



The VOICE

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Inside this issue:

Read to Win!	2
Focus on CU with S. Rohn, CU VP	2
Your Contract . . . Clarified	2
Negotiations Corner	3
Your Contract Clarified . . . continued	3
Various and Important Information	4
Tentative Agreement	Extra!
Grant Application	Extra!

Upcoming Events

December 5: Ratification Vote at CTA/CU office

December 21: Early Release (Recordkeeping)

December 24—January 4: Winter Holiday (10 and 11 month employees)

December 24—January 1: Winter Break (12 month employees)

January 7: Teacher Workday

January 8: Students return

A Different Angle

The teaching profession in the United States is in crisis. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves (statistics show that 50% of new teachers leave teaching within the first five years) and veteran teachers are retiring earlier. On the other end, fewer students are entering colleges of education nationwide, and particularly in Florida. The result? A current teacher shortage with little end in sight.

So, what does that have to do with educators in St. Lucie county? In general, it generates a long list of educators who used to work here and empty classrooms for students. It also means that the teachers and non-instructional staff who stay are finding the environment more stressful and less rewarding.

We have seen what a tough budget year does to financial compensation; St. Lucie School District is finding it difficult to compete with its neighbor districts (a total of 20 statewide who have passed referenda to increase compensation). This coupled with ever-more micro-managing with cookie cutter lesson plans, rote recitation of lessons, and the threat of being reprimanded if a teacher is not teaching the EXACT same lesson in the EXACT same way as others in her grade group, it becomes harder to maintain a positive working environment and good morale.

It's said that people quit bosses, not jobs, but in St. Lucie it appears our colleagues are quitting both. However, there are other reasons people chose to remain with a particular "boss" or job. If we are finding it difficult to compete financially, then perhaps it is time to take a serious look at those things that cost the district nothing but mean so much to employees. Our district's leaders relish sharing the upward progress of the district and do often remember to credit the teachers and staff with the work they have done to get us there. So why then are we not rewarded with the freedom we have been told comes with increasing success? The Florida Department of Education gives great latitude to principals and school districts who show progress and sustained success. It is time our district offers the same incentive to our teachers and our schools on a local level.

The intrinsic reward of freedom to determine teaching methods, pacing, and sequence for successful teachers will untie many from what they feel is keeping them from enjoying their work (and in many cases, their students from enjoying learning). This is not radical stuff. Some of the most successful school districts in the country step back from micromanagement and allow their best performing educators to soar by allowing them to practice their craft.

We have a few individual schools right here in St. Lucie County that work to give educators the freedom to teach. Less experienced teachers would have something to work toward, and less adept teachers could receive more support if administrators could focus on those weaknesses instead of treating everyone like they were weak. Young people today are looking for fulfilling work. They are also looking to pay their bills and live what used to be known as a comfortable middle-class lifestyle.

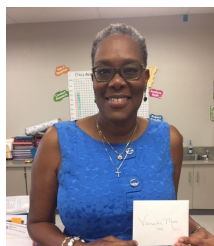
If we are to fill the positions being vacated each week in our district, and many others in Florida and the nation, we need to pay our educators a reasonable wage and make the work something that is fulfilling and intellectually stimulating. Reading a script, forced meetings, repetitive trainings, and a few dollars a week raises are not going to do that.

These really are not radical ideas and they cost the district nothing. It is time we start looking at different angles to address retention and recruitment of high quality educators.

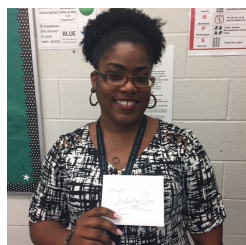
Read the *Voice* to Win!!!

Read, *answer the riddles* and SEND your answer to Barbara.Ziegler@floridaea.org by **December 15, 2018**

1. Where do you find the Education Center for useful tips and information on retirement planning?
2. What is the limit to the amount of sick days accrued for both CTA and CU?



Venetia Moore
Samuel Gaines Academy



Tabatha Chin
Southern Oaks Middle

Winners of \$10 Gift Card

Answers to October Voice Riddles:

1. What is the purpose of the union palm card?
A: *To let members know who the union has vetted and endorsed*
2. What is the deadline for CTA members to use comp time?
A: *By the end of the school year*

Focus On CU with CU VP Sandy Rohn

Hello all, it's and fall is finally in the air (sort of). I hope you all had a great month and survived a full moon *and* Halloween.

