



From Mark Pudlow at FloridaEA.com

REPORTS FROM THE LOCALS

BROWARD TEACHERS UNION SAYS SCHOOL DISTRICT BLOCKED E-MAILS -- The **Broward Teachers Union** accused the school district earlier this month of blocking hundreds of e-mails sent by school employees to School Board members since March -- without board members' knowledge. The union says e-mails about teacher raises, use of federal stimulus money and employee contract negotiations never made it to board members' in-boxes -- or to their junk e-mail folders. Instead, they were filed away on a server and never read. BTU lawyers sent Board Chairwoman Maureen Dinnen and board attorney Edward Marko a letter asking the district to stop blocking e-mails and threatening to sue if they don't do so by Oct. 26. The letter argues blocking e-mails violates the sender's and the receiver's constitutional rights under U.S. and Florida laws. Superintendent Jim Notter said district attorneys were reviewing BTU's letter. He questioned its timing, with the district in the throes of negotiating a contract with the union. BTU has asked for an average 4 percent pay increase. The district isn't offering any raise, but has offered to pick up the difference in employee health insurance. "Unfortunately we're back in a position where it's adversarial," Notter said. He also said a union e-mail and phone call campaign last year crashed board members' in-boxes, shut down fax machines and kept important calls from coming to their cellphones. "Some of the shenanigans they pulled last year absolutely could have impacted the safety of our kids or employees," the superintendent said. The accusation comes at a time when the district faces increased scrutiny after last month's arrest of suspended board member Beverly Gallagher in a federal corruption sting. Board members have admitted the scandal has cost some of the public's faith in the district. "If district officials are willing to intercept employees' messages, I have to wonder who else they might decide they don't want school board members to hear from and to what lengths they will go to stop or even slow the lines of communication," BTU President **Pat Santeramo** said. <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/broward/story/1285203.html>

BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD REHIRES RETIRED ADMINISTRATOR -- Over objections from two employee unions, the Broward School Board unanimously agreed to rehire a retired district administrator to her old job just one month after she left. Joanne Harrison, who had served as the deputy superintendent for educational programs and student support, will return to that position in November. She'll earn an annual salary of \$135,000 while also drawing from her state pension. Broward Schools Superintendent James Notter said Harrison took a \$40,000 pay cut to return to the district, and that she was the most qualified person for the job. State law allows retirees to be rehired by school districts and other agencies after 30 days. The district has rehired 34 former administrators, according to the **Broward Teachers Union**, which called on the district to stop rehiring retired employees. Leaders of the teachers' union said that if teachers in the state's Deferred Retirement Option Program aren't allowed to keep working for the district,

neither should other employees.

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/sfl-broward-schools-rehire-102009.0.1368279.story>

BROWARD TEACHERS UNION DECRIES BOARD MEMBER -- As part of the cozy -- but legal -- relationship between money and politics, it's not unusual for companies that do business with the Broward school district to give generously to School Board members' campaigns. On Tuesday, the board is scheduled to vote on awarding a \$1.2 million contract to Royal Concrete Concepts, a West Palm Beach construction company that hosted an August fundraiser for board member Ann Murray's 2010 reelection campaign. The **Broward Teachers Union** cried foul last week -- prompting Murray to say she will recuse herself from any vote involving companies that have given to her campaign, even though she is not required to do so. The Broward teachers union asked the district to look into whether the relationship between Murray and Royal Concrete broke any ethical rules or state laws. The union has been stepping up its attacks on the district in the midst of teacher contract negotiations. BTU is asking for an average 4 percent pay increase. The district isn't offering a raise. It has offered to pick up the difference in individual employee health insurance, although union officials point out that insurance for dependents would skyrocket.

