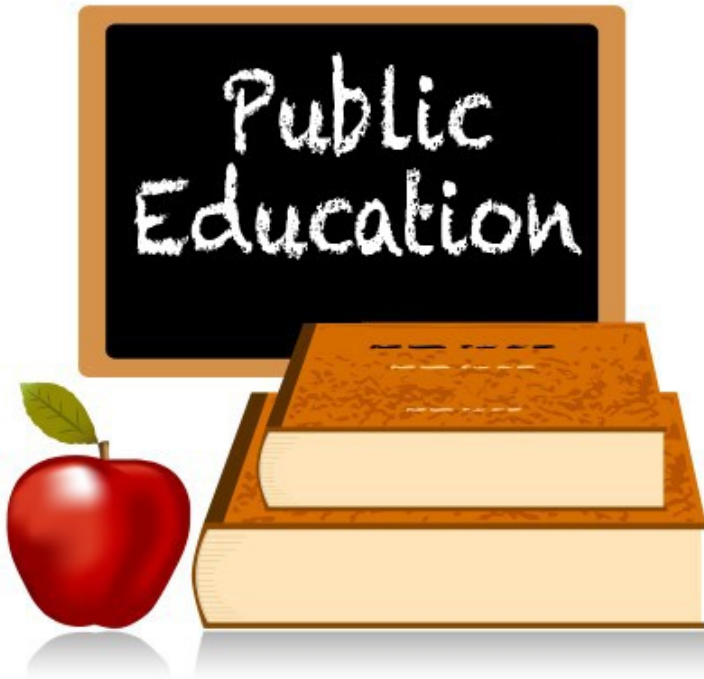


Public Education – What’s happening?

By Mallee Stanley



When I was assigned my first full-time teaching position, I was not laid off after my first year; nor were the other new teachers at Anmore at that time. But twelve years ago, when a new government came into power, layoffs became a yearly occurrence.

Our district was unsure of how many teachers' jobs would be slashed due to funding shortages, so ever since, teachers wait for the dreaded news. The library and librarian were the heart and soul of a school and these were the first teaching positions to go.

In May of this year, teachers with 8.2 years of teaching experience or less, received their pink slips.

What does this do to teachers?

I've heard teachers say they are tired of teaching a different grade every year. They don't have space any more to store multiple grades of resources they've accumulated. They are tired of not having continuity with the same students in a school. They feel unappreciated and unwanted and their morale is low once that pink slip is handed to them. Finally, they admit their passion has ebbed.

Is this how we should treat our young teachers? Will this encourage university students to want to enter this important profession that under-values them?

For the staff remaining in a school, they don't feel any better. Often schools lose half their staff, many schools more than half. This means there is little point having school goals when you know you'll lose staff after a year.

For example, recently, Anmore focused on reading strategies, taking workshops on Pro D Days, purchasing books on the strategies. Next school year, only three teachers who participated in this professional development will remain at the school.

Since Kathy Hoffard retired, we have had a new kindergarten teacher every year. **How is this beneficial to anyone?**

And what about counsellors? They work closely with both students and families and when they are moved year after year, this causes further attachment disorders with both the child and family. The trust built with that professional is gone.

Many of these teachers will be rehired to a different grade, to a different school. Many may not be rehired and will be on the teacher on call list. I have heard of teachers finding out the night before school opens of their assignment. **How does this help them prepare to do the best job possible?**

In the last twelve years, I've witnessed nothing but cuts. Your tax dollars are supposed to include a first world standard of public education for your child. While we teachers are doing our best to maintain that standard, it is difficult when we see important programs and support sliding. For example, speech pathologists were cut at the end of last year which means less students receive service.

We went on strike losing thousands of dollars, but nothing has changed in public education. In fact, with the Government having won the recent court case with regards to class size and composition, expect more cuts, class sizes growing and less specialist support for needy children. When teachers organized classes for next year, we were forced to make several of those classes exceed the limit. This translates to less individual time a teacher spends with each student.

We teachers have done all we can. Now it's up to you. Our children deserve better.

