

Kamehameha Schools Faculty Association

P.O. Box 894163, Mililani HI 96789

Negotiations to start again

Bus strikes, gas hikes, sky-high plane fares, and trans fats lurking everywhere. Welcome to a new school year. While we adjust to the changes in the world, we must keep pace with the changes on our campus as well. Your school calendar is probably filled with special dates, obligations, deadlines and appointments, but there is one item that may not be included. KSFA wants to make sure that you include us on your list.

Three years ago KSFA and Kamehameha Schools negotiated a Collective Bargaining Agreement with improvements in many areas. These three years have shown progress in many areas. Other areas are still in need of improvement. Our current CBA with KS comes to an end on June 30, 2004. We are planning on beginning negotiations in January with hopes of producing a new contract before the school year ends in May. With only four months until the start of negotiations, KSFA needs your input to be sure we are working in your best interests.

This is the year to participate as a member of the KSFA Representative Assembly (RA). Our first meeting for this school year will be on September 10th at the Elementary School in Kuhelani 19 at 4:00 pm. Our meetings are open to all our members. Please join us if you are interested. As in most years, because some people have changes in responsibilities at home or at work, there are some openings on the Representative Assembly this year. Now is the time to bring your voice to KSFA.

Our negotiating team will have representatives from all four units at Kapālama so getting your ideas heard should be easy. We will be creating and circulating a questionnaire asking for your views on what areas we need to target during negotiations. Please take the time to complete and return it. We need your input in order to serve you better.

— Rick Heyd, Unit 9-10
KSFA President

Kapālama campus goal #5, 2003-4: “Maintain positive relationship with KSFA”

Dr. Chun recently published Kapālama goals for the coming academic year, including the one above. That KSFA is mentioned in a positive light as one of five campus-wide goals for the coming year bodes well for the upcoming negotiations, a welcome overture.

Our past relationship cannot be characterized as “positive.” The goal might be better worded “Develop positive relationship with KSFA.” In every meeting, in every discussion since the very beginning of the union, we have affirmed the need to “take the high ground” and to remain open to developing that positive relationship. Let us all hope that it happens this year.

What might help establish a positive working relationship that benefits everyone, students, teachers, administrators and the rest of the ‘ohana?

- an acknowledgment of “just cause,” the basic right of KSFA members to assume continued employment beyond a reasonable probationary period, or to be entitled to a grievable justification for their termination.
- a restoration of the five-year contracts that offered some job security to veteran teachers.
- a meaningful revision of a heavy-handed employee handbook written by discredited trustees.
- a fresh look at a drug testing policy applied to only a handful of other school districts in the nation.

— Jan Becket, unit 11-12

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Ramona's story, by an ex-employee

I'm gone. But, I hope you won't forget me, for your sake and mine. In spite of the circumstances of my departure, I have many fond memories of the twenty years I spent working with you and the students. I appreciate the opportunity of being part of a dedicated faculty and the efforts of all those who tried to help me. I also think that you deserve a complete explanation of the details of my termination so that you can relax knowing that it can't happen to you, or so you can take action to avoid my predicament if you see similarities.

On April 29, 2003, I was notified by Principal Sandy Young that my contract would not be renewed. I will skip the "I said-she said" stuff and try to summarize the details of the termination from my perspective. Sandy had been my boss for almost two years. While I don't feel that Sandy was out to get me from the start, I do believe she was quick to judge and that once she had formed an impression of me, it was close to impossible to change it and she became more interested in building a case than saving my career. Unfortunately, my first year under her supervision was the year following my nervous breakdown and definitely not the best example of my potential. My personal life was a mess (e.g. divorce, financial problems, medication effects, etc.) and the only thing holding me together was my pride as a teacher. I was not as open to criticisms of my teaching as I should have been, but I did try to respond to and comply with her criticisms and suggestions.