We have been busy with negotiations and issues that our members deal with daily. Watch your home email and Facebook for updated information. If you are not receiving the updates at your home email, check your spam and if it's not there, contact the office and make sure we have your correct home address. We can't send these updates to your work email.

November is a very special month for our support staff. **November 14th** was National ESP (Education Staff Professional's) Day. I, along with our other Officers and Executive Board members would like to take this opportunity

to **thank each of you** for all you do for our students every day. We are a vital part of the school system whether we work in the district office, school offices or in direct daily contact with students, **we matter**. Enjoy your week off for Thanksgiving.

Did You Know: According to your contract: **Approval of Leave Requests:** Once you have put in a written/skyward request for leave (personal, vacation or comp), your supervisor has **two (2)** working days to deny this request or it is automatically approved. Please keep copies of written comp time requests.

Have a great month and remember, we are stronger together. Sandy

Your Contract . . . Clarified! with CTA VP Rebecca Petrie

CTA Contract

Article XI, Section C, Sick Leave

1. Extent: Each member of the bargaining unit employed as a regular employee shall be entitled to four (4) days of sick leave as of the first day of employment of each contract year, and shall thereafter earn one day of sick leave for each month of employment which shall be credited to the member at the end of that month, and which shall not be used prior to the time it is earned and credited to the

member, provided that the member shall be entitled to earn no more than one (1) day of sick leave times the number of months of employment during the year of employment. Such sick leave shall be cumulative from year to year without limitation. All members of the bargaining unit shall be entitled to use sick leave for maternity/paternity leave until such time as maternity/paternity leave begins.

So... what does that actually mean?

CTA bargaining unit members should see 4 days of sick leave in Skyward as soon as they return to work for the start of a new contract year. At the end of every month after that, they should see another day (7.5 hours) added – for a yearly total equal to the number of months worked. For example: a 10-month employee would get a total of 10 days

Continued on page 3

Negotiations Corner

The CTA/CU and the School District reached a tentative agreement on compensation on November 7.

The agreement :

For CTA: A supplement equal to the retention adjustment of \$850 for eligible employees. The supplement base will increase to \$26,000.

For CU: A supplement equal to eligible employee's next step on the salary schedule. A one-time \$250 bonus.

This is in addition to the increase to the district's contribution to insurance premiums and the \$750 HSA contribution for employees who chose to enroll eligible plans.

Unlike a bonus, supplements are treated as income and count towards retirement income.

Understanding the agreement in context:

This year only \$192,000 in new revenues came from Tallahassee in the budget that could be used for discretionary expenses, including raises.

That created a real concern for the district about the ability to sustain recurring new expenditures (ie: could the district continue to pay the raises going in to future years?).

At the same time, there was an election that we had hoped would bring a change resulting in a more favorable budgetary picture in the spring.

Now, we are faced with the prospect of an even more unfavorable budgetary future given the stated budgetary priorities of the incoming governor.

Given all of this information, the negotiating team opted to put money in our members' pockets now

rather than waiting until April or later.

To be clear, this is not the agreement we wanted for our members at this time, but it is the best agreement that was available for us. There is a short and a long-term strategy at play here. We never "just take the offer." There have been many bad proposals rejected prior to getting to this point.

Ultimately, the agreement will be voted on by the membership who will decide for themselves whether they want to take this money now or gamble on a possible alternative.

We respect our members' decisions and encourage everyone to vote on ratification on December 5th.

Ratification includes ALL language since the last ratification vote in August 2017

Your Contract . . . Clarified!

(continued)

Continued from page 2

(75 hours) of sick leave during the year. Sick leave cannot be used before it has been earned. There is no limit to how many days you can accumulate.

CU Contract

Article VIII, Section F, Sick Leave

2. Extent: Each member of the bargaining unit employed as a regular employee shall earn one day of sick leave for each month employment

which shall be credited to the member at the end of the month, and which shall not be used prior to the time it is earned and credited to the member, provided that the member shall be entitled to earn no more than one day of sick leave times the number of months of employment during the year of employment. Such sick leave shall be cumulative from year to year without limitation. All members of the bargaining

unit shall be entitled to use sick leave for maternity until such time as maternity leave begins.

