



Citizens For Education



Fall Issue

November 2012

The objectives of Citizens For Education are to ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.

A Significant Change for Students Regarding Test Returns

As has been reported in the past several CFE newsletters, members of Citizens For Education initiated discussions with administrators regarding the topic of returning tests. The issue was raised because, for many students, very few tests/quizzes had been coming home.

For the past two years Citizens For Education Board members and concerned Council Rock parents who believed that returning assessments is important for better, more efficient study, class preparation, and overall learning, met with administrators, teachers and CR School Board Directors to advocate that students have their tests and quizzes returned.

At the June Academic Standards meeting, the administration announced that it had substantially revised its policy relating to the return of student tests and assessments, and presented Administrative Regulation 213, which would go into effect with the

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PSERS: What You Need to Know

The Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS), which provides qualified district employees a guaranteed defined-benefit pension, was a key subject at the May 16, 2012 Council Rock Budget Forum. Council Rock Director of Business Administration, Robert Reinhart, identified the district's state-mandated contribution to PSERS as the single expenditure driving the 2012-13 tax increase of 1.88 mills (1.7%). In fact, if it were not for the increase in PSERS, the 2012-13 budget would be lower than the 2011-12 budget. The 1.7% tax increase is estimated to provide \$2.2 million in revenue toward the \$3.8 million state-mandated increase in PSERS.

PSERS Funded by Employee, Employer, and State Contributions

The PSERS contribution by employees and local school districts is fixed by state law. In 1983, employee members' contribution rate was raised from 5.25% to 6.25% for new members. Since 2000, most employees have been contributing 7.5% of their salary to PSERS. Employees hired after July 2011, who took a one-time option to keep the same benefit payout level as those hired before July 2011, pay 10.3%.

Mr. Reinhart stated at the Budget Forum that the CR School Board "does not have any authority to change the funding mechanism or the rate it pays." Over the years, the state has varied the mandated

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Visit our website: www.citizensforeducation.com



Citizens For Education Annual General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, November 28th, 2012
7:30 pm – 9 pm

The Chancellor Center
30 N. Chancellor St., Newtown, PA

Please Join Us!!

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percentage amount of payroll that each school district pays to PSERS. No matter what percent is set by the state, the percentage is the same for each PA school district. The compulsory dollar amount varies because of the difference in each district's total payroll. In 2011-12, Council Rock was required to pay 8.65% of eligible employees' payroll to the PSERS Fund; for 2012-13 the rate was raised to 12.36%. The state's future mandated percentage increases over the next four years are: 16.75%, 21.25%, 25.56% and 26.26%.

The state has reimbursed districts at least half of its PSERS costs for employees hired after June, 30, 1994. More impoverished districts receive a higher state reimbursement rate. In the 2011-12 budget year, Pennsylvania contributed about \$1.07 billion to PSERS and in the current budget the state's obligation increased by \$256 million.

Current Pension Benefit

"The formula for benefits under PSERS is the employee's years of service, times the employee's multiplier (2% or 2.5%) times the average of the employee's three highest years of salary."¹

Employees hired before July 1, 2011, get 2.5% times the number of years of service. Those hired after July 2011 have a 2% multiplier, but have a one-time option in the first 45 days of employment to up their contribution from 7.5% to 10.3% in order to keep the 2.5% multiplier. These same newer employees have a shared risk provision that could change their contribution rate every three years.

Early History of PSERS

On July 18, 1917, the Pennsylvania Public Employees Retirement Act became law to provide guaranteed retirement benefits to all school employees who met the requirements. Over the years the legislature passed laws that continually refined employee eligibility, retirement benefit parameters, and the governance of the PSERS Fund.

Until 1933, the PSERS Fund was "invested exclusively in Pennsylvania state, county, city, borough, and township bonds with preference for school district bonds."² Because funds were not tied to the stock market, PSERS solvency was not threatened by the Great Depression. In 1933, US government bonds were added to the list of legal investments, and at the "height of the depression, the year's annual report noted that through the PSERS bond invest-

ments, jobs had been created building schools and roads in Pennsylvania."²

PSERS Surplus Years

Retirement Code, Act 96, enacted in 1975 had a profound effect on the system because it liberalized PSERS authority to invest in common stock and PSERS became an independent administrative board.

