



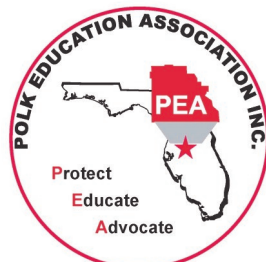
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Join Today and Receive a \$20 Rebate!

Polk Education Association

730 East Davidson St.
Bartow, FL 33830

Phone: 863-533-0908
Fax: 863-533-3559
E-mail: polk@floridaea.org



THE ADVOCATE

POLK EDUCATION ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP/PAYROLL DEDUCTION CARD

I authorize my employer, The Polk County School Board of Polk County Florida, to deduct the amount indicated and remit same as instructed by the Association. I understand that the deduction amount may change and consent to such change without the necessity of additional authorization. This authorization may be revoked with a thirty (30) day written notice to the Polk Education Association. PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____ Soc. Sec. No. _____ - _____ - _____
(last) (first) (mi)

Address: _____ Monthly Deduction Amt. \$48.98 \$24.74

City: _____ Zip: _____ D.O.B. ____/____/____

Home ph.: _____ Cell ph: _____

Home e-mail address: _____

Worksite: _____

Method of Payment: _____ Position: Teacher / Paraeducator / ESP-Secretary
Cash Race: _____ Sex: _____

Signature of Employee: _____ Date: _____ Registered Voter: Y N

Local Association Representative: _____

AFT Local Number: 7454 NEA Local Number: Teachers (530) Paras (531) Secretaries (532)

\$20 Rebate received: _____



THE ADVOCATE

The Voice of the POLK EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

January 2011

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From the Desk of the President

EXPECT RESPECT

Dear Teachers and Support Staff,

This edition of the Advocate deals with RESPECT. Why did PEA choose this topic for the opening newsletter of the New Year?

Simple, throughout last year there has been and continues to be, growing reports of worksite bullying behavior that Polk's education staff is being expected to accept. We are not talking about expectations being set, for we understand high expectations. We are talking about unreasonable expectations, threatening/rude behavior, and remarks made when teachers and support staff do simple and reasonable things like ask for clarification of the workload, ask for reasonable time to complete the tasks, or professionally question the why of the expectations set.

In this issue we will cover your rights under the law, in our Collective Bargaining Agreements, in PCSB Policy, and in Florida's Professional Educators Code of Ethics. It is important that you understand not only what you are obligated to follow but what you have a right to expect!

We will also educate you on the cost to the health of those being bullied. This is an important topic because it has a costly a human toll. The major drugs prescribed for our staff include antihypertensive, antidepressants, and (in lay terms) stomach medication. It was reported to the Insurance Committee on Dec. 8th that 16-17% of those screened by the District's Health Risk Assessment are depressed and 60+% are at risk for hypertension. Research has shown that both of these conditions are related to worksite stress and bullying!

PEA is asking you to join with us in EXPECTING RESPECT. We are asking you to continue to give respect but to also expect it in return! We are asking that you report incidents of bullying and that you stand by colleagues being bullied. We are asking you to wear the button you will find on the left hand corner of this newsletter as a sign that this is a county where a culture of respect is being established. A place where respect and dignity are expected for all—administrators, students, parents, AND teachers and support staff!

We understand that employees may need direction, and could possibly even have done something that rises to the level of discipline, but both can be meted out with due respect! In fact, if done with respect, more will most certainly be accomplished!

To the principals and supervisors that get it right, we thank you. For those that choose bullying and harsh comments in an effort to "motivate staff", we hope this newsletter gives you food for thought. You see harsh comments, non-specific direction, unreasonable timelines, not honoring the contracts your employees have to honor, and workloads that are impossible to meet do not net the long term gains our students need. They simply burnout staff, cause illness, and drive those we need to keep in education, out of the system!

Never underestimate the power of a "thank you" or an "I'm sorry". Both remarks are bridge builders and game changers!



