



American
Federation
of Teachers AFL-CIO

ALBERT SHANKER
President

11 Dupont Circle, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036
(202) 797-4400

April 26, 1982

Mrs. Jimmie Jackson, Director
District of Columbia Teacher Center
Goding Elementary School
10th & F Streets, N.E., Rm. 301
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Jimmie:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in your recent conference. Comments of teachers between sessions were a testimonial to the rewards of the teacher center program gleaned through your tireless efforts.

In my session, we discussed the need for involving the membership more directly in protecting educational standards, seeking input to decision-making on these issues, and promoting community outreach. Too often the union is perceived as handling safety/security issues, but not being involved in members' day-to-day instructional needs.

I have proposed a program which would be complementary to the teacher center, which I'd like to discuss with you and Bill.

First, the problem. As budget cuts increase and conditions worsen in the schools, teachers and paraprofessionals often become resigned to conditions which are not conducive to learning. Too much paperwork, increasing discipline problems, supply shortages, conflicting Board directives and so forth present obstacles to teaching. People start out fighting to preserve good teaching/learning environments, but sometimes get tired of knocking their head against the wall and decide this is just the way the system is. This leads to the "survival syndrome," whereby people are concerned with coping on a day-to-day basis in their classrooms. We find this blurs global issues in education and leaves members with a sense that nobody really cares what's going on in their classrooms.

Fortunately, the union-supported teacher center fills this void in many of our locals. But I think there's even more we can do.

We would like to do some experimental work combining two separate programs originating in Corpus Christi and New York City. The idea is to have a new union position in each school building, the professional issues representative, which would parallel that of the building representative. This person would

Mrs. Jimmie Jackson
April 26, 1982 - 2

be available to counsel or assist teachers in educational matters and would be trained to be facilitators in professional issues circles, based on the study circle concept. These are small, informal, democratic groups (up to 20 members) in which participants select a topic to explore. They gather resources and share ideas and information on the topic, usually for a period of from 8 to 10 weeks. The product may simply be new information gained by participants, recommendations on a particular matter, or creation of informational material for colleagues.

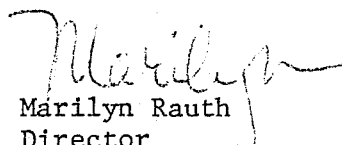
There are a lot more details I'd like to discuss with you which would take too much time here. I was thinking some or all of your representatives in the schools might be plugged into a program like this, unless it would be too burdensome.

We're going to pilot this program in about 30 schools in Miami in the fall, and I wondered if you think there might be any interest in D.C. The effect, hopefully, would be more involvement of union members at the building level, a perception that the union addresses and serves individuals' professional needs on a regular basis, and an image of the union in the community that it does more than ask for more money.

Also, Rufus suggested that the local union might sponsor its own QuEST Conference. I responded that this should be discussed with you to see how this fits into teacher center activities.

Let's talk soon about these matters. Give me a call, or I'll try and reach you soon.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Rauth
Director
Educational Issues Department

MR/pvt
opeiu2aflicio