Between 1997 and 2002, the PSERS Fund was taking in more money from member contributions than it was paying out, plus getting robust returns from investments, resulting in a cumulative surplus of \$6.9 billion.

PSERS Fund Turns from Surplus to Deficit

In the 1990s, the pension system was funded at 126%. During that time the state and school districts decreased their contributions to the PSERS Fund, while employees continued to pay their full share. By 1999, PSERS was underfunded and

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2012-2013 school year. (You can find the regulation online by searching crsd.org -> Resources -> Administrative Regulations -> AR-213 or at: <http://www.crsd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=593>).

The revised regulation states, in part:

"With the exception of District Assessments, students have the option of taking assessments home".

The change means that beginning this school year, almost all tests, quizzes, essays, papers, lab reports and homework will be available to come home. (Students can choose to keep their assessments in school if they prefer.) The exceptions include midterms, finals, and other district-wide exams (such as quarterlies). In addition, parents and students will be able to easily see what assessments are available to bring home through the Home Access Center; there will be an asterisk next to any assessment item that is not available to bring home.

Citizens For Education applauds the Council Rock administration for making this very significant change, which will lead to greater productivity, better communication and, hopefully, less stress for students.

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could not meet its future obligations. The burst of the dot com bubble in March 2000 resulted in investment losses in the PSERS Fund. The PSERS Fund quickly found itself in a hole, because the investment losses were compounded by the state's suppressed contributions that eventually reached 0%.

In May 2001, under the leadership of Governor Tom Ridge, in order to justify the 50% pension raises that the legislators gave themselves and other public employees, Act 9 was passed. Act 9 bumped up the pensions of PSERS members by 25% (increasing the multiplier from 2% to 2.5%), increased Health Premium Assistance from \$55 a month to \$100, and reduced vesting requirements from 10 years to 5 years.

Four months after the passage of Act 9, the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred and PSERS lost billions in the market collapse that followed. Despite this, in 2002, the Republican legislature gave a two-part cost-of-living increase (COLA) to retirees who were left out of the 2001 pension increases. The COLAs and market losses changed what once was a \$2.5 billion surplus into a \$1.5 billion deficit by 2003.

In 2008, with the global market collapse of the "Great Recession," the PSERS Fund lost 28.7% of its value; the worst of any state according to a study by the Pew Center on the States.

PSERS 2010 Reforms

Under the initiative of Governor Ed Rendell, the state legislature passed Act 120 of 2010 that rolled back the benefit enhancements of 2001 only for employees joining the plan after July 1, 2011. For these newer employees, the pension multiplier was reduced to 2%, the retirement age increased, the lump sum payment option was eliminated, and the vesting period was changed from 5 to 10 years.

New members also have a shared risk program and "benefit when investments of the PSERS Fund are doing well and share some of the risk when investments underperform. Starting July 1, 2015, new members' contribution rate will stay within the specified range, but could increase or decrease by 0.5% every three years, depending on the investment performance of PSERS."³ If the pension multiplier is 2%, the range of fluctuation of the employees' contribution is between 7.5% and 9.5%; and if the employee multiplier is 2.5%, the range is between

10.3% and 12.3%.

To buy time for the state treasury and school districts to fund PSERS, Act 120 spreads the looming unfunded liability out over several years. The longer spread pushed the first pension spike for state and local school districts to a 4% increase in 2012-13.

CR Minimizes Effect of PSERS Mandated Increase on Taxpayers

Council Rock's ability to raise taxes is limited by Act 1 (The Taxpayer Relief Act of 2006) that uses a complicated state formula to dictate the maximum percentage that each district can raise taxes each year without referendum. The Council Rock Act 1 limit for 2012-13 is 1.7% plus an exception of 1.3% based on the increased PSERS payments. Although the CR board authorized the administration to apply for the exception, they also directed the administration to build a budget without using that exception.

Being mindful of taxpayers' burden, CR did not pass the exception on to taxpayers, and instead reduced expenditures. The district also used \$2 million from the budgetary reserve to finance this school year's budgetary needs.

Future Escalating PSERS Payments

Because the state legislature postponed the needed increase in employer contributions for a decade, school districts and the Commonwealth have not paid what they should in any of the last 10 years. As a result, the impact of needed increases to the state and school district's budgets for their share over the next 4 years is staggering and will require tax increases or severe budgetary cuts for both the state and school district's to meet anticipated future obligations to PSERS.

