This year approximately 150 new teachers were hired. As we enter year five of TEVAL, it is important to note a few important items for new teachers which may also serve as a refresher for veterans as well. Perhaps the three most important components are: goal setting, the midyear review, and the continuous feedback and support for teachers.

As you read this article, many teachers have completed the goal setting process. What should have occurred is a collaborative construction of those goals between the teacher and the Instructional manager (IM). Student learning objectives (SLO’s) must be mutually agreed upon and data-based. All teachers create a minimum of two goals, but never more than four. The midyear conference is a major checkpoint whereby a conference is scheduled for a formal sit-down. The IM and teacher review progress on the SLO’s as well as all other aspects of teacher performance at this point in the school year. Adjustments and changes to the SLO’s can be made if appropriate. The third major component is the continuous feedback and support. Throughout the year, following all formal observations as well as walkthroughs, IM’s should be giving feedback. This feedback is crucial so we are aware of our area(s) of strengths as well as where improvement is needed. The feedback is written on some occasions and verbal on others.

The goal setting process is incredibly important as roughly half of our summative rating is based on the level of attainment of our SLO’s. A unique feature of TEVAL is the SLO’s are specific to each teacher and completely data-driven. Learning objectives must be rigorous, yet realistic. Not all students will progress at the same rate. Nor is it possible to suggest every student will be at the exact same point at the end of the school year given how far apart individual students are academically when they arrive in our classrooms. SLO’s are specific and unique, as they should be, to each and every teacher.

...continued on page 8
Dear Fellow Educator,

Whether you are a new educator or have been working with New Haven’s children for many years, helping them with their coats, their spelling, their history, their math, science, English, foreign language, and their social skills. New Haven students are your kids, and they are my kids too. Together we do our best to teach them the attitudes and the skills they will need to seek post high school options either in the work force, the military, the trades or in institutions of higher learning. Unfortunately, the escalating costs of post-secondary education keep too many of our high school graduates from starting and completing their courses of study. Fifty years ago, Jean Lovell, a former teacher at Hillhouse High School realized that graduating seniors needed financial assistance to pursue their educational dreams. To help her students she started the New Haven Scholarship Fund. Fifty years later, the New Haven Scholarship Fund has awarded more than seven million dollars to more than 7000 students. This year the Scholarship Fund assisted over 200 of our New Haven graduates with over $300,000, helping them pursue their post-secondary career paths.

The Scholarship Fund is totally voluntary; there are no administrative costs or overhead. Every dollar donated goes directly to helping our students meet their tuition obligations, and enabling them to pursue their dreams. The members of the committee and I have been and will continue to be committed donors, along with people like yourselves who are invested in the youth of New Haven.

This is your opportunity to continue to help defray the cost of post-secondary training for deserving New Haven students. If every teacher in the New Haven school system would be willing to donate just $10.00 per pay period or about $1.00 a day, that small amount would generate well over $320,000, which would help an additional 200 New Haven graduates pursue their dreams.

As we all continue to give our students the tools they will need for academic success, we can also give them the financial support they need to continue their education so that one day they will have gotten the training and skills needed to fill many of the current 83,000 New Haven jobs. Currently, only 19,000 of these jobs are held by New Haven residents.

Within the next couple of weeks your building Steward will place in your mailbox a brochure from the New Haven Scholarship Fund detailing the mission, goals and history of the fund. You will also receive a payroll deduction form that you can fill out and send to Jessica Criscuolo in the payroll office, it’s that simple. Keep in mind that every dollar of every donation goes to our kids.

Please continue making a difference by helping our New Haven Students.

Jim Barber  
President  
New Haven Scholarship Fund

Dave Cicarella  
President  
New Haven Federation of Teachers
The arduous task of negotiating a contract is behind us and we are settled in and secure for 3 more years (2014-2017). While the economic climate was slightly better than our last negotiating session in 2009, it was still a struggle for our 15 person negotiating team to “keep what we had” and also add items that were identified as priorities through the process set up allowing teacher input. The success of our team is confirmed by a comparison of negotiated contracts in various school districts surrounding New Haven. Many of our colleagues in other districts will endure step freezes, a “hard zero” in at least one year (a “hard zero” means the teacher makes exactly the same salary as the year before), medical cost shares that are significantly and often painfully higher, and teacher reduction through attrition and/or layoffs. Conversely, our negotiating team was able to have salary increases for all teachers every year, cost share increases that are well below the norm, no step freezes, a reduction in the number of steps on our salary scale from 17 to 16, and a maintaining of the 64 day cash out of sick days for teachers and free medical benefits for all teachers with 25 years in New Haven upon retirement. The last two items are incredibly important to veteran teachers as they move closer to retirement. I give high praise to the negotiating team for securing a contract that provides security and peace of mind for 3 more years. There are a few items to highlight and explain:

