



# Escambia Education Association

## Union of Escambia ESP



6551 N Palafox, Pensacola, FL 32503 / office: 850-476-2906 / fax: 850-477-4341  
Affiliated with FEA, NEA, AFT, AFL-CIO

### A Message from your Presidents

January, 2012

Welcome to 2012 — a year that promises to be much like 2011 only more intense. To some of us that may not seem like a bright forecast, but 2011 did see some happenings in the Escambia County School District that offer glimmers of good things on the horizon. Reform is not always palatable, and most often is certainly not swift. In the 2007 Winter edition of *American Educator*, “The Agenda That Saved Public Education,” by Richard D. Kahlenberg, points out that ‘the need to counter bad ideas with good ones is as vital today as it was 10 or 20 years ago. What was true in 2007 is still true in 2012. I contend along with Albert Shanker, AFT President 1974-1994, that our biggest challenge as educators is to preserve a system of public education in the face of those who would demolish

it. So how do we as professional educators accomplish that? We improve it. We take responsibility for OUR profession and our classrooms. We take honest looks at what goes on in our classrooms and work to make improvements that benefit both students and educators. We do not jump on the train of quick-fixes and unproven trends. In Escambia, your Union has been willing to work to take ownership of the problems we see in America’s public classrooms. We have worked to improve teacher evaluations, though not without some expected bumps this first year. We fully expected that some areas would have to be revisited and they will be. We have also instituted our START program with the intent of providing new teachers with the assistance they need to give them a firm

footing in their profession. Certainly not of least importance is our continuing voice calling for accountability of our elected officials. We have seen a light bulb flash as a result of SB 6 and 736. At long last educators are finally beginning to understand that political involvement does matter; our very profession is controlled by those we elect to office.

Do we have challenges ahead and battles looming on the education frontlines in 2012? Absolutely, but let there be no doubt that your union will be in the forefront of the battles fighting for reform that brings about a better teacher in every classroom and fair working conditions for all employees.

**Kathy Breakall, EEA President**

Welcome back. It’s a brand new year and I would like to thank all of you who support your Union. Without the support of members, Escambia ESP would be far less effective. During 2010 and 2011 employees in ECSD received some of the highest salary increases in Florida. Unfortunately, the last six months have seen those gains eroded. The State’s decision to tax you through retirement contributions and the School District’s imposition of outlandish insurance premiums has negatively impacted your income. Your Union understands these are hard times. That is the main reason there was no dues increase for this school year. When times are tough it becomes all the more important that we as co-workers stand united. The temptation to think of our own

situation without considering the larger ramifications can be overwhelming. Right now the majority of the elected officials in Tallahassee consider unionized citizens the enemy. The only way to combat the attacks on your paycheck, retirement and job security is through unity. Without unity, they will be free to continue their campaign to turn public servants into private contract employees - removing your rights and financial security.

Thanks you to everyone who took their valuable time to fill out the bargaining survey. As soon as the results are tabulated we will publish the results. In the coming weeks, your Escambia ESP Bargaining Council will begin meeting with the District’s representative. Salary increases to offset the recent

negative impacts on your income and meaningful changes to the insurance program are at the top of the list of priorities. As always, ECSD’s Educational Support Professionals work tirelessly to meet the needs of the students. It is time for the School Board and Superintendent to do the right thing. They have the ability to show their appreciation during the upcoming bargaining sessions. Will they? Time will tell. By supporting your Union, you will “help” the District make the right choices during this year’s negotiations.

Everyday I have contact with the members of Escambia ESP and everyday I become more honored to represent you. Keep up the good work.

