

UniServ Link

Embattled Teachers—Together We are Strong!

...Clay Kirkham, OEA Board Member

Putting together my thoughts to write this month—my mind continued to reflect back upon my teaching career. As an educator who has taught for over twenty years, I have seen a lot of changes in education. Some changes have positively impacted education, and some have not. I am proud to be an educator and consider teaching to be a profession that should be considered one of the highest human endeavors.

With all of this said, I wonder why it is that teachers, and the teaching profession, are under attack at this time in my career. Teachers around the country are dealing with negative rhetoric from all sides. They are taking the brunt of financial shortfalls within the communities and states they serve. Collective bargaining, lanes and steps compensation, pay cuts, larger class sizes, merit pay, lay-offs and furloughs, higher accountability, and even the grading of teachers and schools have become massive concerns

for teachers.

School districts are adopting teacher accountability systems to grade teachers with little consideration being given to class size, poverty levels, students who live without stable homes, those who are considered homeless, and students who are still learning the English language. It is important to remember that all schools and classes are not the same. Some schools are more challenging with a difficult population when compared to other schools. Yet, these schools are treated the same, with the same expectations, and the teachers are held to the same standards regardless of the population they might serve.

Research tells us that the economic strength of our cities and towns has a direct correlation to the strength of our local school system. Why is it then, that even with this knowledge, “policy and law makers” continue to make poor decisions that weaken education rather than strengthen it? Teachers are paid 14 percent less than profes-

sionals in other occupations that require similar levels of education. In real terms, teachers’ salaries have declined for 30 years. The average starting salary is around 39,000 dollars and the average ending salary is around 67,000 dollars after 25 to 30 years in the profession. In some metropolitan areas of the country, teacher salaries price teachers out of home ownership and make raising a family on one salary nearly impossible.

Hard working teachers across this country are being placed with ownership of a problem that is much bigger than education. Now, more than ever, teachers need to band together, support each other and become informed and educated to the problems facing the educational system. Now, more than ever, we need to support and dedicate our time and efforts to union concerns and to each other.



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Professional and Ethical Behavior

...Rick Palmer, Ogden/Weber
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Utah Educator Standards
Rule 277-515
Professional and Ethical Behavior

#3 Educator as a Role Model of Civic and Societal Responsibility

The professional educator shall not:

- be convicted of any felony or misdemeanor offense which adversely affects the individual's ability to perform

“...the role model responsibility travels with you to your home, shopping and out to your favorite social activity.”

assigned duties and carry out the responsibilities of the profession, including role model responsibilities.

This is only one of 24 specific “shall not’s” that is included in this rule. If you have not read them lately it would be a good idea, especially since failure to comply can mean loss of your job and/or your license to teach.

#4 Educator Responsibility or Maintaining a Safe Learning Environment and Educa-

tion Standards

• A professional educator maintains a positive and safe learning environment for students, and works toward meeting educational standards required by law.

This is followed by 9 specific things that professional educators “shall do” and a couple of big “shall not’s” (violate the acceptable use policy of computers or possess any pornographic materials at school).

Again, they would be good to read again...

So...what is the “educator’s role model responsibility”?

Does this mean only at school? No...the role model responsibility travels with you to your home, shopping and out to your favorite social activity. Can you turn it off? No...Can I take it off like one of those monitoring devices Lindsey Lohan wears? No...your “educator role model responsibility” is implanted and can’t be surgically removed. As long as you are an “educator” it goes with you. Is it fair to be judged so critically by the public and the state? Maybe not...but the reality is that parents send their little kid-dos to you with the trust that they will be safe in your care. Our culture in Weber and

Ogden is different than downtown Brooklyn, New York...there are different standards that are acceptable.

It is the job of each educator to know what the “role model responsibility” entails and to work each day to stay within the boundaries of correct student/teacher relationships and legal/moral standards.

Standard 10: Professional and Ethical Behavior (types of evaluation labels)

Practicing/Effective/Highly Effective/Distinguished

Practicing: Advocates for and models compliance with law and rules governing ethical conduct of educators.

Effective: Knows which laws, rules, policies and directives guide legal, moral, and ethical conduct of educators and where to access them.

Highly Effective: Adheres to and upholds laws, rules, policies and directives, and holds others accountable to do the same.

Distinguished: Understands the importance of laws, rules, policies, and directives.

I hope that you will continue to follow all of these in your daily lives. Go to www.schools.utah.gov/uppac/ to read the rules.

