**Union Pulse**Colorado Springs Education Association

January 12, 2023

**Your Peers’ Pay and Yours: This Week’s One Big Topic**

CSEA Board Directors and Staff do a lot of work to support our members and sustain our values, and a lot of that happens without fanfare or even members’ knowledge. As things evolve in D11, it’s more and more important for members to see that work and to become familiar with various goings-on that affect their rights and employment. Described here in full detail is a prime example. We provide the *full* picture so you can see how things work and understand this is not the way to treat half of the people on your staff.

**The Situation**: For the past year and a half we’ve pursued fair and equal pay for teachers in D11. CSEA members filed a grievance to ensure that staff members are placed appropriately on the salary schedule. This grievance has gone through Level II, ending in denial by the district, after they claimed to seek a reasonable settlement of the claims.

In the fall of 2021 we discovered through a new member that at some point the district had started depriving people of one step on the salary schedule if they came with experience from outside the district. The most basic example goes like this: If you began your teaching in D11, you started on step one, and the next year you moved to step two, in keeping with the MA. Year one, step one. Year two, step two. Simple. 1+1=2. Or not. If you taught in another district your first year and then brought that experience to D11, Payroll put you on…wait for it…step one, because 1+1=1. D11 places two teachers with the same experience in public education on different steps of the salary schedule. That’s not fair. It’s the same for people with more experience, too: If you began in D11 and taught 5 years, you’d start year 6 on step 6. If you taught 5 years in another public school and came to D11, they put you on step 5.

**The Arguments**: The Master Agreement specifies a difference in salary-schedule placement between a teacher with no experience and a teacher with experience (Article XIV.F). No previous teaching experience puts you on step 1. One through 14 years’ experience corresponds to appropriate placement on the schedule on a one-step for one-year basis. For a number of us on the CSEA Board of Directors, this worked just as you’d expect: One of us brought three years’ experience and started the new year on step 4. Another brought one year of experience and started on step 2. At some point, though, D11 started asserting a “step zero” for people coming from outside the district and continues to do so now. No—There is no step zero anywhere in the Master Agreement or Salary Schedule. They made that up.

**The Actions**: We worked with administration on this in 2021-22, trying to arrive at a solution. We asked only that the district rectify the situation for inappropriately placed teachers going back to the start of that year. Admin balked, so we filed a grievance (a formal claim of a violation of the Master Agreement), after which they assured us of their desire to fix things. We had the Memorandum written out, and CSEA gave admin the time they requested to work out the details. At the end of bargaining in the spring, however, after months of promises, they told us they couldn’t do it with the new BoE and the termination of the superintendent. Come fall and a new administration, we were done waiting on the slow-boating and promises, so we submitted a new grievance that incorporated the prior factual claims with new information and employees. This is because these new members were denied experience and came to us. This new grievance asked for the back pay consistent with timelines established our initial filing; you don’t get to obstruct things and get to avoid paying people for that time.

The new superintendent called President Schott to complain that with its grievance CSEA was trying to keep teachers from outside the district from being paid as much as teachers who started in the district—That made it hard to recruit! Hmm…uh, no. Just the opposite. He was stating the very position CSEA had argued. The superintendent’s position agreed with CSEA’s! (Who had told him *we* were trying to deprive teachers of pay?) He wanted to figure out a way to solve this using the previously negotiated parameters, he said, and after some brainstorming, he understood he could seek an extension of timelines. He asked (in writing) for time to resolve the issue. Thinking a new administration brought new will to fix the situation, CSEA granted the time and a specific deadline. With no contact or collaboration for six weeks, however, on the last day, an hour before the deadline, the superintendent denied the grievance, never having worked with us but only having strung out the timeline. The District’s latest position appears to be that the words “teacher may be placed” in Article XIV meant that the district could choose to pay people appropriately, or not, at its discretion.

**Now**: It’s clear after our being strung along by two administrations for a year and a half that a collaborative solution has vanishingly little chance of appearing. The district is depriving half of our teachers of a step on the salary schedule, despite having banked nearly a hundred million dollars in the past couple years and despite teacher vacancy-savings for no fewer than 80 positions this year and despite now budgeting for more administrators. Indeed, it costs money to pay your employees, and yet it is unjust not to pay them what they deserve. Threatening to decrease everyone’s negotiated compensation package if they have to make good for having short-changed our fellow educators amounts to little more than extortion.

**Finally:** We are examining options at this point. We always look first to our values, which start with Solidarity, and that empowers Justice. As we head toward Dr. Martin Luther King Day, noting his words from the Birmingham Jail seems appropriate:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”

We are disinterested in being divided so we can be conquered. In our union, we believe no animals should be more equal than others.

**Announcements & Upcoming Events**

**Election Notice**

Election information and timelines for this year’s CEA Delegate Assembly was emailed out today. Please refer to the email for detailed information about the Assembly and running as a delegate to represent CSEA at the state level.

**Retirement Packet Deadline**

**Friday, January 13**

Completed retirement document packets are due in HR no later than 4:30 p.m. Failure to submit paperwork may result in losing the benefits associated with the retirement incentive program. A submitted nonbinding Notice of Intent to Retire becomes binding at close of business. Applicants not wishing to retire must notify HR in writing to withdraw their retirement application.

**Educating Children of Color Summit**

**Saturday, January 14**

Online registration is closed but you can still attend and register the day of the event at Armstrong Hall, Colorado College, 14 E. Cache La Poudre, starting at 7:30 am the program starts at 8:30. For a detailed agenda, visit the ECOC [website](https://educatingchildrenofcolor.org/summitregistration/).

**Article of Note**

[**NFL**](https://www.thenation.com/article/society/nfl-damar-hamlin-buffalo-bills-cincinnati-bengals/?fbclid=IwAR3H_R4rOdWtTf08kj4Lskc9Xnqf_huzwu71PPUvV9Jk6DxM6PAY1ROE0Xc) **–** Thankfully D. Hamlin has been released from his hospitalization. However, the solidarity and workplace assertion shown by the players and coaches is equally important.

[**Nurses in NY City reflect issues in the nation**](https://www.npr.org/2023/01/11/1148333140/new-york-city-nurse-strike-staffing-shortages) **– Although the strike ended this morning, does this sound familiar? *“****And we've really worked together with decision-makers in organizations and nationally to say, you know, we really do need to work through and address safe staffing issues. We need to look at how we can address getting more nurses to be faculty and address the faculty shortage. And we also need to look at the work environment and encourage nurses to stay nurses and not to leave the profession. And we want nurses to be nurses for their entire career. So those are the three areas I think we could really focus in on in order to make a sustainable change.”*

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