1. Converting the Numerical Scale to Letters

The contract brought with it a new salary schedule converting our numerical steps to letters. The rationale was to clean up some aspects of the previous salary scale added in over the years such as max 1, max 2, max 3, step 14.5, the disappearance of step 1 and step 2, etc. While there was good reason to their inclusion as individual entities, throughout the years as a collective group, they simply became too confusing and irrelevant. The thought is to crossover to a new schedule employing letters. Everybody gets that Step A is equivalent to step 1, Step B is equivalent to step 2, etc.

Another crucial item is actually reducing the number of steps to reaching max. In the previous contract, we were forced to insert step 14.5 because of a bubble that existed. In this contract, we were able to gain back that step. Some teachers have called and assumed they were at the wrong step because the number is the same. That is simply because we now have only 16 steps as opposed to 17. But what matters is the fact that everyone picks up an additional step towards max while receiving a raise each and every year.

In our daily engagement with youth, we teachers make priceless contributions to the New Haven community. The goal of the NHFTCAN (NHFT Community Action Now) committee is to provide union members new, exciting opportunities to contribute to New Haven youth and their families.

Currently the NHFT organizes food drives, makes financial contributions to a wide variety of groups, and provides students with backpacks of supplies.

The goals of NHFTCAN is to expand this philanthropic outreach and broaden our community partnerships. We invite you read the letter in this issue from The New Haven Scholarship Fund and consider contributing. Remember, all the funds collected go DIRECTLY to our students. The New Haven Scholarship Fund has no overhead!

In addition, we plan to partner with local labor actions in support of living wage jobs.

Climate change is predicted to be a particular burden for the poor. NHFTCAN will pursue active partnerships with local environmental organizations that are working to mitigate our carbon crisis.

Parents who attend the citywide Parent Leadership Team and Parent University would benefit from programming NHFTCAN will help coordinate.

We look to highlight the great work New Haven teachers do every day. NHFTCAN will help to identify and promote our work in social media and other public forums such as radio and short podcasts.

If you are interested, please contact Metropolitan teacher Chris Willems at willemssscience@gmail.com
NHFT End-of-Year Party 2014
A different kind of union

Jackson Potter boarded a plane in April 2008 to attend the coalition’s conference, hosted that year by the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA).

At the time, Potter was a history teacher at Englewood High on the south side of Chicago. He and other rank-and-file and community members were fighting school closings across the city—with no help from their union officials or staff.

“The Chicago Teachers Union did nothing to stop the closures,” explains Pauline Lipman of the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Collaborative for Equity and Justice in Education. “Teachers were forced to operate outside the union, and work with the community and parents.”

She was the one who told Potter about the Tri-National Coalition conference, which would offer him examples from Mexico and Canada of a very different kind of teacher union.

“These are unions that exhibit tremendous courage,” Lipman said. “They aren’t simply going to fight for their teachers, but they are challenging the entire neoliberal agenda.” That meant battling against privatization and school funding cuts.

Potter wasn’t sure what to expect in L.A. But the conference exposed him to the Progressive Educators for Action Caucus (PEAC), the reform caucus that had just taken leadership of UTLA.

“It was a very different model than our union,” said Potter. And it gave him a way “to start thinking through how it would look different, and feel different, if we were able to shape the union policies and the approach to the membership.”

B.C.’s illegal strike

The three-day conference was jam-packed with workshops and speakers. Potter also met Jinny Sims of the British Columbia Teacher’s Federation. She had led an illegal strike, after the Liberal government refused to meet the teachers’ demands for improved classroom conditions, the ability to collectively bargain, and a fair pay increase.

