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January 26, 2011

ACLU settlement: Why the students lose

Last week, a judge approved a settlement between ACLU, LAUSD, and the Partnership for L.A. Schools that would change the way layoffs are handled in the school district and impact students and teachers districtwide.

In the aftermath of the decision, the media chose to focus on the threats to seniority while ignoring the serious harm the settlement will do to students at all affected schools. Because the settlement shields up to 45 schools from *any* RIFs and requires that layoffs at all schools not exceed the District average, a significantly larger number of schools will be impacted should layoffs happen. *Experienced teachers who previously would not have lost their jobs could be subject to layoffs.*

The settlement will destabilize many schools that have the kind of cohesive, collaborative environment that encourages staff stability and leads to increased student achievement. It will also leave many low-performing schools with a higher concentration of less experienced teachers.

UTLA is concerned about the serious issues of high turnover and hard-to-staff schools at the heart of the ACLU case, and we presented the settlement plaintiffs with a package of research-based proposals to address systemic problems at some schools (see utla.net for more). Those proposals were ignored.

Using “students’ rights” as a smoke screen

The settlement was the backroom work of superintendent-elect John Deasy (who will be paid \$330,000 a year, which is more than virtually any other public official in L.A. and \$80,000 more than Cortines), Mayor Villaraigosa, the ACLU, and some School Board members.

Some settlement supporters claim to be defending students’ constitutional rights, but clearly their real goal was to attack seniority and weaken the union by trying to do an end-run around our contract.

UTLA appealing ruling

UTLA will file a formal appeal to the ruling. While the appeal process moves forward, UTLA will be working to get answers to members’ questions about how the settlement might be implemented.

For true change: Volunteer for the School Board campaign

The ACLU settlement would not have happened without the support of the current School Board majority. Want to elect Board members on March 8 who won’t make decisions that hurt students’ educational opportunities or promote the “blame the teacher” mentality? Volunteer for the critical School Board campaigns.

To volunteer, go to www.utla.net/schoolboard2011 or call Bianca Anderson at organizing support at (213) 637-5147.