To make up the PSERS deficit, the percentage of the school district's contributions will rise every year for the next 4 years from 12.36% to 26.26%. These mandatory, continually increasing, payments for school districts and the state's share will be challenging. In the 2012-13 fiscal year budget alone, the general fund appropriation for the Commonwealth's matching share of the employer contribution to PSERS is \$856.1 million, up \$255.9 million, or 43%.

PSERS Investments Still Falling Behind Expectations

Governor Corbett's budget proposal of February 2012 estimates that retirements will rise by nearly

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Sixth to Seventh Grade An Important Transition

When it comes to the transition from sixth grade to middle school, the Council Rock theme is, "It takes a village." Citizens got more information about this topic during a recent meeting with Joy McClendon (Director of Elementary Education/Curriculum Services), Kristin Weand, (Richboro Middle School teacher), Wendy Nelsen (Richboro Elementary School teacher), Albert Eckelmeyer (Newtown Elementary teacher), Mary Sanders (Newtown Middle School teacher), Sandy Kopel (Hillcrest Elementary School teacher), and Dr. Julie Eastburn (District Mathematics Coordinator).

Sixth grade students are recommended for either Honors or Academic level of instruction for 7th grade. Students with special needs may also be placed into Inclusion or Foundations classes for additional specialized learning, supported by an IEP. Determining which level is appropriate for each student, in each subject area, is a yearlong process, with much of the communication to parents and students occurring in March.

Behind the Scenes

The flow of information about curriculum content occurs through vertical teaming throughout K-12. Teachers and curriculum coordinators meet to discuss what benchmarks are expected at each grade to ensure readiness for the following year. There is also emphasis on textbook continuity, to ensure the texts used at the elementary level align and properly prepare students for the texts used in the middle school. For example, the enVision Math textbook, used from K-5, is an excellent precursor to the McDougal Littell Math Course 1 used in 6th grade and the McDougal Littell Math Course 2 used in Academic 7th grade classes.

In the past few years, the teachers have also had visitations where the 6th grade teachers observe 7th grade classrooms and 7th grade teachers go to the elementary schools to observe the 6th grade. All 6th grade teachers also receive the first marking period report card of the 7th graders from their school as feedback for how well their former students are doing in their placements. The 6th grade teachers also meet with the middle school guidance counselors.

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10% in 2012-13 and by nearly 24% by 2016-17. At the same time, when there are fewer employees paying into PSERS than previous years, the fund's investment returns have been lower than expected. It was announced in September that fiscal year 2011-12 PSERS investments only earned 3-4% which are far below the 7.5% return that is built into the pension system's accounting. PSERS unfunded liability at the end of 2011 of nearly \$26.5 billion will grow to at least \$43 billion by 2019. Last year's worse than expected investment returns have to be made up by increases in future investment returns, by even more onerous increases to PSERS payments by the state and school districts, or contributions from workers and/or tax dollars.

CR Strategies to Meet Future PSERS Obligations

Council Rock's current PSERS contribution of 12.36% of payroll is \$13,055,088 and will more than double by 2016-17. The district estimates that the 26.26% of payroll will be \$27,789,088. Yet CR is slightly better off than other school districts because it has set aside \$7.4 million to offset future PSERS increases. Still, meeting CR's future PSERS payments will be challenging.

Further PSERS Reforms Needed

Unless future investments make up recent losses, employees and/or taxpayers will have to fund the difference caused by these losses. Since school district revenues have been negatively affected by the "Great Recession," mandated PSERS increases could result in severe cuts to district's budgets that could negatively impact delivery of quality public education.

Reforms needed to ensure that the PSERS Fund and Pennsylvania school districts are solvent, to meet future PSERS obligations, are still being debated. To add your voice to this discussion, contact your state legislators.

¹ Sunshine Review. Pennsylvania Public Pensions

http://sunshinereview.org/index.php/Pennsylvania_public_pensions#History

² Public Employees Retirement System: History - <http://www.psers.state.pa.us/about/history5.htm>

³ Synopsis of Pension Reform Legislation Act 120 of 2010 (House Bill Number 2497, Printer's Number 4476) http://www.psers.state.pa.us/content/pfr/resources/Act_120_AMH_Insert_revision_01_2012.pdf

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Factors in Determining Placement.

