

Public Comments

6/21/2018

Dawn Lucas, EAA President

My name is Dawn Lucas and I am the president of the Education Association of Alexandria also known as EAA. I am addressing the Board tonight about the TELL survey results as well as other concerns which have been reported to EAA. The TELL survey began as a partnership between ACPS and NEA/EAA. Being in the district during the implementation of the first TELL survey, I can attest to the high level of excitement around TELL and the information it could provide about teaching conditions across the district. EAA was and is still committed to helping to make ACPS a great place to work. It was troubling for me to see the decline in the participation rate from the first survey to the most recent survey. It signals that the level of buy-in from the employees has waned and there needs to be serious consideration given as to why this has happened. Are employees afraid to take the survey? Are employees fed up with completing surveys and nothing changes? Do employees feel powerless to change the conditions at their work locations? While EAA appreciates the commitment of ACPS to the TELL survey, it may not give the "full story" about teaching and working conditions across the district. Due to the limitations of the TELL survey such as the district or work locations having to meet a minimum participation threshold in order to get results, non-licensed staff not being able to participate in the survey as well as survey respondents not being able to reference individual school leaders, the results may not provide an accurate view of teaching and working conditions across the district. EAA asks the Board to fully research other surveys to get detailed information about how employees truly feel about teaching and working conditions at their locations and what changes need to take place in order to make ACPS the best school division to work for.

EAA has received reports of poor customer service from employees. Employees also report not feeling supported at the school or central office level when issues arise. While we are employees of ACPS, we are also customers of the various departments at central office. There have been reports of the inadequate or delayed responses when concerns have been brought to the attention of the appropriate department. Employees have to feel confident that when they contact central office that their issue or concern is going to be addressed in a timely manner.

Goal 3 of the ACPS 2020 Strategic Plan emphasizes having an exemplary staff. In order to have an exemplary staff, you need to have exemplary working conditions. I would say that one way an employee feels as if they are being treated exemplary is by the level of customer service they receive from the people who are there to support them. If employees do not feel valued, then eventually they get fed up and leave or suffer in silence. Recently, I spoke with an

employee who felt like they were being unfairly targeted based on an accusation from another employee at their work location. The employee did what was asked of them to address the concern even though they felt it was baseless. The employee still felt like their reputation at their work location had been tarnished and did not want to have the accusation hanging over their head so they are leaving ACPS. Up until the point of the accusation, the employee did not have negative things written about their work performance or their ability to get along with colleagues in the workplace but based on the accusation of one person their professional reputation was ruined in their eyes. If ACPS is vested in having an exemplary staff then they need to have the supports in place so that employees feel valued and not attacked. ACPS has to do a better job of handling workplace conflicts and providing conflict resolution that does not favor one party over another.

In closing, I would say that there has to be a higher level of communication from central office so that employee expectations are met or exceeded. Employees get frustrated and/or discouraged when they do not receive a timely response or no response. If an employee is worried about the lack of response to a critical question or concern then it may take away from the job that they are hired to do. ACPS should take care of its employees so the employees can take care of the students. EAA looks forward to working with all stakeholders to help make ACPS an inviting and collaborative place to work and to meet the needs of our students.

Thank you.