President’s Message: This Could Change Everything

Welcome to 2019-2020 school year!

We hope you had a great summer break, and are feeling ready for the coming school year.

We have a big year ahead of us. After a major campaign for fully-funded schools, culminating in over 35,000 educators, families, and community allies taking action across the state on May 8th, we won the passage of the Student Success Act.

This legislation will put over a billion dollars into Oregon’s schools.

Unfortunately, we don’t receive any funds this school year, but we will be actively engaged in the process for shaping the District’s recommendations to the state this fall. And, with contract negotiations beginning in January, we’re in a perfect position to make sure additional revenue gets spent on things that matter most to students, educators, and families. This is great news, and we will keep you informed on ways you can get involved as things progress.

We also have a few changes in the PAT office. Marty Pavlik, our longtime Uniserv consultant, has retired this summer, and we’re happy to welcome Peter Brogan on staff. We also are excited to welcome Kelly McKenna as our new administrative assistant replacing Lisa Wilkerson, who also retired. Kelly joins Jennifer Dixon as our second administrative assistant (Jennifer started in January).

In addition to all our staff changes, we are excited to have several PAT members on release. This year, in addition to myself and PAT Vice President Elizabeth Thiel, Nichole Watson joins us on full time release from Rosa Parks Elementary. Thanks to a generous grant from the NEA, our national union, Nichole will be working full-time on racial equity and social justice. We were also able to release our Treasurer and Advocacy Committee Chair Al Rabchuck and our Bargaining Chair Steve Lancaster one period each to assist their committees in accomplishing all the work we are planning for this year.

The role of PAT President has term limits, and I am beginning my final year serving as your President. I am excited to return to the classroom next year, but just as excited about everything we’re poised to accomplish together this year.

When I started my first term, securing additional revenue for our schools was one of my top priorities. It took longer than expected, but I am overjoyed that when I return to teaching full time it will be in a system that is almost fully funded to the Quality Education Model.

I also launched a Racial Equity Taskforce, that over the past 3 years has grown and developed distinct charges for what can be done to fully support PAT members. I’m thrilled to start the year with a member on full time release dedicated to our union’s goals of racial equity and social justice.
I wish you the best as you set up your classrooms and prepare to welcome our students back, and thank you for all your service to public schools.

I also hope to see you at the PAT picnic at Laurelhurst Park September 13th.

In Solidarity,

Suzanne Cohen
PAT President

Get to Know Your PAT Committees

PAT members have set the gold standard in our state for what unified and motivated professionals can achieve through collective bargaining in recent years. In addition to bargaining, much of the union’s work is accomplished by PAT members on our standing committees, benefitting all our colleagues and every Portland student.

- The **Advocacy Committee** defends your rights in contract administration meetings and grievances, addresses district-wide issues such as safety and workload, and informs the bargaining team and helps shape many of our bargaining priorities.

- The **Social Justice and Community Outreach Committee** members strengthen ties with other labor and community organizations and conduct open forums on topics like Special Education, Immigration Rights and Climate Justice.

- The **Racial Equity Committee** is comprised of educators of color whose goal is to build organizational capacity within PAT to honor, acknowledge and center the lived experiences and stories of educators, along with students of color, within our union and inside PPS.

- The **Substitute Teacher Committee** discusses best practice for substitute teachers and supports the bargaining team. Their work, along with our collective efforts, helped PAT win the strongest Substitute Teacher contract in Oregon.

- The **Membership Committee** offers workshops to help PAT members with issues such as student loan forgiveness, retirement planning, and interview skills for the transfer process. It also plans member activities such as the annual PAT “Party in the Park” and Retiree Reception.

- The **Instructional and Professional Development Committee** meets with PPS leadership monthly to advocate for better district-wide programs for all PAT members.

- The **Legislative and PAT-PAC Committees** meet with and lobby both elected leaders and candidates for elected office so that educators can influence our government to recognize the needs of our students and our profession.

- The **Nominations and Elections Committee** ensures that each PAT member has a fair and easy process when we’re electing PAT leaders or ratifying collective bargaining agreements.

PAT is a democratic organization whose leaders are elected. We volunteer to support and defend our colleagues, as well as the craft of education. We are exactly like you – educators who want to make a difference. Everything we have accomplished is the result of educators working together for a school system that educators, families, and students deserve. We need you to be an involved member and to stand up for yourself, your colleagues, and your students.

If you are interested in learning more or getting involved in a committee, email PAT Vice President, Elizabeth Thiel at pat_vp@oregoned.org.