There are different factors used to determine placement in each subject area. This includes tests, district tests, quizzes, projects, papers and the 6th grade assessment project. A Pennsylvania Writing Rubric system is used to evaluate the quality of a student's work. State standardized tests and SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) are considered too. There are also intangibles, such as class participation, ability to work independently, enthusiasm for the subject, willingness to ask questions, as well as any significant changes that might be occurring for the child outside of school.

There are specific guidelines for recommending a student for honors classes, depending on the subject. In math, a student is expected to have a minimum 95% class average. There is also a math placement test given in the early spring. In the past, there was a strong connection between math and science; Honors Math was considered a requirement for being recommended for Honors Science. That is no longer the case, as teachers feel that students can get the math education they need for high school science (specifically chemistry and physics) in accelerated classes, which is another level of rigor offered at the high school. In the other core subject areas, teachers analyze reading and writing ability, the results of the SRI and the other determinants listed above.

One issue that was discussed is the ramifications of course choices for 7th grade as a general blueprint for the rest of their secondary education. This is true specifically for math and science. If a student is not on an honors math and science track in 7th grade, it is very difficult to transition to the honors level in future grades. Citizens For Education thinks this is information that should be communicated to the 6th grade parents as they go through the course selection process.

Parent Communications

Parents have an opportunity to attend a middle school orientation in March of their student's 6th grade year. The presentation includes an introduction by the principal, as well as teachers in each area. After the presentation, parents are invited to walk around and speak to the various curriculum coordinators to get a better feeling about the rigor of each subject. While no elementary school has specific parent meetings set up in the spring, any parent is welcome to request a meeting with their child's 6th grade teacher to discuss class recommendations. Parents are also allowed to override teacher recommendations. At the middle school, teachers do not look at the override list until after the first interim report. At that time, if a student is not performing well, they do look at the elementary file to see if an override is a factor.

Transitions

All 6th grade students visit their respective middle schools in the spring. In addition, each middle

Did you know that attendance email alerts have been posted to the Home Access Center (HAC) logon screen? You will NOT get an email if your child is absent until you "opt-in" using the process described here <https://hac.crsd.org/homeaccess/crsd/emailalerts.pdf>

school has their own activities to help ease the students' transition. For example, at RMS, there is a penpal program, where a 7th grader writes a letter to a 6th grader. At NMS, the 7th graders do a Power Point presentation about going to the middle

school, which their feeding elementary schools can view. They also have a reading program in which the 6th graders and several 7th graders read the same novel. The 7th graders then visit the elementary schools and lead a class session about the book. At the beginning of 7th grade, there are also many social events planned to help the students adjust and make friends. Different activities occur at each school.

Much time, attention and careful consideration are given to making sure that sixth grade students are appropriately placed in their middle school classes. Citizens For Education appreciates the diligent effort and collaboration that teachers and administrators put into ensuring that the transition from elementary school to middle school is a positive experience for every student.

Secondary Level Restorative Practices

As a follow up to the elementary level bully prevention and character development practices reported in our spring 2012 newsletter, Citizens For Education is now looking at the secondary level (grades 7-12). In Council Rock, the secondary level relies on Restorative Practices to assist in preventing and addressing bullying and other undesirable behaviors.

The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) states that the premise of Restorative Practices is “that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them.” Restorative Practices is used to manage student behavior and teach students to take responsibility for their actions. It is considered preventive because it is applied before a significant problem has developed, compared to Restorative Justice, which is reactive, i.e., applied after the problem has occurred.

Newtown Middle School (NMS) initiated this program in Council Rock, led by then Assistant Principal Richard Hollahan. The NMS program began with IIRP provided trainers and data was collected for three years. The results of that study, shown below, indicated a significant decrease in behavior problems and lower numbers of detentions and suspensions. After analyzing the data, all of the secondary level schools began to employ Restorative Practices.

