

President PHILIP RUMORE



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BUFFALO TEACHERS
FEDERATION, INC

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MEMO TO: Donald A. Ogilvie, Interim Superintendent, BPS
Members, Buffalo Board of Education

FROM: Philip Rumore, President, BTF

RE: Horrendous Class Sizes/Student Support Services Reductions

In response to concerns raised by teachers relating to educationally destructive class sizes and substantial reductions in student support services, the BTF has conducted an initial survey of our teachers.

The initial results are indeed troubling. While large class sizes in any grade/subject are troubling, 29, 30, 31⁺ students in Kindergarten (without a teacher aide or teaching assistant) are unacceptable and destructive as are Pre-K classes that are being pushed to their maximum. Early childhood education is the foundation of a child's education and a predictor of a student's future success.

As you have most likely heard me say many times over the years, **“We will never substantially improve our high school graduation rate and student success in high school unless we ensure that our students graduate from elementary school prepared for high school”**. This isn't rocket science. However, we haven't, as yet, devoted the necessary resources toward this obvious but, as yet, incomplete goal.

I am not suggesting “social promotion” or keeping students in third grade until they are 16! I am suggesting providing greatly reduced class sizes, intensive reading, math, and student support services for all of our elementary students so that they successfully move from PK-6. Unless we greatly reduce class sizes and provide the support services our students need during the day, additional time after school and adding one extra day or two to the school year is meaningless.

Indeed, several years ago, I proposed mandatory Summer School for elementary students (Gr. 2-6) who are not performing at, or near, grade level.

Yes, this will take increased funding. However, without intensive student support that our students and indeed all students (especially in poor school districts) need to ensure that they

move from one grade to the next prepared for that grade and prepared for high school, our students will continue to be short-changed and indeed nothing will really change.

Of course, this does not mean that we ignore or short-change our students in grades 7-12; however, many of the problems e.g., discipline and absenteeism will, in my opinion, be greatly reduced.

An integral part of ensuring our students' success is, of course, having the necessary Support Services for them, e.g., SST Teams, School Counselors, Social Workers, Attendance teachers, Psychologists, ESL teachers, etc.

As you will note from the enclosed, many schools have seen a reduction of services. It seems that rather than student Support Services being based upon need, e.g., the number of Students with Disabilities, and/or with severe problems, etc., a budget numbers game is being played. In my opinion, if we are going to help our students overcome some of the problems they are coping with, we need to work with them to find the source of their troubles and help them and/or their families overcome them.

We are also hearing of Special Education classes that have, as yet, no certified regular teacher assigned as well as the other concerns listed on the attached document.

While we will continue to have differences, I would hope that we could put those aside and work together to ensure that we provide all of our students with the services they need to move from PK-6 prepared for their next grade and prepared for high school.

I can't imagine a greater and longer-lasting legacy.

PR:ls

cc: Buffalo Teachers

Encl: [Class size Charts - Overage](#)
[Class size Charts - Services](#)
[Concerns Document](#)