

# ***BTU*** *Broward Teachers Union*

A Union of Education, Technical Support, Charter School and Education Support Professionals

Dear Broward Teachers Union Member:

When I was appointed administrator last month, I promised you that the business of the Broward Teachers Union would be conducted in an open and transparent manner. It is in that spirit that I am writing you about the financial situation our union has reached with Patrick A. Santeramo.

This is understandably a very critical issue to all of our members. I assure you it is a critical issue to me. Our leadership team has been conducting a comprehensive and meticulous review of BTU finances. We are accounting for every penny that comes in, and every penny that goes out. We are putting in place fiscal controls and sound accounting practices that will serve our union for years to come. We are being frugal, and we are being smart.

After extensive review by both our accounting and legal teams, it is very clear that there is money owed to Mr. Santeramo, who resigned as president effective Dec. 31, 2011. It is also clear that Mr. Santeramo owes money to BTU, mostly from salary/pension overpayment. I have reviewed the legal opinion and concur with its findings. If you wish to review the legal opinion yourself, it is available on our web site, [www.btuonline.com](http://www.btuonline.com).

While it is clear the BTU owes Mr. Santeramo \$230,958.11, I insisted that the \$56,419.41 owed to us be deducted before any payment is made. After that deduction, the amount owed Mr. Santeramo is \$174,538.70.

We must honor this commitment. In thousands of contracts across the nation, AFT locals and school districts negotiate sets of work rules and compensation packages. Our members correctly view those agreements as sacred commitments that must be honored. Here in Broward County, we expect the Board of Education

to honor the commitments it makes to us. Likewise, we have an obligation to hold up our commitments to others, as well.

Honoring our commitments is more than a legal obligation. It is a statement about our character and a fundamental value we teach our children.

The debt owed to Mr. Santeramo is part of a compensation package that has been on the books for years. Like any contract, it was something two sides agreed on. Mr. Santeramo's accrual of sick and vacation days was a benefit known by board members and BTU accountants. No official action was taken to halt this benefit. Over time, the BTU has carried that debt as a liability. Put simply, it is a debt we owe that now needs to be paid.

Clearly, we owe Mr. Santeramo money. Clearly, he owes us money. It is in no one's interest—the BTU, Mr. Santeramo's, or the children and young adults we serve—to engage in a potential protracted legal battle that would distract us from the union's important business and cost the BTU thousands of dollars in lawyer fees.

We will pay Mr. Santeramo what we owe him and collect what he owes us—not one penny more, not one penny less.

Sincerely,

John Tarka, Administrator  
Broward Teachers Union