I feel I was improving in those areas of concern to her and that my last year was significantly better than the previous one. However, Sandy's view is that one year in the life of a child is a long time and that the end of our one year contracts is an annual opportunity to improve the quality of the teaching staff whenever the performance of a teacher dips below what can be expected from the talent available in the applicant pool.

To be fair, Sandy did a number of evaluations

and even assigned Rita Littlejohn as a mentor to help me. Rita was a big help, but my problems were with Sandy and revolved around her fixed impression, reliance upon her own expertise, credibility and vision of what constitutes a good teacher and my inability to change her impression of me and to conform to that vision. I did attempt to incorporate every suggestion she made into my classroom, but several factors in my teaching style reflect my basic values (e.g. promoting individual responsibility, self learning, and holding students accountable) and may have a lower priority in Sandy's vision. These values tend to encourage student and parent complaints which significantly influenced Sandy's decision to terminate me. In the end, even though I feel I had definitely improved the second year, my evaluation was significantly worse and I can only believe that it was lowered in order to support her case for non-renewal.

I believe my termination was mismanaged and unfair both procedurally and for cause. In terms of procedures, I have several complaints. It was never clear to me exactly what was expected of me, what my status was, or how much time I had to make improvements. Unsatisfactory "performance" was the official cause for my termination, but if you search KS policies and guidelines you will not find a definition of "performance" or a standard for teacher performance. I know my teaching style was not what Sandy likes and that she wanted me to provide more direct instruction and use a wider variety of teaching techniques. She was also not satisfied with the number of student and parent complaints regarding my classes. However, she made no effort to see how well my students were doing at the next level and (to my knowledge) no teacher has ever complained about my students not being ready for their class. In a sequential subject like math, it seems to me if students can hack it at the next level, that would count for something and a good supervisor would be in-

Ramona's story (cont.)

terested in knowing it.

If I were on an accreditation team evaluating KS' non-renewal process, I would rate it unsatisfactory and these would be my suggestions to correct it:

1. Define performance and set some minimum standards.

(Rationale: If we are going to fire senior teachers for "performance," we ought to know what it means and have a clear standard to allow even-handed treatment of employees.)

2. Continue to maintain high standards for KS teachers.

(Rationale: The Administration and the teachers both want to attract and maintain the highest quality faculty at KS. However, this can only be done by establishing goals and standards for teachers to achieve. Terminating teachers when it appears likely they would be outperformed by an applicant would severely degrade the work environment and productivity. As there will always be someone in the applicant pool who is better than any one of us, job security would depend upon seeking favor or avoiding being low person on the totem pole. Imagine the cooperation and climate of fear under that kind of leadership.)

3. Continue to assign mentors to teachers who could benefit from colleague assistance.

(Rationale: Mentors are a proven method of improving performance. Colleagues have the desire and ability to raise teachers to another level.)

4. Establish a formal probation status with procedures describing a period in which specific improvements must occur after which the employee is either released from probation status, continued on probation, given a one-year leave of absence without pay, or non-renewed.

(Rationale: To be fair, employees need to know when they are in trouble, what they have to improve, and how long they have to achieve these improvements. The one-year leave of absence might be an attractive option for teachers who are recovering from personal problems and need some time to get their act together.)

5. Revise the non-renewal process for senior teachers (those within six years of retirement eligibility) so that the immediate supervisor's non-renewal recommendation is not decided until after the teacher has had an opportunity to present his/her story to the Headmaster.

(Rationale: Terminating a senior teacher for performance is a serious matter and affects the entire faculty. The Headmaster needs to know both sides of the story before he makes his decision. It is also important for the Headmaster to understand how the system failed to correct the performance of a previously satisfactory employee.)

6. Revise the teacher evaluation form so that each category has a space below it where any unsatisfactory rating must be justified by at least one example and a corrective action must be suggested that (if complied with) would raise that category to satisfactory performance.

