

# *A MILLION AND A HALF DOLLARS FIGHTING TEACHERS.*

*By Chris Neidenberg*

Despite cries of rubbish from the JCEA, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marcia Lyles is insisting the state forces the district to keep teachers in disciplinary or other proceedings away from classes for prolonged periods, until cases are resolved.

But association attorney Andrew Feintuch, addressing Lyles at the board of education's Nov. 20 meeting, insisted the procedures do not mandate forcing teachers to stay away from practicing the profession they love based on many of the ongoing case reviews.

The JCEA attorney maintains Lyles is not telling the whole story. Feintuch contended a great number of lengthy reassignments, pending resolution of the charges, are the fault of the district itself.

He blamed the situation on overreaching principals and administrators who have no interest in having a productive working relationship with their subordinates to begin with.

Feintuch added teachers unnecessarily, and spitefully, reassigned to administrative desk jobs, for long periods, when they are innocent until proven guilty, denies schools the experienced personnel needed to function most effectively.

"You have spent over a million and a half dollars fighting teachers," complained Feintuch, breaking down the legal bills and blaming Lyles' administration for fostering a stridently antagonistic atmosphere that is completely unjustified.

"You (the board) know they (teachers) have been in these rubber rooms for months and months,' the attorney said, adding, "You were not elected to spend millions of dollars forgetting the children of this district."

Further, an angry Feintuch proclaimed boldly, "No one at 346 Claremont Ave. (the central office) is interested in speaking up for teachers.'

Lyles acknowledged such reassignments can be prolonged, particularly if a state agency is conducting an extensive probe into the teacher, and that the district must follow the edicts of that agency.

The superintendent cited the state's Division of Youth and Family Services as an example.

She explained that, if such an agency advises the district the allegations "are under investigation, then we have to wait until they've been addressed.'

"There are certain conditions we cannot override," insisted Lyles. "And it depends on the circumstances and the nature of the allegations."

Feintuch, however, blamed Lyles' philosophy – and not state agencies – for emboldening the supervisors below her to pursue unwarranted disciplinary actions wrongly prolonging reassignments.

He complained the board allows Lyles to operate with little oversight, contributing to a hostile work environment – one determined to unfairly keep teachers away from their students for as long as possible. .

"Do any of you know what's going on?" he asked the board. "These administrators will not let that teacher back in his or her classroom."