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/breakingnews/sfl-btu-member-bn102009.0.4356642.story>

http://weblogs.sun-sentinel.com/educationblog/2009/10/btu_wants_district_to_investig_1.html

WATCHDOGS URGE BROWARD SCHOOL DISTRICT TO ACT QUICKER OVER AUDITS --

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/miami-dade/story/1292260.html>

ETHICS QUESTION ARISES OVER BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER --

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/broward/breaking-news/story/1291413.html>

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/broward/corruption/sfl-broward-board-email-102309.0.669290.story>

E-MAILS SHED LIGHT ON TIES BETWEEN BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, LOBBYISTS --

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/broward/corruption/sfl-broward-board-email-102309.0.669290.story>

DEAL POSSIBLE IN SUSPENDED BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S CASE --

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/broward/story/1297731.html>

BROWARD SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS AIR THEIR ETHICS IDEAS --

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/miami-dade/story/1292264.html>

<http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/editorials/story/1292300.html>

PALM BEACH SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS RESPOND TO CROWD PROTESTING NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS WITH PLEDGES FOR CHANGE -- After spending more than five and half hours listening to parents and teachers threatening, begging and even crying for change, a majority of the Palm Beach County School Board endorsed making some kind of adjustment to a new academic program begun this school year. As the meeting stretched almost to midnight, school board member Frank Barbieri tried to make a motion to turn the program over to teachers, letting them vote at each school whether to continue with the plan. But board Chairman Bill Graham and the board's attorney said it would be inappropriate to take a vote without giving the public notice, as required by law. Several board members acknowledged major communication problems and asked Superintendent Art Johnson to plan a discussion at either the workshop scheduled for Wednesday or the week after. "We definitely have a role model here in how not to implement change," said board member Sandra Richmond. She advocated "pushing the pause button," like Barbieri, and leaving the program in place only at schools that want it. Johnson did not take well to the suggestion of changing his program, reminding the public that the board does not dictate policy. "The board does not give direction the superintendent," he said. Postponing a decision may have been a tactical move to avoid change, said Barbieri, who has been asking on behalf of teachers and parents for some relief. "I don't believe if there are less than 1,000 people here the board will act responsibly," he said after the meeting. He also said the superintendent is not listening to the public. Earlier in the meeting, critics threatened a no-confidence vote against the Palm Beach County school district administration and to unseat school board members. They begged for a halt to the school district's new academic plan. And they screamed "What is wrong with you" into the microphone. Parents and teachers unleashed weeks of pent-up frustration at Wednesday night's meeting of the Palm Beach County School Board. With as many as 1,000 people on hand, it was the largest and most vocal crowd since 1992, when the school board considered a sex education policy, district insiders said. The scene appeared to be a bizarre Halloween party, with people dressed in orange, the color of the opposition group. Some carried sad-faced pumpkins. Johnson made his case before the public comments, listing state and federal mandates that drove the district's new program. "Insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results," Johnson said. "We know where we've been. We know where we are and we have to go forward. This is a moral

imperative." But insanity is exactly how some critics described the district's new program, which includes frequent testing, a calendar of skills that teachers must cover at a required pace and monitoring by district staffers who visit teachers' classrooms to make sure they are following the program. They complained that the plan is too rigid and too heavily focused on testing over teaching. "We are here tonight to show a vote of no-confidence for Dr. Johnson and Jeffrey Hernandez," said Janice Kerber, a teacher at Pine Jog Elementary, referring to the superintendent and the district's chief academic officer. One teacher compared the plan and its "dehumanizing curriculum" to the "nightmare" George Orwell imagined in 1984.

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/pbcsouth/content/local_news/epaper/2009/10/21/1021pbcschools.html
Robert Dow, president of the county **Classroom Teachers Association**, blasted the district's "flawed jungle of programs" and demanded the board end to the reforms until they are studied and evaluated.

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/sfl-schools-rally-p102109.0.5256907.story>

Dow demanded the district halt all of the "one-size-fits-all" reforms until they are studied and evaluated.

"The poor implementation of dubious programs has not served our district well," he said.

