



World Class Educators
for
World Class Students

News Release

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DODEA STAFF CUTS, MANAGEMENT BELIEFS, POINT TOWARD MEDIOCRITY

Plans by DoDEA Director Dr. Shirley Miles to cut middle school and kindergarten staffing while enlarging management threaten to push DoD schools toward mediocrity, the Federal Education Association warned today.

Says FEA President Michael Priser: “There is not a single credible source you can name that would defend enlarging class sizes as a way to improve educational quality.”

“DoDEA is playing at semantics when it says the change to a 25:1 Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) would not have a big impact. Yes, the current 16:1 PTR in middle schools does not include positions such as music, physical education, and health, so the true average class size overall in our middle schools is around 22 students currently. But DoDEA’s own release on the 25:1 proposal states those subjects will also not be included in the new PTR calculation, so the new standard would result in overall average class sizes of 30 or more in most schools.”

“The bottom line is: 25:1 is a whole lot bigger than 16:1 and it’s going to result in DoDEA middle school students getting a lot less individual instruction from the teachers that remain.”

On the kindergarten aide cuts, Priser says: “There are more than 120 full day kindergarten classes in Europe alone. If you add in the Pacific and DDESS, there are well over 200 such classes. If Dr. Miles thinks she can cut over 200 dedicated classroom aides and cover the same number of students with the addition of just 90 new teachers, she clearly doesn’t understand what goes on in a kindergarten class.”

“The classroom aides play many roles. Besides being another adult in a classroom full of children, the aides allow teachers to provide special attention to individuals or groups of

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DODEA STAFF CUTS, MANAGEMENT BELIEFS, POINT TOWARD MEDIOCRITY (continued)

students as needed. The aides do everything from assisting in instruction to walking a student down to the nurse's office to accompanying teachers on home visits.”

“Asking a single teacher to cover 18 children with an aide who has to split time between several classrooms is a recipe for disaster and a huge disservice to these children.”

That these positions would be cut at the same time Dr. Miles wants to add 160 new Resource Manager positions is illogical and bad for education, Priser says.

“Slashing staffing at the classroom level – the only place where education actually happens – is never justifiable, particularly when Dr. Miles wants to add 160 unnecessary new administrative positions while taking away hundreds of people who directly serve children.”

“This goes beyond bad management: this is bad education.”

Priser points to a statement in a DoDEA release issued last week about the proposed staffing cuts as an ominous sign for the quality of DoDEA schools.

“DoDEA's own press release said ‘Both evaluations are being conducted to ensure the educational environment for DoDEA students is commensurate with the educational environment students will most likely encounter during transitions in and out of stateside public schools.’ Does that mean we want our DoD schools to be no better than the average public school in the U.S.?”

“Is that the standard we want to set for ourselves? Is mediocrity our new goal? Unfortunately, Dr. Miles plan to slash classroom staffing and enlarge management seems to indicate that she thinks so.”

“DoDEA schools have long enjoyed a fantastic reputation for the quality of education we provide. We have been nationally recognized for the excellence of our students and especially for narrowing minority achievement gaps.”

“I don't believe for a moment we should rest on our laurels and not strive for further improvement. But cutting classroom staff so we can bloat management is not the path toward future success.”

With over 5,400 members, the Federal Education Association (FEA) is the leading advocate for educators and classroom excellence throughout DoDEA. The association was founded in Germany in 1956 and now represents faculty and staff in Europe, Asia and Stateside.