A week into the strike, the BCTF was charged with contempt for violating a Labour Relations Board order, and its funds were frozen. But the community rallied around the teachers, providing them food and support. Two weeks later, victorious B.C. teachers returned to their classrooms with a new contract, though they still didn’t have the right to collectively bargain.

Sims “talked very honestly about the risks that were taken,” said Potter, “and the need to engage the broader community and the public around these vital issues. How do we resource classrooms, how do we ensure there is low class size, how do we connect the things that our members value that also resonate with the broader communities we serve?

“It was a moment that was obvious to me,” Potter said. “She was articulating something that we were trying to articulate in Chicago.” He returned home and proposed forming a caucus.

A few months later, Sims met with 35 Chicago teachers interested in doing just that. “There were light bulbs going off,” said Potter. “It was exactly what we needed to jump-start our union.”

The B.C. teachers’ story was an inspiration. “They shut down the city of Vancouver—because they made relationships with parents, communities, and with other unions,” said Karen Lewis, who would later become Chicago Teachers Union president. “[Sims] became the face of resistance to us in Chicago.”

Sims, who’s now a member of parliament in Canada, says she too was “incredibly inspired and excited” by the Chicago teachers and the caucus they formed, CORE. “They wanted to work to make a difference, even on top of teaching.”

She and the BCTF continued to provide guidance in the run-up to the 2012 strike in Chicago, where community support once again made the difference.

Oaxaca uprising

The Mexican teachers inspired CORE too. A documentary screened at the conference told about the 2006 uprising in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, where teachers led the city in a revolt against state corruption.

The uprising was led by the radical Sección 22 of the Mexican teachers unions SNTE and CNTE. Teachers had gone

To continue reading, go to http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2014/09/international-teacher-solidarity-cross-pollinates
As an antidote to the “grow grow grow” mentality of the elected officials and business leaders pushing charter schools, a recent report by University of Oregon professor and political economist Gordon Lafer outlines what’s wrong with privatization of public schools.

The report, titled Do Poor Kids Deserve Lower-Quality Education than Rich Kids? Evaluating School Privatization Proposals in Milwaukee, focuses on the model of Rocketship, a national charter elementary school organization that hopes to expand its Milwaukee footprint to eight schools by 2018.

City officials have even considered carving out the lowest-performing parts of the city’s schools for charters to operate, similar to the New Orleans “recovery district.” Milwaukee’s Chamber of Commerce and Democratic Mayor Tom Barrett are among the charter chain’s supporters, raising millions to help it grow.

Rocketship’s investors, who are tech industry heavyweights, claim altruistic intentions: they care about the kids! But they’re also profiting from the expansion of charter schools, a market for their own products and services.

Case in point: Netflix CEO Reed Hastings, on the board of Rocketship, is also an investor in a company called Dream Box, which runs software the schools use for math applications. In the public sector this type of self-dealing is often prohibited, because schools should be choosing the service or product with the best track record, not the one that will enrich investors.

So it’s no surprise that businessmen like Hastings find investing in charters much more appealing than paying more taxes to support public schools.

TWO-TIER SCHOOLS

Lafer points out that the charter companies’ self-proclaimed cutting-edge learning models offer anything but advanced instruction.

In Rocketship’s “blended learning,” for instance, students learn basic literacy and math with an emphasis on test preparation, receiving online instruction in the schools’ computer labs. Other academic subjects, arts, and music are left out of this education model.

The teachers at such schools are often inexperienced, with an average 30 percent teacher turnover from year to year—twice the Milwaukee school district average. A non-union workforce is part of the incentive for school districts to switch to charters, though some charter teachers have begun to unionize.

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50 to 1

While it claims a 29 to 1 student-teacher ratio, which includes non-certified, lower-paid instructors, Rocketship has actually redesigned its instructional model, shifting the ratio closer to 50 to 1. Company leaders explained bluntly that they were changing the schools’ structure to extract more money for expansion.

Even as they skimp on teachers and dumb down the curriculum, Rocketship and other charters brag of their mission to serve low-income black and Latino students. In reality they are further segregating America’s schools, creating two tiers: one for the affluent, where students get exposure to the arts, languages, sports, and one-on-one instruction, and the other where they are taught the basics, and spend most of their time in front of a computer.