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/sfl-academic-changes-p102209.0.565816.story>

Nine weeks into an experiment with centralized control, Superintendent Art Johnson abruptly made an about-face Friday amid outrage from parents and teachers and waning support from the school board. Now he's returning control to the principals, letting them decide whether to continue following his program of frequent testing, a prescribed curriculum and pacing, and classroom monitoring by district experts. The plan is proven and will work in schools that choose to use it, Johnson insisted Friday. But in a "diverse" community of schools with varying needs and strengths, he acknowledged, it was viewed as a bad attempt at a one-size-fits-all policy. "At the end of the day, this is not about this program," Johnson said. "It's about meeting the needs of students." Critics of the changes reacted with cautious optimism, two days after 1,000 parents and teachers packed a school board meeting to oppose the program. "I feel very hopeful. I do," said Lisa Goldman, creator of the Testing Is Not Teaching page on Facebook. "I think that we definitely woke them up. I think they heard us." **Robert Dow**, president of the teachers union, remained skeptical that principals and their staffs will have complete freedom to choose. He also wants parents to have a say. "It seems that everything that was done in the last couple of weeks was an attempt to defuse parent and teacher anger. My concern is that this might be another step in that direction," Dow said. But he added, "I would dearly love to trust the superintendent on this one."

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local_news/epaper/2009/10/23/1023schools.html

Union leaders took out a full-page ad in Wednesday's paper. It's titled, "Why are parents angry? Why are teachers in revolt?" It is also meant to inform the wider community. "Of course, had they listened to us four or five months ago, it wouldn't be this broken," said **Robert Dow**, president of the **Classroom Teachers Association**. "The problems that are going on are important enough that the parents and the business community and the political leadership of the district has to know what's going on. The system is failing." Slowly, the district has made some concessions on embedded assessments and strict frameworks that had all students, from Boca Raton to Belle Glade, on the exact same page of a textbook on the exact same day. Johnson said gifted students are exempted from the testing and pacing requirements. "One hundred twenty pages of concerns that I got from teachers," said Dow, holding up a binder he planned to present at Wednesday night's school board meeting. Dow said he doesn't want a victory; instead, he's looking for a thoughtful session in which the school board listens to the discontent. "That's all I want them to do, is to hear the concerns of the students and the parents and the teachers," said Dow. "Then things will change."

<http://www.wpbfl.com/news/21362170/detail.html>

PALM BEACH SUPERINTENDENT APOLOGIZES FOR BOTCHED COMMUNICATIONS, SAYS CRITICS IN DENIAL --

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local_news/epaper/2009/10/15/1015pbschools.html

ACADEMIC PLAN TWEAKED AGAIN: IF GIFTED KIDS KNOW IT, TEACHERS CAN SKIP IT --

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/pbcsouth/content/local_news/epaper/2009/10/20/1020pbcschools.html

SCHOOL DISTRICT MUST BE COLLABORATIVE IN IMPROVING SCORES --

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/opinion/sfl-palm-schools-change-m102009ppnoct20.0.1786941.story>

GIVE SCHOOL CRITICS A TREAT --

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/opinion/content/opinion/epaper/2009/10/21/a12a_leadedit_skulboard_1021.html

FACEBOOK PAGE FOUNDER: TODAY'S CHANGES IN PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL CURRICULUM "THE RIGHT THING TO DO" --

http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local_news/epaper/2009/10/23/1023facebook.html

