



State of the Elgin Teachers Association January 15, 2020

I would like to take a few moments to reflect on 2019.

A number of important moments happened this past year. As the new year is always a time to reflect, I have reflected on my work as your ETA president as this will direct my energies as to where more improvement is needed.

First, the JANUS decision was meant to hurt unions all over the country. I wasn't sure what it would do to the ETA. What I can tell you is that 18 months later we have had only 3 members drop from the ETA. In addition, we have more members in the ETA than ever before. As of this morning, our membership total is 2,536. We are growing and will continue to do so. We are working on bringing in members who have not signed up and we are working to find those members who were fair share and get them to become members. My biggest thanks in this goes to our head reps and building reps that meet with new teachers and members who aren't sure about being in the ETA and gets them to commit to our organization. For that I thank you all.

Our strength in numbers paid off in the legislative world as well. As the clock was winding down on last year's legislative session, it was our membership along with members of the IEA that signed petitions, sent letters, and made phone calls to repeal the 3% cap on pensions that became such a big part of our bargain last year. To every one of you who signed a petition, wrote a letter, or made a phone call, I thank you.

Speaking of bargaining, I believe the membership was relieved that the bargaining team was able to bring forward, to the RA and the full membership, an Elgin Agreement, that was approved by over 80 percent of the membership. This allowed us all to move forward with other important work. In that agreement, there was a new salary structure which allows a member to move without a masters through the schedule. There is also the opportunity to not only move to the right but for many who were locked in the Master plus 40 lane, this new schedule allowed a teacher to move vertically. This is unprecedented and I can tell you, it is the envy of many other local presidents.

In addition, there is now compensation in the form of professional credits. Credits for our members who serve on district contractual committees, for our members who go to professional development and earn CPDU's, and for our members who meet every week in PLC's to benefit our students. Credits that go towards additional salary increments.



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The ETA is also very proud that we continue a 30 plus year tradition of Those Who Excel. High school students who wish to enter the profession of teaching are selected to receive a \$1000 scholarship. I am hoping in the future we can raise that dollar amount.

TWE also recognizes outstanding 6th and 8th grade students nominated by their teachers in their building. This event will again take place this spring at the end of April. You will be hearing more about this later tonight. I want to thank Donna Streit for taking this on the past 2 years and also thank all of you who helped make this event a success.

Last year, I put out a request to members to send an email with your safety stories and concerns. These concerns were presented to the District superintendents as well as the school board. Your stories were instrumental in the bargaining conversations regarding safety which in turn placed stronger and more frequent safety processes and language into the contract. We are not yet where we need to be with safety issues but the language is there and we have that language to direct stronger conversations in the building and also at the district level. This is a priority for the ETA leadership, and we will continue to make this a priority. It is a work in progress and certainly outcomes are not as they need to be at this time nor are they happening as quickly as they need to, especially in our elementary classrooms.

There are struggles in the buildings, inside and outside the classrooms. I continue to have conversations at the district level and with many principals, and trust me, I am not welcomed by some administrators because of this. Status quo of administration with attitudes that are not acceptable will not be tolerated. Implementation of contract language which is contradictory to the contract is not acceptable. Grievances have been and will continue to be filed. Our grievance committee has already written and assisted on more grievances this past year than were done in the previous 5 years. Thank you to Scott for leading this work along with Kathy Cebulski from Kenyon Woods and Bob Malek from Ellis.

The safety committee is one of the committees that came out of bargaining and we are just getting started there. I am encouraged to report that we have very strong,



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committed ETA members sitting on that committee working towards improving the safety of our teachers, our students, and our schools.

As a union we have just completed a full audit. Thank you Carol Mammoser for guiding that work. You will hear more about the audit later this evening. This is the first full audit that has been done in about 10 years. In addition, we now have a budget committee that oversees the finances of the ETA. They will ensure that your dues money is being watched over judiciously and be budgeted and spent as it should be. Thank you Steve Hoyt, Melissa Genz, Lisa Burnell and Carol Mammoser for doing this most important work.

I have appointed over 30 members to district committees. Many more members have been elected to committees as well. Many of these members are on a district committee for their first time. I am thrilled that we had more requests to participate than were available. However, this is encouraging. This shows our members want to be involved, know their voice is welcomed, and they wish to be an active part of our ETA decision making. Members recognize the importance of being part of an organization that addresses their professional needs. Members are becoming more aware that they are welcomed and encouraged to have their voice at the table. If you sit on a building level committee like SIP or SD or you sit on a district committee please stand. Our voice on these committees is important and all of you standing are part of bringing that teacher voice to the table. Thank you.