At the 60-year anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education, separate is still not equal. Lafer proposes that all schools receiving taxpayer money be subject to the same accountability and transparency, and that they be governed democratically, such as by elected school boards where parents and community can have oversight.

To read the whole report, visit: http://www.epi.org/publication/school-privatization-milwaukee/

Samantha Winslow is a staff writer and organizer with Labor Notes.samantha@labornotes.org
Our New Contract...continued from page 3

2. Why the disparity of salary increases from one step to the next?
   Many teachers suffered through step freezes prior to my tenure as NHFT President. This resulted in lost wages for teachers trapped in this situation. We have consciously added additional money to these steps, where in some cases teachers are receiving salary increases of $3600 while others are receiving less. It was a conscious attempt to help these teachers “catch up” and recoup some of the lost wages. While these teachers will never make up all of the wages lost, I felt it was important to help them as best we could with the limited amount of money available and still not ignore anyone else. It is never easy nor pleasant to make these type of decisions, but they were necessary and done with good intentions.

3. The 45-minute prep period for all teachers
   This was a crusade on my part. We absolutely had to eliminate the ridiculous 30 minute prep period for elementary teachers. Now, every teacher receives a 30-minute lunch and a 45-minute prep period. And this includes all teachers at every grade level. Why any administrator would think this does not apply to Pre-K teachers is beyond comprehension. Their work is every bit as significant and important as any other in the school district.

4. The 30-minute time plans
   This is one area where we again show ourselves as progressive leaders in educational reform. I am extremely proud of the work of the NHFT Executive Board as we have transformed the very essence of who we are. The NHFT is now recognized as a professional organization, one that is at the forefront of reform. While we will always fight for “bread and butter” issues, we have now proven to be an organization that goes above and beyond the primary charge of many unions. The collaboratively-crafted plans, whereby both teachers and administrators must agree to the use of the 30 minutes of contractual time beyond the student day, delivers on our promise to provide teachers with collaborative time for issues of importance and of our choosing. I know of very few contracts across the country where teacher unions have gained a concession from management to allow teachers a direct and contractual right to determine use of this time. In virtually all other districts, that is a management right that is almost impossible to wrest away from them. A

A Review of the TEVAL Process...continued from page 1

The midyear review is crucial as any and all concerns are raised at this point. Prior to TEVAL, teachers were often not told of performance concerns until May or June, and teachers were “blindsided”, completely unaware that there were any deficiencies. Non-tenured teachers all too frequently received non-renewal notices without being comprehensively evaluated. This is the very reason that the teacher and IM both bring their “ratings” to this midyear meeting. While unofficial and not part of the teachers’ TEVAL, it is vital in that a conversation occurs whereby the teacher and IM compare the respective ratings. For example, if an IM has a teacher rated as “developing” in classroom management and the teacher has self-rated as “strong”, there must be a discussion regarding this disconnect.

The continuous feedback and support is central to TEVAL. Instructional Managers have the responsibility to provide quality feedback throughout the year and needed support to place us in a position where we can be successful. This is a significant part of their responsibility as an instructional leader. Identifying concerns is one part of the IM’s responsibility, but equally important is to assist in the professional development of the teachers assigned to them. That is part of their responsibility and we (NHFT) hold them accountable.

Teachers will call me (or NHFT Vice President Tom Burns) in June to question or argue their summative rating. Perhaps the most frustrating aspect is during the course of conversation it is conveyed that no midyear conference ever took place (or it occurred in May), or there was no agreement on the goals and the teacher “accepted” them. In other cases, there was virtually no feedback or support provided, etc. While Tom and I certainly still review these situations, this needs to be brought to our attention as they occur so we can fix them promptly. We have been successful in having over 70 TEVAL ratings changed for teachers due to procedural matters. Additionally, many of these were non-tenure teachers that had their non-renewal of contracts rescinded and their contracts reinstated. And while it is gratifying that we have a mechanism to do this, and certainly helpful to those affected, we never want anyone placed in this stressful position. Situations cannot be remedied unless we are aware of it. TEVAL is a system that deservedly continues to remain in the national spotlight with districts across the country replicating it. However, no system is perfect and fidelity is crucial. So as the year progresses, please contact me or Tom if you have any questions or concerns. A