

Connetquot Teachers Association, Inc.

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November 28, 2012

Dear Community and Staff,

At last night's Board of Education meeting, a number of issues were discussed that the Association believes should be a concern to all who have a vested interest in the Connetquot Central School District. Whether you are a parent of children in the district, without children, but a taxpayer in the district, a staff member who resides in the district, or a staff member who does not reside in the Connetquot district, we all should be concerned.

Issue #1:

There are a number of emergency windows in classrooms at the high school that either do not work properly and/or are non-existent, therefore, students and staff would not be able to escape the classroom in case of emergency and the door was blocked. This is a State and County fire code violation. This has been the case since the beginning of the school year. One classroom is one too many! Would you want your children on a school bus without an emergency door?

The issue has been brought to the district administration's attention, but to date nothing has been done to remedy the situation. At last night's meeting, once again it was brought to the district's attention and the response at public session given was a bit confusing. The Superintendent of Schools responded by saying he knew nothing about the issue. But, he also said he did not know about it officially because the "process" of reporting health and safety issues was not followed. So, the confusion is and the Association's question is, the district knew there was no emergency exit from the classrooms in clear violation of State law and fire codes, but chose not to deal with it because of "process" or did the district not know about the issue at all. We know for a fact that members of administration knew of the situation and if the Superintendent of Schools did not know, that is a problem. They knew and allowed a very unsafe situation to be in place for months.

Issue #2:

At a time when every penny counts that is spent in a school district, the Connetquot district continues to waste thousands upon thousands of your tax dollars on a heating system that does not work. In an era when funding has been cut and a 2% tax cap is in place, wasting money is not an option. When discussion comes about as it has regarding closing schools, cutting programs, letting teachers go, infrastructure breaking down and no money to fix things, we can ill afford to waste money.

Not only is it a money issue, but it is also detrimental to the educational process. When students are more concerned and focused on the temperature of a classroom and are uncomfortable because of the extreme cold or heat, it makes teaching and learning much more difficult.

When this issue was brought up at last night's meeting, the response from the superintendent of schools was the party line. "Buildings are old, miles of piping, the old system is not integrated with the new system (which by the way cost taxpayers thousands of dollars and does not work) and we will not be able to fix the problem. It will cost millions of dollars." The Association asks if a complete analysis has been done by the district to ascertain the specific problems and what needs to be repaired, as well as a cost out to fix these problems so we can have an operable, efficient heating system? Or, do we allow the district to simply say it will cost too much money and forget about these concerns?

Let me provide some specifics regarding this problem. The Association has documentation that shows the extreme temperature ranges in the classroom, which are from 54 degrees to 102 degrees. There is no ability to regulate temperatures in certain parts of buildings. The only way to regulate the temperature is to shut off the heating system or open a window. The former results in the temperature plummeting until the system is turned back on, while the latter results in a waste of taxpayer dollars. Heat and tax dollars are literally blowing out of windows, students are uncomfortable and learning is compromised.

The issue about heat is not a new one. In December of 2011, the Superintendent told the Association that the ongoing heating issues at Sycamore Elementary School that had been going on for years would not be able to be fixed for the same reasons given last night. After the Association illuminated the problem and a school board member became involved, by the second week of January 2012, the problem was fixed. The district called in a company, made the repairs (and they did not cost "millions") and today teachers and students have a comfortable environment to teach and learn in. The Superintendent saying nothing can be done and these issues will continue is unacceptable to the Association and we would think are unacceptable to you.

Please consider the above information in the spirit in which it is intended. As parents, taxpayers, and staff we must advocate for safety for all concerned always, as well as advocate for staff and students that the environment in which teachers teach and where students learn is as optimal as possible. Current conditions are not acceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Felicio, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tony Felicio, Jr.