Donna Kielbasa, our ETA secretary, continues to work on finding ways to connect with members who have been late hires and who have been fair share members in the past. We want to make sure all the teachers are invited to be part of the union. Recently, Donna sent out emails to over 100 members to update their email addresses so that they receive ETA updates. Thank you, Donna.

Our ETA Web Site has taken on a new look. Prior to Scott taking on this endeavor, there had been an estimate to pay someone \$5000 to do this work. That has not been necessary. Scott has been instrumental in redesigning and maintaining the ETA website. This is a work in progress for Scott, as he has shared many of the ideas he has in mind to make the site even more member friendly and usable. Thank you Scott, for this work and for all the work you have done.



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The ETA Board of Directors has been asked to be more available and accessible to the Reps in their section. They need to hear directly from you as to what you're seeing and experiencing in your buildings. We will continue this spring with our elementary and secondary collaborative section meetings. Many of you attended when section directors held these meetings last year. Section directors reported back the positive experiences they had. This allowed for you to meet with your feeder schools and to share experiences and concerns directly with one another.

We heard your request for additional training with contractual committees and contractual language. The officers are already underway discussing how to develop and present additional trainings.

I would like to share that I continue to meet with the district leaders more frequently than the one monthly contract meeting. I must admit, there is some frustration as I have many conversations but do not believe the outcomes are what is needed nor what is deserved by our members.

I have now set appointment times with the Deputy Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents for both elementary and secondary, as well as the Curriculum and Instruction director to discuss the issues you are facing and have brought forward as the issues that occur in your buildings and in classrooms. Again, I admit the outcomes are not what I had hoped for or what you deserve, but nevertheless, the conversations are occurring and I will push to do better. Because of these meetings, I believe we were able to resolve one elementary conflict that had been occurring for over 5 years. There is still a great deal of work to be done.

I am confident with the officers and board we will commit to addressing issues directly. As a board and membership, we need to be thinking not just about today or next month but the future as well. I see many of our past ETA leaders retiring or will be retiring soon. The future is having new teachers ready to take their place. That is why the invite for Early Career Leadership that Marti shared with us tonight is so important. Thank you to Marti Renteria for leading this. This is a great opportunity. Please consider it if you, or you know of a member in your building in the 5 to 11 year stage of their career, I encourage you and others to become part of this.



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A step in this direction of new involvement is the number of delegates to the upcoming IEA Rep Assembly in March which will take place in Rosemont. Many who are attending are first time attendees. This is encouraging and exciting to see more members participate. We will have approximately 25 delegates attending.

It is important for all to recognize that this is not a union of 25 but a union of 2500 plus members. All are welcomed and encouraged to apply to participate in the future for IEA and NEA elections. Your voice is welcomed and needed both locally and at the state level.

As for the future, I believe, we need a strategic plan for our union as we need to be ready for what comes down to us as union members, both in the district as well as legislatively. By being strong and anticipatory rather than reactive, we can attempt to ensure we protect our profession and all the language in our contract that so many before us have worked so hard to give us.

We are the largest IEA local union in the state. Our collective voices needs to be out front guiding the work, not reacting to it. We need to ask ourselves

- Where are we as a union today?
- What changes need to be made so we are meeting the needs of all of our members?
- What needs to remain and what needs to change so that we continue to improve and grow as a professional organization?

A union is not just a president, vice presidents, and a board. A union is made of the members. I see us heading where every voice is important, every member is valued, and this is known and felt to all our members. Although I cannot service all of the members as quickly as I would like to, the effort is there, please know that. I know the commitment is there as well from the officers, the board, and the ETA committees. I see the passion and hard work as I sit at these various committees.

I also want to add one more acknowledgement at this time. I would like to thank Jack Janezic, our ETA uniserv director. His knowledge of our union and of the district is huge. I appreciate his willingness to share that information and help guide the work of



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the president. Jack has worked for 4 ETA presidents and I can only imagine that each president has worked differently. In addition, Jack spent the last two years bargaining and has been a part of the last 5 negotiating teams. I believe Jack and I are now on a less bumpy road than we were at the beginning and becoming more in sync with expectations for one another. This is certainly to the benefit of the membership. Thank you Jack for all that you have done to support me and the work of the ETA.

In conclusion, I need to hear from you. I need for you to participate for the betterment of the union. Most importantly, I thank all of you sitting here tonight for taking time from your busy schedules to act as that important liaison between the ETA and the building and department members. The board and myself are here to help you to make this the best year ahead for our teachers and students. I am excited about the endless future possibilities for the Elgin Teachers Association and the work of our ETA union that comes from a commitment from union leadership and an engaged union membership of 2500 plus strong.

Thank you
Barbara Bettis
ETA President