

Royal Oak Education Association

Reporter

May, 2008

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Laurie Moore

MEET THE TEAM

Our new bargaining team members were approved by the Executive Board at our April 22nd meeting. The new bargaining team is a great mix of experience based savvy and the energy and enthusiasm of new team members. Our team members are Susan Cox, Tracy Crawley, Betty Ann Garlak, Barbara Pollis, Marcia Rauschendorfer, Dave Stafford, Laurie Moore, and me.

Susan is a 7th grade geography teacher. This is her second term as a bargaining team member. Susan is our recording secretary.

Tracy is a high school science teacher. She has been an MEA delegate for several years. This is her first experience as a bargainer.

Betty Ann teaches 2nd grade at Addams Elementary School. She is our Political Action Chairperson. This is her second term as a bargainer.

Barbara is a 6th grade ELA and social studies teacher. She is an experienced bargainer. Barbara subs for Susan as team recording secretary.

Marcia is a high school science teacher. She is an experienced bargaining team member and will act as chairperson when I am unable to attend meetings.

Dave teaches 4th grade at Oak Ridge Elementary. He has served as an Association Representative and Executive Board Secretary. Dave is a first time bargainer.

I act as our team chairperson—an easy job given the experience and motivation of our team.

Laurie is our main spokesperson, responsible for gathering and analyzing data and making our presentation to administration with team input and support.

A pre-bargaining meeting has been scheduled for May 27th. The participants in the pre-bargaining meeting will be Laurie and I, Cheryl Goodgine and Gary King, the District's attorney. We will discuss the topics of the re-opener and the structure of bargaining that will be most conducive to obtaining a fair contract. Hopefully we will be quickly on our way to active bargaining after the pre-meeting. We will keep you informed about bargaining throughout the summer.

Thanks for your support. I hope you enjoy the summer.

Sid

Royal Oak Education Association

26111 Evergreen, Suite 225
Southfield, MI 48076

Phone: 248-358-4770
Fax: 248-358-4758
www.ROEAonline.org

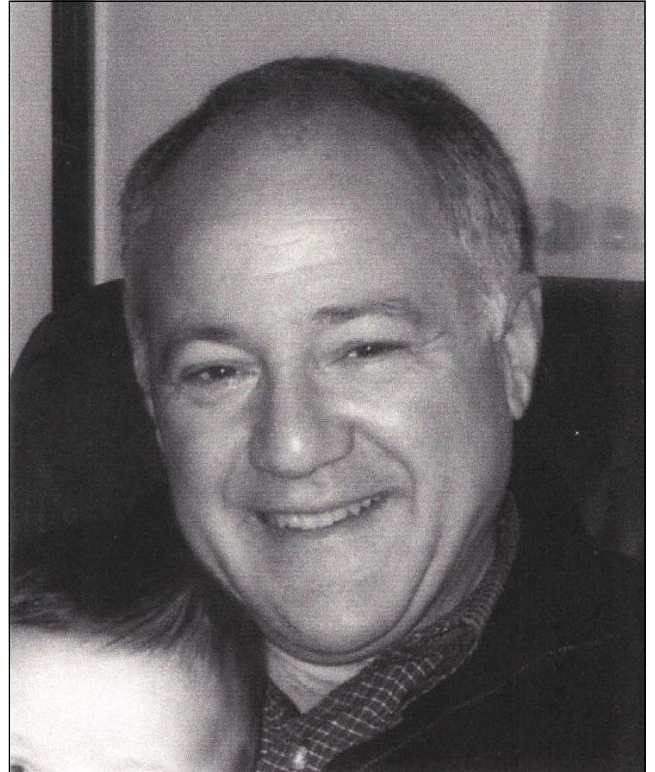
In Memoriam

Jim George

“Well...? Did you get that damn ERI yet?”, Jim George bellowed as I walked past his classroom every day last year at Royal Oak High School. It was part of our daily routine; Jim’s genuine way of wishing me a good morning as he energetically cooked breakfast with his classroom of severely cognitively impaired students. The breakfasts were legend at the high school. Jim helped his students read instructions, measure ingredients, mix, stir, and cook. They set the table as well as all manner of staff members-teachers, hall guards, administrators, and others-joined them. The students glowed with pride in their achievements and basked in the attention and company of others. Jim taught from his heart.

That same heart stopped and this past January a half a year into Jim’s retirement and after a 32 year career as a Royal Oak teacher. Jim started his career as a general education elementary teacher and became a special education teacher after a few years. Along the way he coached baseball, football, and hockey. And 5 years ago, Jim added working with Special Olympics athletes to his already full schedule of involvement with students.

Jim managed a few other great things, too, such as serving his country in Viet Nam, and raising his sons Anthony and Matthew with his wife Jeanette who died of cancer. In 2003, Jim and Jeanne Baker, one of our school psychologists, married. Jim’s and Jeanne’s family included daughters-in-law Angela and Kelly and grandsons Samuel and Camden.