Infractions	05-06	04-05	03-04		Response	05-06	04-05	03-04
Misbehavior (hall, class, bus)	69	161	147		Restorative Conference	29	2	0
					Detention	71	182	396
Physical Altercation	9	20	41		Saturday Detention	24	103	67
Fighting	2	5	8		Suspension (1 day)	17	69	41
Threats	2	7	8		Suspension (2 day)	8	35	22
Theft	5	5	10		Suspension (3 day)	8	16	13

In Council Rock middle schools, Restorative Practices has two main components: circles and restorative conferences. Circles occur during RA period or other times as the need arises. They are used to build relationships and are often topic driven. Circles allow each person to share their feelings and listen to others' in a safe and controlled environment.

Restorative conferences are run by an administrator (sometimes not the building administrator where the action occurred to promote neutrality) and sometimes include teachers, affected students and parents. This concept holds that the relationship has to improve before it can be repaired. This is accomplished by students sharing the personal impact of the undesirable act, and what each party was thinking as this occurred. This is viewed as a fair process as students feel they have a voice. The following are examples of questions asked during Restorative Conferences:

Restorative Questions #1 (to respond to challenging behavior):

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative Questions #2 (to help those harmed by others' actions)

1. What did you think when you realized what had happened?

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(Restorative Practices continued from page 6)

2. What impact has this incident had on you and others?
3. What has been the hardest thing for you?
4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

All three middle schools have activities to bring students together to create a school family. There are opportunities for students and staff to interact over the summer. All three middle schools have boys and girls "Nights Out". The sixth to seventh grade transition has developed to include collaboration between sixth and seventh grade teachers. Recently all sixth grade teachers were required to visit a seventh grade classroom and seventh grade teachers did the same in sixth grade classrooms. Newtown Middle has transition coaches to help new students become acclimated to the middle school.

At the high school level, peer mentoring programs have been developed. CR North has been using the KOMs (Kick-Off Mentors) peer mentoring program for a number of years and recently CR South has developed its own program. Both programs were funded initially by the Council Rock Education Foundation. These programs enlist upper level students as peer mentors who interact with ninth grade students to help students adjust to their high school. This is all in an effort to develop positive relationships to prevent bullying. Restorative conferences are used when needed. Both high schools also use circles, like the middle school, but not during a certain period of the day. CR South is looking into doing boys and girls "Nights Out," like the middle schools. CR North has pursued different initiatives such as a Diversity Committee.

Due to the cost of training on Restorative Practices, a trainer model was developed. Council Rock now has seven trainers who in turn train staff. They are Richard Hollahan, Tim Long, Tim Keddie, Matt Schram, Mike Reid, Shighlah Jackson and Tammy Cook. Trainers must renew annually with IIRP at a nominal cost of \$100 per trainer. Restorative Practices training is included in the new teacher induction program so that every teacher knows this process.

As social networking has evolved, the district has seen problems spill over into school from actions that occur outside of the school day. The issues inherent in social media have been incorporated into computer classes at the middle school. An Assistant District Attorney spoke to all middle school students about the problems with social media. Motivational speakers are often engaged for student assemblies.

Restorative Practices seem to be working. While the district does not keep specific data per school, detentions and suspensions continue to decrease at the secondary level. The middle schools have eliminated Saturday detentions completely as the need disappeared. At the high school, weekly Saturday detentions have now turned to bi-weekly.

Citizens For Education would like to see the district collect relevant data and track behavior issues to analyze the effectiveness of the diverse elementary and secondary programs as students move through all three levels of education. This would allow for tweaking of programs to develop the best practices to prevent bullying at an important, impressionable time in a students' life. As Mr. Desko said with regard to bullying, "when you let it go, you send a message that you are comfortable with it."

Update on Pennsylvania Anti-Bullying Initiatives

As of this writing, PA House Bill 2636, otherwise known as the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Act, has been introduced with bipartisan support from thirteen cosponsors. Six mayors representing cities throughout Pennsylvania have signed their approval. According to the bill's sponsor, the bill addresses concerns through "promoting the prevention and appropriate remediation of bullying incidents with educators and school staff, along with raising awareness of cyber-bullying that takes place within schools' jurisdiction."

A 2011 report by the US Department of Education analyzed Pennsylvania bullying laws, and reported that

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Christine Trioli CR's New Director of Human Resources

Christine Trioli joined Council Rock as Director of Human Resources on April 23, 2012, following an extensive and thorough search process that began with more than 20 applicants. Christine brings thirteen years of HR experience to Council Rock, with varied hands-on experiences and a real team spirit that will benefit the district.

