

School News & Notes

Teachers Unions Offer Tax Payers Hard Lessons

by Mike Antonucci

(NAPSA)—The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers are notorious for throwing their weight around. But to whose benefit? Does their political clout really benefit students and schools?

Public school teaching is now one of the most secure occupations in America. Teachers are rarely fired for incompetence or substandard work or anything short of criminal activity.

With the unions secure and the members secure, the next priority is obvious: more money. In this endeavor, the unions have peculiar allies in administrators and school boards.

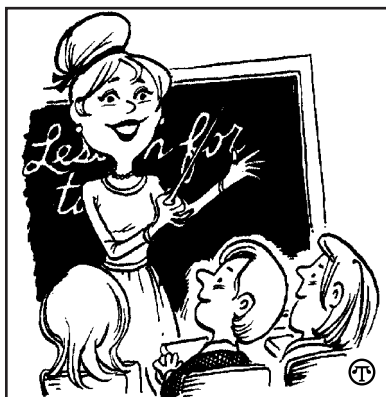
Through their political clout the unions can be valuable allies in extracting additional funds from the legislature, or lobbying for construction bond funds.

But school officials soon learn that having brought more money into the system, the unions feel it is only right to demand a larger slice of the pie in the form of salaries and benefits.

Districts that pay teachers a relatively high wage also find that their unions begin to expand their role into what were previously considered to be management prerogatives.

It is not a coincidence that unions with the greatest involvement in peer review, curriculum development, budget oversight or joint management, also tend to reside in districts with the highest teacher salaries.

Administrators and school reformers often fail to make head-



School districts need to address the needs of teachers that unions can't meet.

way against unions because they consistently strike at union strengths. They try to hammer away at the wall of protection the unions have built for their members.

The key is not to weaken what the unions provide, but to offer employees what the unions can't provide. Happy employees don't form unions. Workers whose financial and intrinsic needs are being met do not seek protection. The unions sell protection at the cost of liberty. Offer employees more liberty. The unions sell their services at the cost of involvement. Offer employees more involvement. The unions sell solidarity at the cost of individuality. Offer employees more individual input and rewards.

Mike Antonucci is director of the Education Intelligence Agency, which conducts public education research, analysis and investigations. His e-mail address is EducationIntel@aol.com.