

Teacher Professional Development



By Dr. R. Pletsch

All schools try to improve teaching by providing teachers with the methodology necessary. Most often, there are classes in Reading, Math or Code of Conduct when a new series or program is introduced to a school or district. This year I feel a need to give teachers special help because many of the younger staff members have never taught in what we consider a normal situation.

They have never had the pressure of 30 students with comments and distractions that cannot be taken care of with the Mute button.

Some of the students returning could be so excited that socializing will be more important at first than learning. They will have the freedom to move around, many will go to PE or Art, have bathroom breaks, lunchroom and compared to their front room at home that is a lot of distractions.

I have attended more of these professional development meetings than I can count. Some, of course, are better than others. Sadly, I attended a few that more of the people were paying atten-

tion to their phones than the speakers. We talk about the kids. I also presented at dozens of these, suburban, private and CPS. Most private and suburban audiences were attentive.

They never thought someone from CPS could give them anything but help seeing that they survived. However, in CPS schools I announced that the first one to turn on their phone would come up, introduce themselves and take over. Obviously, that never occurred.

I recently spoke with a southwest suburban school board member who as a kid had spent many hours in our home. He says that their district lets the individual schools choose their professional development, but helps them find the instructors. This goes along with an article by Elizabeth Heubeck from EdWeek. With her conversations nationwide, she believes that right now the teachers are most worried about the emotional impact that the pandemic has caused for the students.

To such worry she believes that professional development will be targeted in that way. She believes that seeing that many districts are requesting this, that we must "take care of the adults so they can best take care of the kids".

The CPS schools usually start the year with days for professional development. This worry about their mental outlook could be of prime importance for those days.