and your CTU colleagues do each and every day. CTU members are “where the rubber meets the road” in the education of Cleveland’s children.

Now imagine how much better these results could be if all CTU members had administrators who truly supported us and genuinely helped to develop our unique talents as educators, as opposed to intimidating, berating, belittling, coercing, etc.

This next semester will be a challenging one, with negotiations, non-reappointments, ongoing evaluation appeals, and other issues. **I want to reiterate how difficult these negotiations will be.** Our last CBA was built on the promise of collaboration and working together to make our schools succeed. As most of our CTU members are aware, to a large extent those promises have been broken. I will touch on a number of these issues in future updates, but from our differentiated compensation system, to our TDES evaluation system, to our Corrective Action Schools, and the misuse of the 200 minutes, CMSD has chosen to pick a fight over collaboration on almost every issue. That is why the CTU is fighting for resolutions to these broken promises in the current negotiations.

Until then, I want to thank each and every one of you---the members of the CTU---for being the reason CMSD is moving forward. You’ve chosen this profession to make a difference in the lives of children. As we start a new calendar year, reflect on what you have accomplished and realize that YOU have made that difference.

In Union,
DQ