(Rationale: To improve their performance, teachers need to know exactly what their supervisor is not satisfied with and how to correct it.)

7. Eliminate the "N" rating from the teacher evaluation form and replace it with a "U".

(Rationale: "N" is defined as "needs improvement", but anything short of perfection needs improvement. Certainly employees performing at a minimum satisfactory level need improvement. Since an "N" can get you terminated at KS, "N" means "unsatisfactory" and the difference between the definition and the meaning is misleading.)

8. Whenever a senior teacher's performance evaluation and/or observation is unsatisfactory, schedule another observation and get a second opinion from a recognized expert in the field of the teacher being evaluated.

(Rationale: While some things in teaching may be universal, there is not universal agreement on what they are. There are many ways to get the job done and there is no one teaching style that is best for every teacher. Expecting a teacher to accept a particular vision of excellence (or failure) when it conflicts with their core values is unrealistic, but it is much easier to accept when it is con-

Bill Follmer identifies problems and suggests cures

Communications and Fear

One of the joys of attending meetings as your KSFA representative is that I sometimes witness our leaders expressing their deepest beliefs. At a recent meeting called by the trustees in response to an anonymous letter questioning their integrity, all five expressed how important it was to them to look into the mirror every morning and see an honorable person. Coming from an environment where skepticism and cynicism are common, I was reassured to hear our leaders confirm their desire to be perceived as honorable people.

At the end of the meeting, while we were saying our good-byes, one of the trustees expressed his concern to me about a comment from the audience regarding employees being afraid to speak out. The trustee recognized it as a serious problem and expressed his amazement and frustration that after three years of their leadership, “we still have the problem of communications and fear.” I agreed with his concern, especially about KS’ communication problems, and offered a very brief explanation as the meeting had already exceeded its time limits. This article expands on that explanation.

One reason KS has a long tradition of communication problems is that they are preserved and perpetuated in its culture, procedures and policies. There were some improvements when the interim trustees replaced the majority trustees and when the new CEO came onboard. Specifically, guidance from above (especially at the CEO and trustee level) became more honest, clear and attributable. Furthermore, rationales for decisions were often clear and input (even if it was sometimes after the fact and too late to change anything) was solicited and responded to.

It would be easy to argue that the culture of the organization below the CEO level at Kapālama has changed little since the controversy. The system of personal loyalties (that supersede loyalty to the mission of the organization) built by middle managers for their job security during the

previous trustees’ reign of fear is still in place. Inclusive decision making (IDM) gets frequent lip service from administrators but progress is painfully slow, maintaining administrative control is paramount, virtually every decision is advisory, and rationales rarely explain the real reason for a decision. The “us versus them” mentality of administrators toward employees still pervades most actions and precludes the openness required for inspirational leadership. And then there is the “union”, the label that reminds management of its failure to inspire trust and provides an excuse to treat teachers as adversaries.

However, while it would be easy to argue the complaints noted above because there is far too much supporting evidence to deny them, it would be unfair and unwise to ignore the evidence of positive change. From my limited observations, it appears to me that most of our middle managers are reaching out to their employees in an attempt to be more open, honest, and inclusive. For example, in KSFA’s discussions with Dr. Chun and his team regarding just cause for disciplinary non-renewals, we could dwell on the fact that no agreements have been reached on what we consider a fundamental issue of fairness, but there has been progress. Our arguments have been aired, management has expressed its concerns and not slammed the door on future agreements nor revealed any killer arguments that would signal our cause is hopeless. The discussions have been progressively more honest and open. Management has revealed its innermost concerns, unfinished thoughts, and a growing willingness to lay its cards on the table. I don’t think we are at the point where you will see management writing a rebuttal to this article nor are they ready to match KSFA’s willingness to be quoted on positions. But, we have progressed a long way from having the entire discussion “off-the-record” and written notes being criticized as inappropriate. We have started a dialogue where someday everyone will know the ar-

Communications and fear (cont.)

guments, the decision, and the rationale. In an organization led by honorable people, I am hopeful that the right thing will eventually be done.

