

CONNETQUOT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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LORETTA POWELL
PRESIDENT

Tuesday, October 12, 2009

Dr. Alan Groveman
Superintendent of Schools
Connetquot School District
780 Ocean Avenue
Bohemia, NY 11716

Dear Dr. Groveman:

The Association must bring to your attention the significant impact the current computer situation is having on the education of students and on the working conditions of our teachers. As you are aware, the District embarked on several computer projects this summer including the change in network from a Novell-based system to a Windows-based system, centralized distribution of software, erasure of all information on individual hard drives and elimination of the elementary computer teachers in favor of the Ambassador program.

The District's decision to take on so many projects in such a short time span has caused havoc in every school. A majority of teachers have reported that they are not able to utilize their computers to meet their school-based responsibilities, despite the fact that they are expected to do so. Even basic tasks, like taking attendance, frequently can not be accomplished without additional time being required. Teachers need to spend an inordinate amount of time downloading programs, only to have to download the same programs the very next day. Files can not be saved on the local hard drives, making it impossible for teachers to save their own and their students' work for future reference. Teachers also reported that they lost materials stored on the computers when the hard drives were reformatted during the summer. This was frustrating for teachers because as many of the polled elementary teachers indicated (63 of 149 or 42%), they were not informed that this was going to occur.

The information collected by the Association reveals that integration of curriculum and technology in the classroom is almost non-existent due to significant hardware and software problems. Approximately 68% (i.e., 101 of 149) polled elementary school teachers reported that their computers are not working well, while approximately 78% believed that the software on their classroom computers was not adequate in meeting the educational needs of their students. Teachers reported that they are now unable to adequately reinforce skills that are important in meeting New York State Standards, especially for those students who have difficulty learning with more traditional teaching methods. Many similar problems have also been reported by secondary teachers. These problems persist despite the fact that we are in the sixth week of the school year.

The elementary computer curriculum has also been significantly impacted by the elimination of the elementary computer positions. Approximately 93% of the polled elementary school teachers indicated that they believe that the elimination of the computer teacher position has had a negative impact on the delivery of the computer curriculum. Eighty-seven percent of these same teachers believe that the Ambassador program has not adequately compensated for the elimination of the computer teacher positions. A majority (74%) reported that the elimination of

the computer teacher has resulted in changes to their workday, while 60% reported that it has impacted the amount of instructional time spent in other areas.

The Association must ask who was responsible for convincing the Board of Education that the computer teacher could be replaced and classroom teachers adequately trained by providing teachers with eight hours of professional development through the Ambassador Program? Was the Board of Education ever informed prior to approving the elimination of the computer teacher that the District may face legal action from the Association for not considering the impact on the workday of the classroom teachers? Was there ever any consideration of the impact on the workload and morale of teachers who are already overburdened with other District and State mandated requirements?

The Association trusts that the intention of the District was to improve the computer network, the integration of curriculum and technology and the education of the students. With this in mind, the Association must ask an obvious question - how could the changes referenced above have resulted in such a negative impact on the education of students and the working conditions of the teachers? Where was the planning in the changes? How could the responsible parties so miscalculate the problems and the amount of time required to complete the changes? Why did so many changes need to occur at one time?

At this point in time, the teachers are frustrated with the ongoing computer problems, their inability to optimally deliver the curriculum to their students and their change in work conditions. Their perception is that the District implemented foresaid changes haphazardly without nearly the required planning and with a very poor understanding of how these changes were going to impact students and teachers. There is also a pervasive lack of confidence in the District's ability to address these computer problems in a timely and adequate fashion. Even when the District has attempted to address teacher questions and concerns, for example last Wednesday at RMS, it has only resulted in increased frustration. This is due to it becoming even more apparent to the teachers that there is true lack of understanding of the impact or pervasiveness of the computer problems, even by the Director of Technology, the very person who is overseeing the implementation of the computer changes.

The Association urges the District to seriously examine the multitude of problems that have resulted from the changes referenced above. It is hard to imagine the District would accept similar poor planning from classroom teachers if it had such an adverse impact on the education of students. If the District truly wants to lead by example, then true examination of those responsible for these problems needs to take place.

Sincerely,



Loretta Powell
President

cc: Brad Lindell, President for Negotiations
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