Wear your pin proudly to show everyone you not only give respect, you **Expect Respect!!**

Fact or Fiction? Only children can be bullied

FICTION. Adults can be bullied too. Bullying happens not only on the playground, but also in the workplace.

Bullying is not a once-off clash or a fair reprimand. It is typically unfair, humiliating, malicious and vindictive and intended to harm the victim. Furthermore, bullying is persistent, prolonged and happens over a period of time and it likely to challenge the physical and emotional health, safety and well being of the individual being bullied. The bully has the power to bully—whether the power is sanctioned, perceived or real.

The mistake most targets of bullying make is to deny their reality when dealing with a workplace bully. Don't try to explain bullying behavior in logical terms, because it is neither logical or decent. It is not the same as schoolyard bullying either. This is a different ball game. The silence, shame and denial accompanying workplace bullying are exactly what the bully needs to succeed.



When you are bullied you start doubting yourself. You could even wonder if you have done something wrong or could at least be partially to blame for the situation. It is always good to do some self-evaluation and it won't harm you to take stock and remove some of the cobwebs in your life before standing up to a bully—BUT do it for YOU, not for the bully.

Know that you are not alone and it is time to find support. A battle with a bully is uphill and you will need your friends, family and your union to stand by you. If you are the victim of a bully you must speak up and ask for help. PEA is here to assist members of the organization with bullying issues. Sometimes just having someone to talk to so you know you aren't crazy is the first step.

Contact PEA by calling (863)533-0908 or e-mailing polk@floridaea.org for assistance.

Scholarships Available in 2011

AFT Union Plus Scholarship Program

How to apply: The 2011 scholarship application is available for download.

Deadline: All applications must be postmarked by January 31, 2011.

Eligibility for Scholarships: Current and retired members of AFL-CIO unions participating in any Union Plus program, their spouses and their dependent children can apply.

Scholarship award amounts: The amount of the award ranges from \$500 - \$4,000.

PEA Scholarships

How to apply: The 2011 scholarship application will be available for download in February 2011.

Deadline: All applications are due tentatively in February 2011. Check the website in January for the final date.

Eligibility for Scholarships: Dependent children of members of the Polk Education Association can apply.

Scholarship award amounts: Two scholarships are awarded of \$1,000 each.

FEA Trust Scholarships

How to apply: The 2011 scholarship application is available for download at www.feaweb.org. You will need to login with your membership number and PIN number from your ACCESS card. You can also call the Polk Education Association office, 533-0908 and request an application.

Deadline: Due date is in early March, final information on the deadline is posted with the application.

Eligibility for Scholarships: Graduating public high school seniors that are dependent children of FEA members or FEA/Retired members may apply.

Scholarship award amounts: Three scholarships are awarded of \$2,000 each.



Links to all scholarships are found at the PEA website under **Member Resources**, www.polkea.org Click on the **Member Resources** button and select the type of scholarship you wish to learn more about.

How does your school measure up? Does your worksite promote a culture of non-bullying?

Ask yourself the following questions...

In our school, do we...

- ☉ Treat each other with respect?
- ☉ Work with colleagues to achieve goals?
- ☉ Maintain high standards of work and behavior?
- ☉ Promote the values and the aims of the school and implement relevant school policies?

Please take the PEA Bullying survey and let us know your school measures up. www.polkea.org/bullying

Educator Bill of Rights:

At a recent PEA Board meeting the Reps elected from your worksites were asked to develop an “Educator’s Bill of Rights”. This is a work in progress, but here is our starting point.

From the District I expect:

- A decent salary and affordable healthcare
- Adequate resources and materials to perform my job duties
- Sufficient time to implement changes before additional changes are enacted

From my building administrator I expect:

- To be treated like an adult and a professional
- The collective bargaining agreements and school board policies to be followed
- The student code of conduct and student progression plan to be enforced
- Everyone to be held to the same standards
- Administrative support for my professional actions when dealing with students and parents.

