Mapping Our Community Connections

The Social Justice and Community Outreach Committee is conducting a survey of PAT members.

Our goal is to identify the connections PAT members have with various organizations and social justice projects in Portland, and use these connections to strengthen our work with parents and the community.

Please fill out this short survey today!

Take the TELL Survey

In February, 2016, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) will once again ask all licensed, school-based educators to participate in the statewide TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning) Survey.

This is your opportunity to weigh in on topics such as the allocation of time, facilities and resources, student learning, community engagement, school leadership, professional development, and mentoring. Given the serious safety and discipline issues we’ve had this year, your participation is vital.

Documenting what’s happening in our schools is a key part of how we can change things for the better. The survey is completely voluntary, confidential, and anonymous and PPS administrators will allocate time during staff meetings on February 8th or 9th for you to fill out the survey.

Authentic Assessments

I’m excited to report that I’ll be leading an important delegation to New York City next week. PAT educators will be joined by PPS Board member Amy Kohnstamm, PPS Superintendent Carole Smith, and several other top PPS administrators, as well as the Director of Assessments for the Oregon Department of Education and OEA President Hanna Vaandering.

We’ll spend two days observing and learning from our peers in the New York Performance Standards Consortium. Over the past two decades, while the rest of the country embraced high-stakes tests like the Smarter Balanced Assessment, the Consortium has gone the opposite direction.

Instead of one-size-fits-all standardized tests, Consortium schools developed a method for evaluating students based on their performance, including the preparation and presentation of in-depth research projects, papers, and portfolios.

Several PAT members and a PPS official visited the Consortium last year, and we were blown away with what we saw. Students have to defend their work in front of a panel of educators and fellow students. I was amazed watching one high school student discuss some of the finer points of the U.S. Constitution and the connection to racial inequality today.

I was just as impressed with the Consortium’s overall track record. Although Consortium students are twice as likely to be English Language Learners, and suffer from a higher incidence of poverty than the rest of the city’s public schools, their dropout rate is half the city-wide average, and their graduation rate is 50 percent higher. Clearly, these schools are doing a lot we can learn from.

This trip couldn’t come at a more important moment. Across Oregon, like the rest of the country, more and more parents are opting their children out of high-stakes tests like the Smarter Balanced Assessment. And legislators from Salem to Washington are slowly getting the message that things have to change.

One important opening is contained in the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed by Congress late last year. The law, which replaced No Child Left Behind, will create a pilot program for a handful of states to test alternative assessment systems at the local level.

Oregon is well-positioned to participate in the pilot, and lead the way in developing a more authentic method for evaluating student performance. In fact, after our visit to New York, OEA President Hanna Vaandering and PAT member Lisa Kane will head to Washington, D.C. to make the case to federal officials that Oregon should be selected as one of the seven pilot states.

Now more than ever, we need PAT members and our parent allies to keep pushing so we can take advantage of these political openings, and finally put an end to nearly two decades of test-driven education policy.

In Solidarity,

Gwen Sullivan
Handling Building Maintenance Issues

Whether it's a leaky roof or lack of heat, here are the steps you should follow to address maintenance issues in your building:

1. Please immediately notify the school's head custodian and the building administrator. It is the custodian's responsibility to notify the District's Maintenance Department regarding the problem. In some cases, the custodian can provide the Department with information in order to quickly remedy the situation.

2. If it's a heat issue, the District has a small supply of space heaters. If your room is without heat and a space heater is available, the custodian can request a space heater until the District Maintenance Department can fix the issue.*

3. If following this District protocol does not produce results, do not hesitate to call Maintenance Services at (503) 916-3303. The contact there is Andy Fridley.

If there are no results after following steps 1 through 3, then call the PAT office at (503) 233-5018. Give them information on the steps that have been taken so far, and with whom you spoke.

* Note that on regular school days, classrooms and offices should be maintained between 68 and 74 degrees, with gymnasiums and shops between 62-68 degrees. On planning days, the temperatures should be between 65 and 70 degrees.

Health and Safety

For questions on environmental health, occupational safety, emergency preparedness, pest management and hazardous materials:

1. Call PPS (503) 916-3409

2. If there are no results, then call the PAT office (503) 233-5018. Give them information on the steps that have been taken so far, and with whom you spoke.

Questions About Dental Coverage?

We recently moved to Regence to pay dental bills for our dental plan. The plan itself, however, has not changed, particularly when it comes to the fee schedule for dentists who are in-network versus out-of-network. With the new dental bill-payer, a member shouldn't pay any more to see their current dentist than they did under the old system. In fact, members may pay less because the Regence network has reduced costs for most dentists in their network. If you have been told you will need to pay more to stay with your current out-of-network dentist, or you're experiencing any other unanticipated changes, please contact our new third party administrator, Northwest Administrators.

Notice of Resignation or Retirement Coverage?

If you know you are not going to work in the District next year, whether due to resignation or retirement, there is an incentive to give notice to your supervisor early. Written notice given no later than February 15th entitles you to a payment of $1250, thanks to our contract. Notice given no later than March 15th entitles you to receive $700. The payments will be made in the educator's final paycheck.

Unpaid Leaves of Absence

Requests for a Personal, Exchange or Career Development leave of absence for the next school year, whether part-time or full-time, must be submitted to Human Resources prior to April 15th, or the leave will not be approved (except in extenuating circumstances).