PINELLAS SCHOOLS, TEACHERS UNION DISCUSS MERIT PAY -- The Pinellas County School District and the Pinellas teachers union are about to do something that even a year ago would have been inconceivable: collaborate on plans to award performance pay and differential pay to teachers. Superintendent Julie Janssen and union executive director **Marshall Ogletree** confirmed late last week that talks will begin soon. Janssen said she wants to have a plan in place by next fall, if not sooner. "We have to come up with a way to reward people and to encourage them to work with our most needy students," she said. There are no details yet about funding or eligibility requirements or potential bonus amounts. But it appears the plan will be limited to schools -- perhaps as few as 10 -- that the state has identified as in need of help. Differential pay is often used to describe pay plans that give teachers extra money for working in high-needs schools, which are often plagued by high teacher turnover. Polls show many teachers like the idea, but unions have been resistant. Performance pay is based on the notion that better teachers should be paid more money -- a reward to them and an incentive to others. But many teachers fear that standardized test scores or principal evaluations can't fairly measure their contributions. Ogletree said initial discussions will focus on teachers at Gibbs High, but plans that take shape there could become a model for other schools. He said the state's new "differentiated accountability" system -- which requires that districts implement performance pay and differential pay for low-performing schools -- is helping to drive the conversation. But he also said the union had other motivations. "We're trying to break the mold," he said. "We have to work on plans to close achievement gaps, no ifs, ands or buts about it."

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/prek/pinellas-county-schools-teachers-union-discuss-merit-pay/1045102>

REFORM TEACHER PAY -- <http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/article1046137.ece>

ST. PETERSBURG RESIDENTS SAY THEY PERCEIVE SCHOOLS' QUALITY IS SLIPPING --

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/st-petersburg-residents-perceive-schools-quality-is-slipping/1045639>

SMALL STEPS, NOT BOLD LEAPS TO HELP PINELLAS' BLACK STUDENTS --

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/small-steps-not-bold-leaps-to-help-pinellas-black-students/1044662>

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/qampa-school-improvement-plans/1044547>

DISTRICT, TEACHERS GET HELP DURING NEGOTIATIONS -- Thirteen hours and it still wasn't enough. After a marathon negotiating session earlier this week, the Santa Rosa County teachers union and district officials will meet again to try to hash out sticking points on working conditions and insurance. The big question -- including whether annual, merit-based pay raises will remain in the union's contract -- will have to wait until Oct. 30. Both sides spent 13 hours before a special magistrate last week laying out differences on working conditions and insurance among other things. "We were able to discuss issues with an objective person who gave us good, solid direction on how to resolve some issues," said Superintendent Tim Wyrosdick. The Oct. 30 session with Mark Sherman, the special magistrate from Houston, will focus on pay issues. "Clearly, there is room for compromise, and the parties can narrow the issues," said Sherman after the first installment of hearings. The union is ready, said **Rhonda Chavers**, president of the **Santa Rosa Professional Educators**, the bargaining unit for teachers and educational support personnel. "From what the special magistrate said and the directions he gave, the district is more than ready to work with us on narrowing the issues," she said. An impasse was declared in July when a settlement could not be reached by the board and SRPE on behalf of nearly 2,100 teachers and educational support personnel. Some of the issues Sherman has heard about include a short relief period for all employees and the use of personal technological devices on school grounds. But perhaps the biggest looming question is the future of the step increase, an annual salary bump teachers in Santa Rosa have enjoyed since the 1970s. A person's step is their position in the salary schedule. The schedule dictates a bump in pay annually until 25 years of service is reached. Those with 25 years or more receive a stipend. In July 2005, the system was changed so employees move up the pay scale based on receiving a satisfactory performance evaluation, not just based on years served. The teachers and educational support personnel want a 3 percent raise, including a step increase. A step increase for all school employees will cost about \$2.2 million officials said the district cannot afford. The District wants step increases frozen and negotiated on a yearly basis, not taken for a given year after year. Union representatives believe the District can handle the pay increase. "They are paying \$10 million less in payroll because the district has 400 fewer employees," Chavers said. "Even if it will cost \$2 million, they will still have \$8 million in savings." But, the step is about more than money, Chavers said. "This is also about keeping that language in the contract, which

was put there when the teachers walked out in 1968," she said. "That walkout resulted in the salary schedule being put in place so teachers could have progression."