Jim George

Jim understood the value of life inside and outside the classroom. He was planning on retiring, regardless of whether there was an early retirement incentive or not, so that he and Jeanne could more fully enjoy their family life. But Jim’s daily admonishment to me was purposeful; Jim not only valued the growth and development of his family and his students, he understood that the growth and development of young teachers was germane to the continuing success of our public education endeavor. In Jim’s unique style, he reminded of that every day.

Sid

If you would like to further honor Jim’s memory and continue his work with students, please consider a contribution to Special Olympics, Southeast Regional Office, 12900 Hall Road, Ste 390, Sterling Heights, MI 43317.

CONTRACT FEATURE

DISCIPLINE

It's springtime! In addition to rifling through your closet, putting the snow blower in the shed, and doing all of our other spring cleaning chores - it's time to clean out your personnel file. Our contract allows us to petition the administration to have reprimands that are more than four years old removed. Should an administrator decide to discipline you (and we typically have several disciplinary situations every year) anything in your file will be used by the administration to support the need for present discipline. "Hmm..." says our administrator, "25 years ago you forgot to call the SEMS system to report your absence, and today you were late for the staff meeting. This is obviously a pattern of irresponsibility. Punishment shall be swift and severe".

This is somewhat of an exaggeration, but not too much. A few years ago I called the building principal and social work secretary to report my absence. I told several teachers the day before that I would not be at work the next day. In short, most of the district knew I was absent, but I forgot to call the SEMS system and I was disciplined as a result. The special education director at the time huffed and puffed with managerial indignation at my behavior and using the authority invested in him by the state of Michigan blah blah blah proceeded to right the kingdom. A letter was placed in my personnel file assuring me that further such abuses would be punished severely, "up to and including discharge..." if necessary. I'd like to report that I'm a better employee for the experience, but I'm actually not.

If I were to subsequently forget again to call in an absence, the administration with my first letter of discipline in hand would want to suspend me for a day without pay. After all, I had already been disciplined once for the offense and the district seeks reasons to allow them to discipline more severely the second time around. Or, if I were to be late for a staff meeting or commit some other egregious infraction of what administrators consider important, those two events are easily linked into a supposed "pattern."

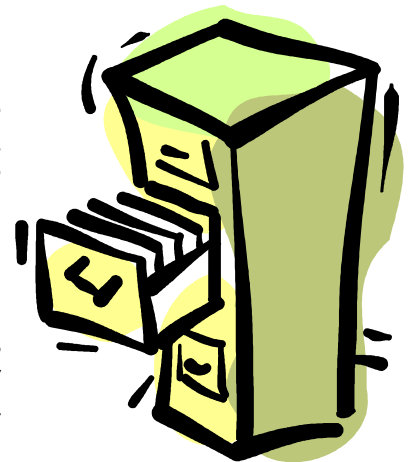
Subjectively, prior discipline leads administrators to believe that current discipline is justified regardless of whether the past discipline was warranted and whether

the current situation has any relation whatsoever to the past discipline. Our rights regarding the contents of our personnel files are on page 43 of the contract.

We had a few situations this year in which the administration verbally disciplined teachers. A principal would write a description of an event and conclude by saying that the write up constituted verbal discipline. (One teacher, for example, was written up for not requesting their own sub for a half day teacher conference believing that the school was going to do this). The administrator would then carbon copy the letter to the teacher's personnel file, in effect changing the verbal discipline to written discipline by noting that it was going into the personnel file and placing it in the file. After a few ROEA grievances and discussions at Joint Committee about our procedural rights, we were able to reach agreement that verbal discipline may be written for purposes of documentation (which the administration wanted), but would not be placed in the teacher's personnel file (which is what we wanted).

Most importantly, whether discipline is verbal, written, or more severe it cannot be arbitrary or capricious. There has to be cause; and not merely any cause, there must be just cause. In other words, the situation needs to be one that actually merits discipline. In the example above of the teacher who didn't call the sub, we filed a grievance saying that there was not just cause for discipline as the event was only an oversight by the teacher and that any record of verbal discipline should be rescinded. The contract talks about our rights to fair treatment on page 6.

Bottom line: if you have disciplinary letters in your file, get them out of there.





Elaine Lee, Susan Geisler, Mary Ann Sara

The newly retired!

At our May 20th Representative Assembly meeting we honored retirees-to-be Susan Geisler, Elaine Lee, and Mary Ann Sara. All three enjoyed careers of more than 30 years in public education. Their colleagues and their students were the beneficiaries of their professionalism. Susan, Elaine, and Mary Ann are all presently teaching at Royal Oak Middle School. We wish them happiness and success in their future endeavors.

Unemployment Workshop

Executive Director Laurie Moore has arranged a workshop on unemployment benefits. The workshop will be on Thursday, June 12th in the Royal Oak Middle School media center. The workshop will focus on how to obtain your unemployment benefits. Any contractual questions that you have regarding lay-offs and recalls will be answered as well. Contact Sandy Riccardi at 248/358-4770 if you plan to attend. You can contact Laurie or Sid at the same number if you have any questions.