

## **Better Pay for Better Employees**

*Education is the most powerful weapon  
which you can use to change the world*  
Nelson Mandela

After the 2008 legislative session, Florida ranks behind states like Alabama and Mississippi in per pupil spending. This is our reality, and we need to take positive steps to keep good teachers in our district.

My experience over the years has taught me that good teachers are more focused on having administrative support for curriculum and programs over increased salary. No one goes into education for the money, but rather a love for students and a passion to teach. Do not be mistaken; we must pay teachers well. They deserve a fair living wage.

In addition, we must develop programs that reward exceptional employees in ways other than just additional money. At the same time, we must work with employee organizations to establish procedures for effectively dealing with low-performing employees.

On the financial front, we have been competing with both Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties for the best teachers in the past five to ten years; and now, with Florida's cutbacks, we also must be concerned about Baldwin County, Alabama.

I believe that we can keep many good educators if we create the right culture, a culture that rewards excellence and creates an environment of empowerment. If we purposefully recruit high-performing teachers and support them, they will stay. What we cannot offer in wages must be offset in environment.

The best teachers will always be drawn to the best teaching environments. Good teachers like to teach. Good employees want to be effective and make a difference in their students' lives. Together, we can give employees an opportunity to do that right here in Escambia County when the system is able to

- Improve employee selection and retention,
- Purposefully recruit high-performing employees,

- Reward and recognize the high-performing employees that make a difference,
- Work with the employee organizations to establish the process and procedures for dealing effectively with low performers, and
- Stop the practice of moving low-performers from school to school.