So... what does that actually mean?

CU bargaining unit members earn one day of sick leave at the end of each month of employment. Sick leave cannot be used before it is earned. There is no limit to how many days you can accumulate.

**St. Lucie Classroom Teachers' Association
and Classified Unit**

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CTA/CU Executive Board

David Freeland, President CTA/CU: CTA Office
Rebecca Petrie, Vice President CTA: CTA Office
Sandy Rohn, Vice-President CU: FPC
Laura Lovett, CTA/CU Treasurer: Records Dept.
Lashawn Floyd, CU Secretary: NK8
Tammy Davis, CTA Executive Board: FKS
Alan Mathison, CTA Executive Board: LPA
Pamela Jenkins, CU Executive Board: SLWC
Claudia Martin-Vegue, CTA Executive Board:
SLWK8
Christine Derry, CTA Executive Board: TCHS

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VALIC Saving Matters

Footing the bill for retirement

How much will you need to retire the way you want?

The answer depends on your future goals. Figuring out how much you need to save starts with figuring out your future lifestyle. Knowing what you're saving for could help keep you focused.

Check out the Education Center on VALIC.com for more useful information and tips to help you plan and achieve the future you want.

Your Future is Calling. Meet It with Confidence.

CLICK VALIC.com

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Ryan Van Buren 772.778.9401

Whitney Colton 772.778.9401

Tony Tringali 772.600.2662

The SLC CTA/CU is participating in our Annual WPSL 1590 Christmas Kids of SLC Toy Drive

Join us by bringing a new unwrapped toy to one of the following locations:

- ◆ SLC CTA/CU Union Office
Until December 10th
- ◆ The Worksite Leader Holiday Gathering
on December 10th

WPSL 1590
OF ST. LUCIE COUNTY



A Guide to SLCTA/CU Compensation Tentative Agreement

2018-2019

<p>What is the agreement for CTA?</p>	<p>Eligible CTA members will receive an \$850 Retention Supplement. In addition, the supplement base used to calculate supplements will be increased to \$26,000.</p>
<p>What is the agreement for CU?</p>	<p>Eligible CU members will receive a Step Supplement equal to their next step on their pay scale. In addition to this supplement, CU members will receive a \$250 bonus.</p>
<p>I'm in CTA, so when do I get my \$500 supplement?</p>	<p>Well, you don't. The \$500 is an amount added to the supplement base - which is the amount used to calculate your amount if you receive a supplement that is a percentage of the base, like a team leader, for example. This is part of a prior agreement signed last year to get the supplement base back to \$32,000 by 2021-2022.</p>
<p>What does "eligible" mean?</p>	<p>For both the Retention and the Step Supplements employees will have to have worked last year at least half the year plus one day to be eligible. Teachers and staff hired this year are not eligible because they are already placed on the correct step or slot based on experience.</p>
<p>Wait, why would I not be eligible if I was hired this year?</p>	<p>Teachers who were hired this year were placed on their correct slot and already have the \$850 as part of their salary. ESPs hired this year are already on their correct step and are receiving this year's step amount.</p>
<p>So, we are just getting a bonus, right?</p>	<p>No. The only bonus is the \$250 paid to those employees in the Classified Unit. All other amounts are paid as a supplement. That is an important distinction.</p>
<p>What is the difference between a bonus and a supplement?</p>	<p>A bonus is a one-time payment that does not count towards retirement. A supplement is an amount that is reported as income, counts towards your retirement and is taxed as income. A supplement costs the district considerably more than a bonus as they have to pay "fringe" which includes their contribution towards your retirement. It is also easier to convert a supplement into permanent salary.</p>
<p>Why don't we ever get raises?</p>	<p>We have received raises each year for the last 4 years.</p>
<p>Why did we negotiate supplements instead of raises?</p>	<p>It is a reflection of the legislature's continued underfunding of schools in the state. It is part of a larger long-term strategy. See the answer at the end for more details.</p>
<p>When can we expect to see the money?</p>	<p>We are currently planning a ratification vote for December 5, 2018. If the agreement is ratified, the bonus would be paid on the last paycheck of December. We should see supplements in our checks shortly after ratification.</p>
<p>So, is that it?</p>	<p>No. We have language in the agreement to return to the table and review the budget and look at any other sources of continuing revenue in the spring.</p>