Currently residing in Philadelphia with her family, she grew up in the Mayfair section of Philly and attended St. Basil's Academy in Fox Chase. Trioli's Human Resources career began in 1999 in the School District of Philadelphia. She started in this position after earning her BA in English from St. Joseph's University and a MA in English from Rutgers University. It's important to note that she worked full time while receiving her education. She was the Assistant Manager of a movie theater during college and while attending graduate school she worked full time in the medical publishing industry. She began to doubt her original thoughts of becoming a college English professor, took a leap of faith, and accepted an entry-level HR position in Philadelphia. It was very quickly clear to her that she found her niche and she went on to receive her PHR, a national certification for Human Resources professionals. She spent over 5 years in the Philadelphia School District where she was responsible for hiring all new teachers...in a district where, on average, there are 1,400 hires each year! In this role, she also delved into the many details of HR, including: policies, salary administration, retention, certification compliance, new employee orientation, on-line application system, tracking, and more.

Christine later took her Philadelphia experience to Bucks County. From 2005 to 2011, she was the Director of Human Resources in the New Hope-Solebury School District. This position was an interesting challenge as there was no formal department in place when she arrived. During her tenure, she created a highly functioning, effective and efficient Human Resources department serving 245 employees. The advantage of developing a new department is that you must be hands-on in all areas. Trioli developed and honed her skills in recruitment, policy administration, benefits administration, record keeping, contract management, compensation practices and employee relations.

Ms. Trioli also worked for one year, from April 2011 until her move to Council Rock, in the Lower Moreland School District as the Director of Human Resources/Public Relations. Throughout her time at both New Hope-Solebury and Lower Moreland, Council Rock was on her radar. Council Rock was considered the "pillar of the HR group in Bucks County." The reputation of Council Rock was extremely high and many districts looked to Council Rock for good practices. Trioli noted that while in New Hope-Solebury, when faced with decisions for her department, she often asked, "What's Council Rock doing?"

When Ms. Trioli learned of Dave Bollinger's retirement, she jumped at the chance to work in Council Rock. The district's strong reputation made the position attractive and she was confident that her skills and experience would serve her well in the position. Ms. Trioli reports directly to Superintendent Mark Klein and is responsible for recruitment, selection, benefits, teacher certification management, and labor relations for the nearly 1,500 personnel in the district.

The transition to Council Rock has been smooth. Trioli said Council Rock is an incredibly "collegial, intelligent, and responsive group." She is impressed with the universal desire among all administrators to treat everyone with respect. She noted that decisions in Council Rock are not "knee jerk," rather there are very thoughtful processes in place to make the best decisions for the district.

In her nearly six months in Council Rock, Ms. Trioli has been focusing on building the district's HR section of the intranet, "The Rock." This internal system for employees includes portals for benefits, certification and other important district information. She notes, "Teachers are very busy," therefore she is committed to making things easier and more transparent for employees. She is hoping to demystify specific topics that are often on the minds of employees such as personal or medical leaves, retirement, benefits, etc. Trioli is also working closely with Director of Business Administration, Bob Reinhart, as HR systems and finance matters are run through the same computer system.

Ms. Trioli's philosophy is to "treat people with fairness" and to always be open to and respect people. She noted, in order to succeed, "You can't believe you're always right." This spirit is sure to serve Council Rock well. We thank Ms. Trioli for taking the time to speak with Citizens For Education and wish her the very best of luck.

In the Numbers: A Look at Changes in Elementary School Populations

Elementary School Enrollments and Number of Sections - 2006 vs. 2012*						
Elementary School	2006-07 Enrollment	2006-07 Sections	2012-13 Enrollment	2012 -13 Sections	Enrollment Change 2006 to 2012	Section Change 2006 to 2012
Wrightstown	363	16	324	14	-39	-2
Holland	534	21	366	15	-168	-6
Rolling Hills	463	21	401	19	-62	-2
Richboro	526	22	479	20	-47	-2
Hillcrest	551	23	499	20	-52	-3
M. Welch	711	29	613	25	-98	-4
Churchville	677	28	644	26	-33	-2
Newtown	782	32	661	27	-121	-5
Sol Feinstone	798	33	698	29	-100	-4
Goodnoe	774	31	796	31	22	0
TOTAL	6179	256	5481	226	-698	-30