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20091022/NEWS01/910220317/1058/EDUCATION>

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20091020/NEWS01/910200315/1058/EDUCATION>

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20091016/NEWS01/910160326/1058/EDUCATION>

<http://www.srpressgazette.com/news/bleak-8620-budget-question.html>

ONE-TIME MONEY FOR TEACHERS ON THE TABLE IN PASCO NEGOTIATIONS -- Talks about money began in earnest last week between the Pasco County teachers and the district administration. Instead of coming in with a proposal, though, the teachers arrived with a query: "My team would like to get a better sense of where the district is," said **Jim Ciadella**, lead negotiator for the **United School Employees of Pasco**. Employee relations supervisor Kevin Shibley, who heads the district's bargaining team, whipped out a one-page spreadsheet. On one side of the sheet was the district's proposal for all employees to receive a supplement of \$584.38. On the other side, a breakdown of the district's proposal for everyone to get a bonus of \$637.85. The difference? A supplement requires a contribution to the Florida Retirement System and potentially counts toward employee pensions. A bonus doesn't include retirement benefits. Neither would be a recurring payment in future years for the teachers, who are facing a second straight year without raises or step increases for years of service. Shibley explained that the \$5.29 million total represented the operating budget funds available after the district set aside about \$6 million to pay for rising health insurance premiums. The district continues to fully cover employee health insurance, although employees must pay for family member coverage. Ciadella had some immediate questions about the offers. They included concerns about taxes and retirement benefits, but the key issue focused on whether employee bonuses or supplements would be differentiated based on service. "You guys are not looking to differentiate at all from a second, third, or fourth year employee to a 20 year employee?" he asked. Exactly right, Shibley answered.

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/one-time-money-for-teachers-on-the-table-in-pasco-school-district/1045935>

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2009/oct/21/pasco-teachers-union-heads-bargaining-table-today/news-breaking/>

ENROLLMENT SOARS FOR PASCO'S NEW eSCHOOL --

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/enrollment-soars-for-pascos-new-eschool/1045445>

BREVARD SCHOOL BOARD SAYS UNION'S BUDGET FIGURES "MISLEADING" -- District officials last week denied budget figures the teachers union presented at a recent board meeting when the group protested an increase to health insurance rates. "I was a little taken aback because I wasn't quite sure where the numbers came from," said Judy Preston, associate superintendent for financial services. "It was very misleading for the audience who was present (Oct. 13) and as you know the board room was full." At that school board meeting, officers with the **Brevard Federation of Teachers** said the district took \$9.8 million out of the health insurance trust fund last year to build the school board's contingency to \$19.8 million. Preston said that is not true. No money was transferred out of the health insurance trust fund in the 2008-09 school year. Teachers union President **Janet Eastman** said the \$6 million was taken from an e-mail they got from School Board Chairman Robert Jordan. "We worked with the numbers the district is feeding us," Eastman said. "We're willing to work past anything but I think we have a wedge between us now. We don't trust them and they don't trust us."

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20091021/NEWS01/910210331/1006/School+board+denies+figures>

HEALTH INSURANCE SPIKE SPURS IMPASSE IN CHARLOTTE -- Teacher and support employee unions say passing the burden of health insurance onto school employees isn't fair, especially when they believe there's money available in the district's budget to cover expected increases. The news was announced last week during a news conference on the front lawn of Port Charlotte High School by the presidents of the county's two public school employee unions, the **Charlotte Florida Education Association** and **Charlotte County Support Personnel Association**. The unions declared an impasse with the district regarding health insurance last week and they have sent official notification of their disagreement to the Public Employee Relations Commission in Tallahassee. The unions' disagreement with the district began a month after the board approved a quarter-mill levy, which was passed in September as a method to generate \$25 for every \$100,000 of taxable property value. The millage increase will generate a little more than \$4 million this year, and has been budgeted into the school year budget as a reserve fund in case the district is hit with mid-year cuts or an unexpected crisis that could result in staff layoffs. Teacher union president **John Klenovic** said the unions were led to believe the money could be used to alleviate

