

QUOLKE'S CORNER
THE ATTENDANCE LETTER

Once again, in typical CMSD fashion - "the beatings will continue until moral improves". This week, the district sent insulting staff attendance letters out to all CTU members. Our members and others reactions to this insulting, discouraging letter has included disgust, anger, outrage, etc. In the past the district has sent letters out promoting the virtues and benefits of increased staff attendance, but this time it was different. This time it implied to everyone that they should consider contacting our EASE program (Employee Assistant Service). Worse yet, by targeting all members with a form letter - it did not matter if you lost a loved one, or are battling a serious illness, or if you were on an APPROVED leave, or if you were on maternity leave. No, their message was clear...we don't care.

I will not argue about the positive impact our members have when it comes to improving student performance. Our members are the key to the education of our students, Period. No one (including me) will argue about the virtues or benefits of increased staff attendance. In fact, there is a negotiated process in our CBA to deal with absence abuse. However, no one should argue that ANY employee on approved leave, or dealing with personal illness, or family illness or death, or on jury duty, or on parental leave, etc. should be subjected to demeaning form letters from HR.

In addition to the tone of the letter, it raises almost all the same questions from last year about accuracy. If you recall, last year when the CEO sent a letter claiming our average attendance was 89.3%. We pressed the district on the data...guess what? The records they shared with us indicated an average 94.7% attendance rate. Additionally, the 89.3% was a number from the Ohio Department of Education. No clarity ever came out on how the district or the state arrived at this number. Shortly after that, the anti-teacher union NCTQ (National Council on Teacher Quality) reported CMSD teachers had a 91.5% attendance rate and that they counted professional development as an absence in that number.

I suspect all employees, not just CTU members, got this letter and many have a similar angry response. I can only imagine, with as many out of town trips central office takes and the multiple times they pull principals and assistants out of their buildings, their attendance would "look" deplorable.

We have heard countless times how important customer service is to the CMSD. We see the efforts put in the CMSD "Communicate with Heart" campaign, and treating everyone with respect. Treating everyone with respect except for the men and women that are in the schools each day educating, counseling, healing, helping, aiding, growing our students. Talk all you want about autonomy, teacher empowerment, respect....two years into the Cleveland Plan and central office seem to be morphing back to the top down business as usual way of doing things.

As we enter a negotiations year, it would be wise to spend your \$\$ carefully.

In Union,
David