*October enrollment data is used

At their September 20, 2012 meeting, the Council Rock School Board approved completion of an updated district demographic and enrollment study. Because the last such study was completed in 2006 by the Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL), Citizens For Education (CFE) has compiled a comparison of Council Rock's elementary enrollment data from 2006 and 2012. The *In the Numbers* chart above provides the number of all students, including special education, in each elementary school in 2006 and in 2012, and the district-wide difference in enrollment and regular education sections. These numbers show a decreasing elementary population with significant shifts in enrollment since 2006, creating a wide disparity in the number of students in the smaller elementary schools and the larger schools.

The 2006 PEL study was contracted to guide the district as it prioritized three elementary school renovations, but preceded the downturn in the economy. Renovations included 13 permanent classroom additions to replace 13 trailers at two different buildings. Churchville's \$13.6 million renovation included an addition that exchanged its 7 trailers for 7 permanent classrooms. Holland's in-progress renovation/addition, approved for \$18 million, is replacing 6 trailers with 6 permanent classrooms. Goodnoe's projected \$18 million capital project plan that removes 8 trailers includes an expansion of at least 6 classrooms, with an option for 4 more.

Council Rock enrollment data shows that all elementary Schools except Goodnoe (already the largest) have enrollment declines. *In the Numbers* shows that since 2006, while these three renovation and addition projects were being planned and/or put into operation, Council Rock's overall elementary school enrollment dropped by 698 students and 30 regular education sections. *In the Numbers* shows the location of the enrollment decline by school, and where the district has classroom space that is no longer needed for regular education sections.

There is a wide range of decreases in enrollment in each school, from a low of 33 students to a high of 168. This has created a Council Rock where the variability in number of students in a school is

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(In the Numbers continued from page 9)

even more disparate than it was in 2006. Since 2006, two schools that have no trailers (Maureen M. Welch and Newtown), and a third school with just 2 trailers (Sol Feinstone) have had 46% of the elementary enrollment losses, losing a combined 319 students and 13 sections. Combine these losses with Holland, which is currently having all of its trailers replaced, and the district is down 487 students; 70% of all the losses in just 4 schools.

The uneven enrollment decline, a lack of a school size philosophy, and the absence of any district-wide elementary redistricting for 12 years, have all contributed to the disparity between the number of students in each of the elementary schools. There is a

huge disparity in the sizes of the district's elementary schools. The five smallest elementary schools (in order: Wrightstown, Holland, Rolling Hills, Richboro and Hillcrest) have enrollments between 324 and 499. The five largest elementary schools (in order: Maureen M. Welch, Churchville, Newtown, Sol Feinstone and Goodnoe) have enrollments between 613 and 796. These smaller school/larger school distinctions could be creating vastly different experiences for students.

In 2006 there was only one school in the 300-student range (Wrightstown with 363) and in 2012 there are two (Wrightstown and Holland). In 2006 there was only one school in the 400-student range (Rolling Hills), this year there are three (Hillcrest, Richboro and Rolling Hills). This year, even though section losses in some schools put them under capacity, nothing has been done to make school enrollments more equitable.

Without a school size philosophy, the district began replacing all trailers with permanent classrooms. One of the side effects of

the over \$50 million in capital debt is the addition of 6 permanent classrooms at Holland, the school with the largest enrollment decline (168 students and 6 sections). Similarly, the district added or is adding more permanent classrooms to the two largest schools even though their neighboring schools with no trailers have had substantially declining enrollment and the capacity to take on more students. Newtown, with just 27 sections in 42 classrooms, shares a sending boundary line with Goodnoe and Maureen M. Welch, with 25 sections in 37 classrooms, is next to Churchville's sending area. The Churchville and Goodnoe additions will give those schools permanent capacity to house twice as many students as the district's two smallest enrolled schools (Wrightstown and Holland).

