

SLATE

SPECIAL EDITION

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TEACHERS UNFAIRLY LABELED

The July 29 headlines in *The Tennessean* screamed "Garcia Shuffles Problem Teachers". Not since the early 70s has the welfare and reputation of Nashville's professional educators been so callously disregarded. As both active and retired teachers read the article, feelings of shock, distrust and ultimately anger surfaced. The teachers singled out in the article felt ostracized, accused and judged without any unbiased recourse to appeal the decision.

In many cases, the teachers had no idea that the principal viewed their duties in the building as problematic until they received written notice. The principals in question had not had a conversation with them about their concerns nor given them any opportunity to address the issues. Garcia labeled these teachers as "problems" even though they have positive evaluations and performance records. These educators have suffered public humiliation at the hands of *The Tennessean* and Dr. Garcia.

MNEA POINTED OUT PROBLEMS WITH THE PLAN

Early in the spring when Dr. Garcia mentioned his idea of allowing principals to choose two teachers to administratively transfer, MNEA pointed out the obvious. The selected teachers would be branded as ineffective. Human Resources assured MNEA that would not be the case and developed guidelines barring principals from transferring teachers without providing a rea-

son. Many of the affected teachers requested an appeal. However, no appeal was granted even though the principal failed to show that record.

VOLUNTARY TRANSFER REQUESTS IGNORED

Another practice that has created dissatisfaction across the district is the virtual absence of the voluntary transfer option as provided in the contract. Teachers have complained over the last several years that although they have requested a transfer

to another school, they have been turned down year after year. Professionals recognize when they need a change, but that choice has seldom been extended to Nashville's teachers. In fact, some of the teachers administratively transferred this year had filed transfer forms and discussed with the principal their desire to voluntarily transfer to another school. The principal ignored the request and chose the now punitive administrative transfer procedure.

Did you hear what happened to some of our colleagues?

They were Administratively Transferred for speaking out!!

Don't let this happen again!!

Join MNEA President Erick Huth and others as they address the Board of Education on:

August 14 at 4:45 p.m.

**In the School Board Meeting Room
2601 Bransford Avenue**

Spread the word!

(It shouldn't take more than an hour)

TEACHERS MARKED

Just as teachers refrain from labeling students, district leaders should not use the administrative transfer process to negatively impact a teacher's reputation and career. This transfer process has previously been used when student enrollment declined, school programs changed or a situation developed at the school. Garcia's comments in

The Tennessean article suggest that he is proud of instilling fear in his employees whether they are teachers or principals.



JUST THE FACTS

Among the involuntarily transferred teachers, 90% are 50 years of age or older, 60% are at step 20 or higher on the salary scale, only 15 out of 126 schools used the Administrative Transfer plan, and all were either middle or elementary schools. Five of the principals who chose to arbitrarily transfer one or two teachers were themselves transferred to other positions. Still, these principal transfers had no impact on teacher appeals.

INTIMIDATION AND FEAR DESTROY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Professional educators see no positive outcome for this latest use of the administrative transfer process. This action is sowing seeds of despair and hopelessness. The unprofessional treatment of teachers does affect the learning environment in our schools. **Research shows that effective schools tend to be those with positive school climates and a collaborative instructional leader.** A teacher who feels undervalued and afraid to speak out for what's right, will unconsciously transmit that same fear and apprehension to students. Teachers, like students, need to be valued and held in high esteem by their superiors.

ACTION PLAN

- ◆ MNEA will address the Board of Education on **professional treatment** calling on the Board to ensure that Nashville's teachers are always treated professionally and with respect and dignity. Teachers should **attend the Aug. 14 Board meeting at 4:45 p.m.**
- ◆ Relationship building has to start at the top. Though Dr. Garcia speaks to community groups about teachers building nurturing relationships with children, the **district leadership must model a trusting and professional relationship with its employees.**
- ◆ When requests are made, the **voluntary teacher transfer** process must be utilized to the fullest extent possible to promote a healthy school climate.
- ◆ The **appeal process** must be overhauled to allow for impartial and fair hearings of professional employee complaints.

NONE OF US IS AS STRONG AS ALL OF US

I support professional treatment for all employees and I'll be at the Board Meeting August 14.

NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

HOME EMAIL (Not MNPS)

Mail to MNEA, Route 3, OR Fax to 726-2501 OR e-mail mymnea@comcast.net by **Friday, August 10.**

Together we can make MNPS a better place to work and learn.

First they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.

Martin Niemöller [1892-1984]