strains from rising health insurance costs. But in October, the unions were told employees would take on the brunt of the expected increases. "This future unknown emergency takes priority over employees who've busted their hump for what's best for Charlotte County Schools, the Charlotte County students and the community members of Charlotte County," he said. To date, Klenovic said he has seen four different insurance plans, with increases ranging from \$25 to \$106 a paycheck. This comes at a time when employees haven't received raises in two years and have already had to shoulder increases in out-of-pocket expenses related to health insurance and prescription drug coverage, Klenovic said. "We have people who have health insurance that write the school district a check," he said. "Their salary doesn't pay the cost of health insurance." Bob Zipf said most of these workers belong to his union, which represents non-instructional employees like bus drivers, clerical staff and school nurses. "The district won't have to worry about laying anybody off, because we're not going to be able to afford to work here," Zipf said.

<http://www.sunnewspapers.net/articles/pnnews.aspx?NewsID=446105&a=newsarchive2/102109/ew1.htm&pnp=0>

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20091020/ARTICLE/910201024/2062/NEWS?Title=Charlotte-County-teachers-at-an-impasse>

UWF FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION TALKS REACH IMPASSE -- The University of West Florida's faculty union, under the [United Faculty of Florida](#), went to impasse in contract negotiations on late last week with the UWF administration for the first time in the school's history. After many months of attempted bargaining, the two parties could not reach a consensus on whether anonymous student comments should be added to faculty evaluations. That lack of agreement puts the UWF faculty contract on hold until hearings before a special magistrate. The process will take several months and will cost the university thousands of dollars in legal fees. The magistrate could reconsider everything that has been negotiated so far, not just the evaluation issues. That means faculty members could lose a \$1,250 bonus already negotiated in lieu of a salary increase for the last year. Other UWF staff members received the bonus. UWF chief negotiator Jane Halonen said including student comments in evaluations was essential to giving students a voice in the process, but union officials have resisted their inclusion. Union representatives said that students who did not take the comments seriously, or had individual issues with a professor might abuse the comments section and leave the faculty member vulnerable to undeserved consequences. "Evidence suggests that negative comments are given an inordinate amount of weight," said [Susan Walch](#), union chief negotiator.

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20091024/NEWS01/910240318>

INSPECTORS ASSESS JACKSONVILLE'S "F" SCHOOLS, CITE NEEDS --

http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/schools/2009-10-19/story/inspectors_assess_jacksonvilles_f_schools_cite_needs

ORANGE MIGHT NOT FIX 45 SCHOOLS BY 2015 AS VOWED --

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/orl-orange-sales-tax-102009.0.4594622.story>

IB PROGRAM SHOWS PROGRESS, PROBLEMS AT JONES --

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/orl-locorl-mike-thomas-jones-101809.ar0101809oct18.0.6951194.column>

HILLSBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT WINS \$2.2 MILLION GATES GRANT --

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2009/oct/20/hillsborough-wins-22-million-gates-grant-improve-t/life-education/>

TWO HILLSBOROUGH TEACHERS, ONE JOB, PLENTY OF BENEFITS --

<http://tampabay.com/news/business/workinglife/two-hillsborough-teachers-one-job-plenty-of-benefits/1044906>

H1N1 FLU SHOTS START IN SCHOOLS --

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/k12/swine-flu-vaccinations-begin-in-hillsborough-schools/1045378>

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2009/oct/21/na-swine-flu-shots-start-in-schools/news-metro/>

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/state/content/state/epaper/2009/10/19/1019swineflushots.html>

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/health/health-experts-say-the-swine-flu-vaccine-is-safe-and-effective-but-many/1045886>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/21/AR2009102103857.html>

Mark Pudlow, spokesman

Public Policy Advocacy
Florida Education Association
850.201.3223 office
850.508.9756 cell
mark.pudlow@floridaea.org
NEA/AFT/AFL-CIO
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