Redistricting and school closings can further affect each school's enrollment. If sending areas

Did you know that the library at CRHS North is open to all students on Monday and Tuesday after school from 3:00 to 9:00 PM and the library at CRHS South is open to all students on Wednesday and Thursday after school from 3:00 to 9:00 PM?

are not changed, Holland will become the district's newest state of the art elementary school and will be greatly under capacity. Without growth, or a redistricting, the gap in enrollment at Churchville and Goodnoe versus their neighboring schools, with declining enrollment, could continue to

widen. Even if enrollment continues to decline at all schools, a school closing could increase enrollment at the larger capacity schools (Churchville, Goodnoe, Newtown, and Maureen Welch¹).

Citizens For Education agrees with Superintendent Mark Klein who stated an updated demographic study is essential information before "another round of capital projects." He went on to say, "Projections from a smaller microcosm for the school enrollment categories and the district enrollment itself" will give decision makers a very much needed "30,000 ft. view." Hopefully, the outcome of the Pennsylvania Economy League 2012 report will be a good first step in guiding decisions on renovation planning capacities and/or sending area adjustments.

¹ In the Numbers - Elementary Buildings and Classroom Sizes reported in Citizens For Education's fall 2010 newsletter (see www.citizensforeducation.com).

President's Message

In the past year, Citizens For Education has proudly introduced a new website (www.citizensforeducation.com) and Facebook page (Citizens For Education) to help us achieve our mission: To ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.

The Citizens For Education executive board is an all-volunteer committee that is passionate about the education of all Council Rock children. Your membership allows us to issue two informative newsletters per year, as well as maintain our website and post office box.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I wanted to take this

opportunity to thank all of the members of Citizens For Education for their continued support, to thank the Citizens For Education board members for their tireless efforts on behalf of students, and to thank the Council Rock Administration and staff for their continued dedication to excellence. By working together, we can make the educational experience at Council Rock the best that it can be.

Members, please plan to join the executive board at 7:30pm on Wednesday, November 28, 2012 for our Annual Meeting in Historic Classroom 1 of the Chancellor Center. If you are reading this newsletter and are not yet a member or your membership has lapsed, you are invited to mail the attached membership form by November 21st and then join us on the 28th!

Best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at Citizens For Education!

Nancy J. Sauers
President, Citizens For Education

CFE Tutor Survey Yields Helpful Information

Last spring, CFE fielded a 10-question parent survey to assess the extent of tutoring among the district's high school students. The CRSD administration also distributed its own surveys to both students and teachers regarding tutoring practices. In late August, CFE sat down with Superintendent Mark Klein to share survey results and identify next steps. Although these were not scientific polls, the findings will be used by the Administration to direct further effort and information gathering, and to clarify district policies regarding tutoring. The CFE poll found that math, in general, and Algebra 2 and Geometry, in particular, had the highest numbers of students tutored, though responses also indicated students are being tutored in science, English, and foreign languages. CFE will continue to work with the CRSD Administration to better understand and report on tutoring practices and policies. Mr. Klein has committed to review Administrative Regulation 116, which addresses the issue of tutors by late November of this year, and Citizens will report on any updates in our Spring 2013 newsletter. (See <http://www.crsd.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=593> to find AR116) We thank all those who participated in the CFE survey!

(Restorative Practices continued from page 7)

Pennsylvania's policies "were less explicit in communicating legal expectations and avoided concrete prohibiting statements" than other states. "I don't think anyone is taking them seriously, they just don't have any teeth," said the bill's sponsor.

The House Education Committee recently conducted a public hearing on House Bill 2464. According to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) legislative report dated September 28, 2012, "Legislation requiring school entities to develop by January 1, 2013, a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyber bullying (has been introduced). The policy shall delineate disciplinary con-

sequences for bullying and shall identify by job title, the appropriate school staff person to receive reports of incidents of alleged bullying and the school officials responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented. The bill outlines minimum standards the policy must meet and outlines duties of the Department of Education to enforce compliance."



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*Membership entitles you to receive our newsletter published semi-annually and voting privileges at our general membership yearly planning meeting, held in the fall.

** Already a member, but need to update information (current address, phone #, e-mail, etc.)? Please contact Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com.

Citizens For Education is a not-for-profit, non-partisan community group whose objectives are to ensure a quality education for all students of the Council Rock School District, to better inform the Council Rock community of educational issues, and to increase the involvement of the community in the decision making processes affecting the quality of education in Council Rock.