From parents and students I expect:

- School is a priority for every child
- Attendance and participation in school functions
- To be treated as an adult and a professional

From lawmakers I expect:

- My views on proposed changes to policies or laws to be taken seriously
- An attempt to understand the impact of their actions on all educators.

No Bullying: It’s the LAW

With the passage of the Jeffery Johnston ‘Stand up for All Students’ Act (Florida Statute 1006.47) the Polk County School Board instituted Anti-Bullying policies and programs in our schools. These policies and programs cover children as well as ADULTS in our schools.

Elimination of bullying can only take place when the culture at the school or workplace rejects bullying.

If you are subjected to bullying or witness a bullying situation you should report it. Reports can be made through the district harassment process or a PEA grievance.

If you do nothing; nothing will change and the bullying will continue.

See the policy at www.polk-fl.net, keyword: **bullying**

Read more at the www.fldoe.org Keyword: **bullying**



Did You Know The PEA Contract Language States...

10.4 The Board and the Association agree that proper classroom decorum is essential to the learning process. Teachers, in the performance of their duties, shall not be expected to tolerate harassment, abusive language, upbraiding, insults or interference by a parent or any other person.



Contracts available for download at www.polkea.org

Even the DOE Code of Educator Ethics Speaks To This Important Issue

The educator code of ethics applies to all school employees that hold a DOE certification—this includes teachers as well as principals.

(d) Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual’s performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.

(e) Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.

(f) Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgment of colleagues.

<http://www.fldoe.org/edstandards/pdfs/ethics.pdf>

BULLYING: IT IS NOT JUST FOR KIDS...

As school professionals, we are charged with teaching and modeling good social and emotional behavior so that students will thrive in school and act appropriately. We are always on the alert for bullying among children. To end the practice, we try to change the behavior of the bullying child and to help the child who is being bullied respond appropriately.

But what about the adults in a school setting?

It's time we recognize unacceptable staff bullying behavior and the culture that permits the practice. School districts have skirted the issue by obliquely referring to such behaviors as "inappropriate management style" or "poor leadership qualities." But let's call it what it is—"bullying"—and work together to stop the inappropriate behavior.

If you are being bullied or have witnessed bullying, talk to your building representative or union representative. You have a right to respect and dignity at work. Workplace bullying cannot and should not be tolerated.

Contact your union.

If you are being bullied, don't suffer in silence. Avoid being alone with the bullying supervisor or administrator or confronting the person on your own. Stay calm and do not rebut any accusations or engage in arguments with the supervisor. Your union and your building representative can help assess the situation and give you advice and tips on using the contract and other district policies to stop the abuse. They can accompany you to meetings with the offender and then work with you to actively resolve the problem. Remember that if you are being bullied, you probably are not alone. Encourage other colleagues and coworkers who are being bullied to contact the local, too.

Seek help from your personal physician and/or an employee assistance program (EAP) to address any bullying-related health problems. Give the physician

detailed information about the situation at work that may be contributing to your symptoms so that the doctor can give you concrete advice on how to reduce the exposure to bullying. Track your symptoms/illnesses and bullying incidents with dates and times. You and your union may need that documentation to make a case for change.

"The principal openly harassed and threatened me after I questioned his test score data interpretation. I felt humiliated and demoralized; then my union stood up for me."

Workplace bullying is, quite simply, an abuse or misuse of power. Bullying behavior is easy to recognize. It is behavior that intimidates, degrades or offends a person, often in front of others. A person who is the target of a bullying administrator or supervisor often feels defenseless and demoralized. A bullied individual may be singled out by an administrator or supervisor for constant criticism with no concrete or positive guidance and support for changing the alleged shortcoming.

