

Dear Colleagues:

Former President John F. Kennedy once said, *“Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor. But, their work goes beyond their own job, and even beyond our borders. For the labor movement is people. Our unions have brought millions of men and women together... and given them common tools for common goals. Their goals are goals for all America - and their enemies are enemies of progress. The two cannot be separated...”*

After reading former U.S. President John F. Kennedy’s statement, I started thinking about our own union, the Prince George’s County Educators’ Association (PGCEA). I started thinking about how we could increase membership by welcoming new colleagues to our schools. So once again, on behalf of your Faculty Building Representatives; Welcome Neighbor”.

15 Ways Association Representatives Can Welcome New Teachers

Your NEA and PGCEA have come up with a novel idea to encourage, promote and provide leadership for new hires at your school. We say that “you have a new neighbor next door to you (that’s next door to your classroom)” and it is time to bake up a batch of cookies; drop in and say “Hi” over the boxes of unpacked books; lend a screwdriver or an eraser; and present an Association contract to your “new neighbor”.

Your new neighbor is your colleague at school and, as the Building Representative; you should be a great source of information for him or her.

There can be three types of new employees in your building:

- transfers from another building;
- newly hired experienced employees; and
- newly hired inexperienced employees.

And guess what? You can be a valuable asset to all three. Their needs are different, but all three need you - as the Building Representative - to tell them the unwritten rules, and the customs and norms of your building.

You can help a new colleague fit in quickly by sharing information with them as quickly as possible. So, think about the unique aspects of your building and be ready to help in the name of your Association. If there are not any welcoming customs in your building, then start some! Some information to share could be:

- What time do employees arrive at your building in the morning?
- Where do employees hang out in the morning? At lunch? After school?
- Invite the “newbie” to meet you.
- Introduce the newbie to other Association members.
- What have employees done socially in the past?
- What are lunch time rules? What are the best places near school to eat on non-student days?

- What is the principal's reaction to student referrals?
- Student discipline referrals? Is there other help?
- What are the school's special events? When do they take place?
- Where do you get paper/supplies in school? Where can you find them cheaply outside of school?
- What is the copy machines protocol?
- Go over any forms they signed or should have signed.
- Review items in the contract on workday, evaluations and leaves.
- When are Association functions? Help new employees get there.
- Put aside some time the first couple of days and weeks to see how new employees are doing, especially first days with students.
- Encourage the "newbie" no matter how frustrated or disorganized they appear. Give advice, if asked.

Remember, if there is ever a time an employee needs a professional association, it is when they are new to the job and trying to figure what is expected and what help is available. As an Association Representative, your job should be to make sure that new people receive assistance whether they are members or not and to make sure new members understand the benefits of membership, begin to use those benefits and become involved in Association activities.

The second focus point is Parents' Community School Involvement.

We want all of you to know that many communities in Prince George's

County are beginning to form partnerships to help close achievement gaps.

Shortly after officially becoming Superintendent of Schools in Prince George's County, Dr. William Hite, Jr. identified areas in need of improvement, with parent and community involvement through communication as one of three areas of immediate concern. Dr. Hite solicited the support of both parents and community leaders in forging a working partnership to oversee and guarantee measurable success for all students in all PGCPS. Months of tireless meetings, community forums and recommendations have finally put into place the kinds of programs which have produced or have been instrumental in influencing the success PGCPS now enjoys! The partnership has shown results with improvements in high school testing.

Actually, after reading John F. Kennedy's statement, there were many more thoughts that came to mind, such as workload issues for our members, working conditions, compensation, teacher leadership, concerns about all schools in PGCPS making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the State, county and PGCPS budgets. However, I chose not to pile on you more frustration. We wanted to lift your spirits during these rough economic times. I also realized that at some point I had to stop writing (LOL). May we all find peace and joy with our most precious gift - the students of Prince George's County Public Schools.