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MISSION STATEMENT: *The Canton Professional Educators' Association initiates and supports positive changes in the public school system, promotes the educational profession, and actively serves as an advocate for its members.*

COMMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT, PAUL PALOMBA

TO THOSE WHO ARE IN THE TRENCHES

F*** you b****! I ain't f***** listening to you b****! S*** my d***! Our ears have heard these phrases, while our eyes have seen unspeakable bouts of violence, and in too many cases, teachers have felt the forceful contact of a punch, a kick, or even spit. These distressing examples have no age limits, as these incidents of verbal and physical assault have occurred at all grade levels, including Pre-K.

CPEA members have noticed these types of escalating situations increase in frequency and severity, and if you have been in the District at least eight years, it has progressively intensified, with an explosion during the years of Covid. During this time, CPEA Leadership carried forward each and every concern to the four different Superintendents. We clearly and articulately implored each Administration to provide resources to help teachers deal with increased disruptions in the room, and the Administration did, in fact, provide resources.

IT DIDN'T GET BETTER

During the past 8 to 10 years, we noticed that we hired more principals; two in nearly every building, four in some middle schools, and as many as seven in high school. We noticed a substantial increase in guidance counselors, with some buildings having multiple counselors, and as many as 8 guidance counselors at McKinley. In addition, nurses were added to nearly one per building. We witnessed a massive increase in Safety and Security, evolving from a one man team to nearly 30 SRAs. The District added student success coaches, YES coordinators, Dean of Students, and police officers in buildings. We saw an expansion to alternative education, and programs such as PBIS, P4P, and Take Five, to name a few of the added resources. But it didn't get better.

INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH

Interestingly enough, if anyone has taught in the District at least 10 to 12 years, he or she can say, unequivocally, there was a time when it was only a principal and the educators in a building . . . that's it! But somehow, someday, we got through each day and still made astounding impacts in the lives of our students. To be sure, I am certainly **NOT** saying that we are better off with fewer resources. Quite the contrary, could you imagine teaching today without all of these additional resources? However, is it a fair question to ask whether we should reconsider exploring the art of complete principal(s)/staff collaboration for matters concerning student discipline? Apparently, since we were all each other had, we simply were forced to communicate. There was a much more consistent pattern of communication.

continued on the other side . . .

BUT WE KNEW

Our Negotiating Team knew that the additional resources were not enough. We also knew that Canton City Schools continued to spiral downward to become the 609th poorest school district out of the 612 districts throughout the state. At 609, the average income in Canton was \$23,183, with the Orange School District ranking first with an average income of \$101,941. Our team realized that as Canton got poorer, the symptoms of generational poverty would continue to manifest itself into our classrooms on a daily basis.

To this end, we realized that we certainly could not control poverty, so it was paramount to our team to create ample planning time for teachers to think, plan, and prepare. It was important for us to have more planning time than anyone else in the county. But we didn't stop there. We also created co-planning periods (80 minutes/week). We realized that this time could be utilized to invite parents, principals, guidance counselors, intervention specialists, or anyone else to discuss matters related to student discipline. This is a time for all educators to be free to meet with principals and discuss concerns of leniency toward severe student infractions. Please! Please! Please meet as a team and invite principals or whoever is necessary and share our concerns, questions or solutions to our supervisors. We added time in the contract for this possibility to exist.

We knew through Labor Management discussions that communication between the principals and teachers was the number one root cause of breakdowns and dissatisfaction from teachers regarding the administration of student discipline. For this reason, the co-planning periods were created to address communication breakdowns. The Board and our Association agreed that this could help.

By providing 320 minutes a week of personal planning and 80 minutes of TBT a week, we created opportunities for teachers to be away from students multiple times throughout the day to recharge, to breathe, to decompress. And in turn, these increases allowed students more opportunities to thrive in the Arts by creating two specials a day in the elementary classes, and at the same time, produce more CPEA jobs. Finally, we influenced the Administration to agree that cutting 30 minutes off of the Middle School and High School teacher day and 15 minutes off the Elementary day could have a major impact.

BUT SOME WILL SAY

Certainly some members may say it's still not enough, but no one can say our Association stood idle and did not do enough to help facilitate additional resources and the restructuring of the day to address student discipline throughout the years. Together, one conversation at a time, in each building, we should and must communicate effectively with our building administrators to find solutions to student discipline. Again, this opportunity presents itself in writing in our contract.

AND LET'S NOT FORGET

During the fall months, Lynne and I routinely met with Mr. Talbert to express our dire concerns about the mental toll that severe classroom disruptions were having on our teachers, and then Mr. Talbert did something unheard of. He gave us **four** additional days away from students to catch up and pull our heads above water. We realize it is still tough! We also want you to realize that we will continue to advocate and continue to be solutions driven.