**David Pittman,  
ESP President**

#### Visit us on the Web:

- ◆ Escambia FEA Website  
[www.escambiafea.org](http://www.escambiafea.org)  
Sign on to the Escambia website and register on the “Members Only” section of the website to be entered to win the current months drawing.
- ◆ FEA Website  
[www.feaweb.org](http://www.feaweb.org)
- ◆ NEA Website  
[www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com)
- ◆ AFT Website  
[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)



# Service Unit Director's Report—Bill Vincent

In these tight times everyone is very conscious of where there money is being spent. So I thought I would take this time to try to help the members of EEA and Escambia ESP understand what they get for their dues dollars. I am not referring to the two million dollar Liability Insurance that comes with your membership but rather a look at the day to day activities your dues fund: specifically, those activities that are performed by your officers, member volunteers and professional staff.

To begin with, one of the more time consuming activities is bargaining. While the team is made up of volunteers, your Presidents and I work with both EEA and Escambia ESP bargaining teams. To prepare for these activities each year the Bargaining Chairs and I attend a "Bargaining Boot Camp" to remain up to date on the current legislation and how it affects our Master Contract. We then begin our local preparations for bargaining. A Council is assembled in each unit and they work to develop ways to get your input. From October thru December, nine evening meetings were held with more coming in January. And Escambia

ESP held ten regional meetings to gather information. The actual bargaining begins in January and will last as long as it takes to reach a solution.

The Legislative season begins in January this year and your Union will play an active part in making sure your voice is heard in Tallahassee. Several of your colleagues have volunteered to be a local contact with Escambia County's delegation. One of our lobbyists from Tallahassee met in December with interested members from Escambia, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties to prepare them for the upcoming session. Escambia FEA has set aside money to send members to Tallahassee during the session to make sure our representatives know we are watching.

Everyone believes (or at least hopes) they can work their entire career without any problems. But that just isn't the case. Your officers and staff are always ready to work with you when trouble strikes. Unfortunately, it strikes often. As an example in the months of November and December (31 working days) your union represented members in twenty-one meetings dealing

discipline, filed nine grievances, processed one arbitration and referred five employees to attorneys for issues that will or could affect their employment. We are also working with members having medical issues that affect their employment. Your Union also worked with six teachers on 90 day improvement plans following unsatisfactory evaluations. Along with all of those activities your union represents you on District Committees and interviews at the work sites.

Daily we receive phone calls from both members and those that have not yet chosen to invest in their union. It is obvious they know EEA and Escambia ESP as a place to turn when trouble strikes. However, by law and policy we only represent those that have joined their union. Joining after the fact is like buying car insurance on the way to the body shop.

Thanks to all those that have already discovered the value of membership. If you have not yet chosen to become a member of your Union, do so today. For those of you that have, we have listed below some of ways you can save.

## Membership: More than a safety net

Your union does more for you than just help with contract issues. As a member of the union...

- You have a local bargaining council that works to get you better working conditions, better contract language, a raise, paid days off, and affordable health care.
- You have a legislative team that goes to Tallahassee to represent you on education issues.
- You have access to an Attorney (at a discount) for non-work related issues.
- You have members on Committees to give input on the Sick Leave Pool, Insurance, Substitute, Evaluation, Technology, Teacher of the Year and Interviews just to name a few.
- You have been provided an Access card which gives you access to many discounts through FEA, NEA and AFT.

## Discounts include: (for full list see website)

- Air Travel, Cruises, Hotels, Car Rentals
- Auto Purchase Advantage (NEA)
- Automotive
- Click & Save (NEA)
- Credit and Loans
- Credit Card Services
- Credit Counseling / Debt Solutions
- Dining, Movies, Golf
- Disney, Universal Studios, Zoos, Museums and other attractions
- Financial Planning / Retirement Solutions
- Foreclosure Assistance
- Grocery Store Coupons
- Health, Beauty & Fitness
- Home & Garden—can even save on appliances
- Home Financing
- Insurance—Life, Auto, Home, AD&D, Supplemental Health Insurance, Long Term Care Program, Medicare Supplement Program
- Internet & Cell Phone
- Loan Forgiveness
- National Board Certification Loan Programs
- Saving and Investments
- Shopping—Clothing, Magazines, Pets, Jewelry, Electronics, Department Stores, etc.
- Tax Prep Services and more

