

## **DCF FAQs**

### **7-27-12**

- 1) Has the union disbanded?
  - a. No, we have not, and we will not. It is more important now than ever to remain a strong organization to fight for the rights of teachers and classified employees. Out of the union office you will see work continue on ER&D, PERA advocacy, and education policies at the state. Further, we continue to make sure employees are aware of what is happening inside DCSD. Most importantly, we will continue to monitor the ever-changing policies and “ideas” of the BoE and District Administration as well as their employee handbook, “Employee Compensation and Benefits Program,” which they are continually modifying in order to decrease the rights of their employees.
- 2) How can the union help me without a collective bargaining agreement?
  - a. First, we are continuing to fight for a CBA. There are many examples throughout the country of school districts working without a CBA for a short period of time and then regaining it because of pressure from members like you. However, even without a CBA, the union continues to advocate for you, as we did with Extended Service Severance by pointing out, with the help of members, the unrealistic date they first proposed for declaration of retirement.
  - b. We will still continue to advocate for employees. You also still have all of your AFT member benefits like life insurance and legal liability (which is comprehensive unlike any plan the District would legally be able to offer), as well as access to our team of labor lawyers.
- 3) Why should I still be a member if we don’t have a CBA?
  - a. It is very important that the employees in DCSD stand together. We are more powerful when we speak with one voice and more able to put pressure on the administration and the board, we are stronger together.
- 4) Can you still represent members in a grievance or complaint procedure situation?
  - a. We will still represent members in a disciplinary matter. How this looks might change from school years in the past, without intervention from the state. We will ensure members have representation in meetings.
  - b. However, in the event there is no intervention from the state, we are no longer required to represent non-members. In the past, non-members were represented when a violation of the CBA occurred.

- 5) What does the office look like now? Who's doing what?
- a. While the employees/officers in the office were terminated by DCSD, they still continue to fill the same roles they did in years past:
    - Brenda Smith: remains president of DCFCE and DCFT as well as AFT-CO.
    - Andy Pippin: remains vice president of DCFCE and will continue to handle classified issues and concerns
    - Courtney Smith: remains vice president of DCFT and will handle high school issues and concerns
    - Cindi Leitch: remains Treasurer and will handle elementary and special education issues and concerns
    - Mandy Sheets: remains a DCF Executive Board member and will handle middle school issues and concerns
    - Julie Weatherman: remains Secretary of the DCFCE and will continue to run the DCF Office
- 6) What are we doing to get a CBA back?
- a. A request for intervention is pending with the state and we are very hopeful that will happen. Even if it does not, we are prepared to carry on as the voice and protector of the employees of DCSD. First, we are going to be out in the community more than ever making sure community members and parents are aware of the situation impacting classrooms in DCSD. We are also going to be building pressure on the BoE and District Administration to reinstate a CBA by making them aware of the challenges without one.
- 7) What are our next steps?
- a. Once we hear from the state we will take one of two paths. If we receive intervention, we will be working, likely with a mediator, to come to a resolution on our CBA. If intervention does not occur, we will be ratcheting up pressure on the BoE and District Administration. We will be asking members to take on new roles to assist in those tactics.
- 8) Are we going on strike?
- a. Right now, we're focused on 2 things: state intervention and ensuring that employees are as informed as possible regarding all the changes the district is making to decrease benefits for teachers and stifle their voice. All options are on the table. A strike is always the last resort.

## Teacher Post from SPEAK

"Those who insist that education would improve with an infusion of competition and market-based solutions have a fundamental misunderstanding of how teaching works. I don't produce "widgets," I teach children. I have no control over the minds and actions of my students; they sit in my classroom for a variety of reasons. I cannot fire them, I cannot whip them, I can simply attempt to keep their attention long enough to teach them something-anything. They may not have eaten breakfast, gotten sleep, done their homework, read the assigned pages, taken their medication, gone to the bathroom when they walk through my door. They arrive squirmy, hungry, sleepy, angry, and sometimes, ready to learn. How in the world, then, can you measure what they will or will not learn from me?"

Then there remains the problem of who gets to judge how well I do my job. My principals are overwhelmed with the business of running the school. My students can tell you how "cool" I am, how much they like or dislike me, how difficult they believe my class to be, but they are not equipped to judge the quality of my teaching. Parents also can tell you many things about what happens in my classroom, but they also don't know enough to make a qualified judgment about what I do. You can observe my students' CSAP scores, as long as I teach English, math or science and factor into your calculations that students do not take this test seriously. Ask them. They will tell you that CSAP is a "joke."

Finally, how does anyone judge the actual purpose of teaching, which is socializing and educating kids. Can I get a bonus for making first time eye contact with the shy kid who sneaks in and sits in the back? How about the kid who just finished a novel and can't wait to talk about it? How do you measure the success of a student who trusts me enough to tell me that her parents fight too much, or that she's with a boy who hurts her? I teach kids and use English and Literature as my vocabulary. It's great when they leave my class knowing the difference between "who" and "whom." It's even better when they leave my class knowing that I care about them and want them to succeed.

With the exception of Meghann Silverthorne, I do not believe that district leaders care about who I am, what I think or what I do. They set and allow an angry tone at school board meetings and post negative comments about teachers on Facebook. They make sweeping changes to our employment and withhold communication about the changes for 15 days. They ignore legitimate feedback from teachers and parents. They proclaim that they value teachers, and then offer new employees insulting salaries. They remove opportunities for teachers to increase their pay and tell us that there's a Pay for Performance plan coming, but there's not enough information yet to really talk about it. How can I trust them when I do not believe that they value what I do? Show me a Pay for Performance plan that accurately measures the complexity of quality teaching and I will give up my hope of resurrecting the CBA."