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News Release

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Federal Education Association Welcomes Lower PTR for Kindergarten, Calls for Guarantee of Educational Aides Beyond Next School Year

The Federal Education Association (FEA) welcomes a decision by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) to retain full-time educational aides in all kindergarten classrooms for School Year 2009-2010, but warns that those aides may still be cut in future years.

On June 3, DoDEA issued a memorandum to staff saying the pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR) in some full-day kindergarten classes will be reduced next school year to 18:1 (from the current PTR of 29:1). Equally important, DoDEA said it would not take away the full-time classroom aides from those kindergarten classes that reach the 18:1 PTR next year. This marks a reversal from the initial announcement from DoDEA Director Dr. Shirley Miles, who originally said that any kindergarten classroom that reaches the new 18:1 PTR would no longer have a full-time aide.

“Lowering the PTR is always the right move to make for the students,” says FEA President Michael Priser. “Allowing those classrooms to keep their aides on a full-time basis is something FEA has pushed for since this proposed change was first announced. We think the combination of smaller class sizes and full-time dedicated aides will greatly improve the educational environment and, more importantly, help to safeguard our students’ well being.”

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FEA Welcomes Lower PTR for Kindergarten, Calls for Guarantee of Educational Aides Beyond Next School Year (continued)

Priser warns, however, that the announcement this week by DoDEA only guarantees the educational aides will be kept in place for School Year 2009-2010.

“We’d like Dr. Miles to assure parents of kindergarten students that those aides will remain in place permanently, even as the PTR is lowered in more kindergarten classes during subsequent years,” Priser says. “If this turns out to be nothing more than a one-year delay for those cuts, then the educational impact and safety of our military's children will still be at risk.”

“While welcoming this lowering of the PTR in kindergarten, FEA still has great concerns about Dr. Miles’ plans to increase middle school PTR in 2010-2011,” Priser says. “I hope Dr. Miles is hearing the concerns of parents and educators of those students as well and realizes that increasing class sizes in middle schools is no more acceptable than cutting aides in kindergarten.”

FEA has suggested a series of public meetings involving Dr. Miles, Priser, and interested DoDEA parents, students and employees. The meetings would allow DoDEA stakeholders to give their opinions and ask questions about proposed staffing and educational changes in their schools.

“Such meetings would be more valuable now than ever,” Priser says, “particularly because there are no guarantees about class sizes and staffing levels beyond next year.”

As of June 3, FEA is still awaiting a response from Dr. Miles to the meeting suggestion.

“We’re meeting with Dr. Miles on June 10,” says Priser. “We hope to have her response by then, if not sooner.”

With well over 5,000 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.