Other examples of bullying:

- ⊙ Unwarranted or invalid criticism;
- ⊙ Repeated unsubstantiated attacks on a staff member's professional conduct;
- ⊙ Constantly giving competent people trivial assignments or tasks;
- ⊙ Giving assignments with unrealistic or impossible deadlines;
- ⊙ Setting up an employee to fail by overloading him or her with work;
- ⊙ Blaming or disciplining without factual justification;
- ⊙ Treating an employee differently than the rest of his or her coworkers;
- ⊙ Swearing/shouting at or humiliating an employee;
- ⊙ Exclusion or social isolation of an employee;
- ⊙ Making the employee the target of practical jokes; or
- ⊙ Excessive monitoring.

Bullying administrators rarely mistreat staff in isolation; they create a culture of bullying throughout the school. Typically, it is an environment of fear and intimidation that discourages trust, cooperation and teamwork.

They set unreasonable goals and berate everyone when those goals are not met. They may deny publicly that the demand or stress created by this environment is harmful to achieving the goals of the school. Such a culture is often plagued with high staff turnover.

Bullying behavior on the part of administrators is likely to be witnessed by students. Sadly, those students then are less likely to be exposed to all the adult role models they need to strengthen their social and emotional skills.

Health effects of bullying

Workers who try to "cope" or "adapt" to bullying conditions in silence may pay a big price with their health. The problem is made worse if the bully recruits other staff to participate in the behavior. Victims then can become even more stigmatized and isolated, with little or no support. Research has shown that targets or victims of work-related bullying experience significant physical and mental health problems including:

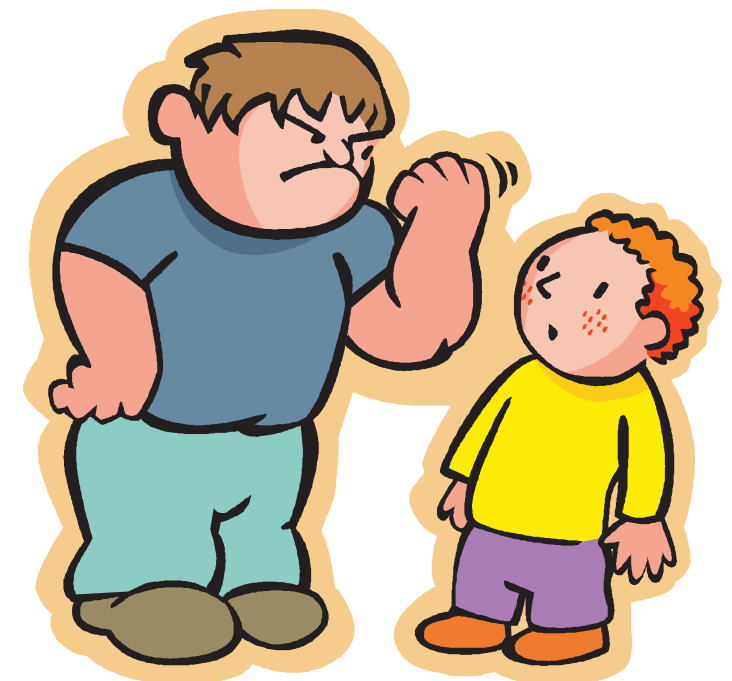
- ⊙ High stress much like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Unresolved, chronic stress causes physical changes in the brain that can lead to depression. Stress is also linked with high blood pressure and heart disease.
- ⊙ Reduced self-esteem.
- ⊙ Musculoskeletal problems.
- ⊙ Phobias.
- ⊙ Sleep disturbances.
- ⊙ Digestive problems.
- ⊙ Financial problems due to absence from work.

A demoralized employee is much less productive and engaged. Many bullied workers ultimately give up and involuntarily leave their jobs and professions because they just "can't take it anymore."

Does your school culture measure up?

Think about your school culture. A good school environment should set explicit standards or codes of professional behavior. The school leadership routinely should remind all staff of the code and model the behavior. Administrators and supervisors also must lay out clear expectations for staff, with positive and supportive feedback on progress in meeting goals.

Give us your feedback on the culture in your school by taking a short survey on the PEA website www.polkea.org/bullying.htm



This information courtesy of the American Federation of Teachers