There have been other signs of our administrators' intent to be more open and inclusive. At the high school, the processes used to reconsider bell schedule alternatives and select new department heads are examples of a genuine desire to hear all options before making a decision.

Rather than focus on whether or not nothing has changed or that we are in a gradual change, it seems to me that the evidence just needs to be recognized, accepted and some obvious conclusions drawn and questions asked. One obvious conclusion is we need to work on some problems (e.g. personal loyalties trumping loyalty to the mission, IDM and the paramountcy of control, "us versus them", and the "union" label). But even more interesting and productive would be to answer the obvious question: "What is holding us back?" We know that we want to solve these problems. Nobody is stopping us. Yet, progress is slow.

I believe the primary barrier to progress relates to our traditional internal communications problems and how they are perpetuated by our culture, procedures and policies. One aspect of our culture that I see holding us back is embodied in the phrase "going around." There appears to be wide acceptance at all levels at Kapalama that it is *disloyal* to take a problem above one's immediate supervisor. Having done it intentionally several times when I felt a problem deserved high level attention, I speak from experience when I describe the sense of violation and hurt conveyed when I am inevitably rebuked by the superior whom I "went around."

Think about the incredible assumptions inherent in maintaining that "going around" is disloyal. First, in order for it to be a big deal, it must be assumed that "going around" will spill the beans and that the boss hasn't kept his boss fully informed. While often true, isn't that the biggest problem of all? Second, what about the problem itself? If it is serious enough to take upstairs, it

must have some adverse consequences for the mission of the organization. Is it reasonable to assume that the boss' boss has no right to attempt to solve a problem before the consequences are serious and unavoidable? Isn't there something wrong with the culture of an organization where problems are routinely contained by keeping your boss' boss ignorant and confining communications to your own departmental bubble. Yet, the "us versus them" mentality supports this containment philosophy which is also probably motivated by a fear of disapproval or the imposition of an unwanted solution. This attitude inhibits the disclosure of problems to those most capable of solving them. The bottom line is that each level of managers is far too reluctant to keep their superiors fully informed and if they aren't keeping their bosses informed, it's not likely they are requiring their subordinates to keep them fully informed. In this communications vacuum, problems breed and fears multiply until a bubble bursts and a problem is suddenly "discovered" too late to deal with by any means except crisis management.

As our culture predisposes us to bounce from crisis to crisis, what can we do about it? Culture reflects common habits and practices and those are the things that have to change if the culture is to change. Procedures and policies play a key role here. Presently, middle management communications procedures are not coordinated and structured in a way that encourages opportunities to air problems, propose solutions, and keep superiors fully informed. While recent e-mail use has greatly expanded the frequency, volume and access of communications between all levels of employees and has the potential to do even more, it doesn't replace the need for productive face-to-face meetings. Though e-mail has broad targeted access and is less disruptive of work schedules, it lacks the personal impact, group dynamic, insight providing and problem solving opportunities of face-to-face meetings. Unfortunately, somewhere in time, we lost the discipline to conduct and participate in efficient and productive meetings (which is prob-

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New faculty members (and a few old ones): please consider filling out and sending this form to Human Resources. Auto dues deduction saves our treasurer time and effort.

AUTHORIZATION FORM FOR DEDUCTION OF UNION DUES/SERVICE FEE OUT OF WAGES

I, _____, an employee of Kamehameha Schools (“KS”) voluntarily agree to have KS take out of my wages regular monthly dues as established by the Kamehameha Schools Faculty Association (“KSFA”) in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws, or a regular monthly Service Fee not to exceed KSFA’s regular monthly dues for its members as certified to you in writing by KSFA, and to turn over to KSFA any and all such monies on the following conditions:

1. This authorization shall become effective upon the date set forth below and cannot be cancelled for a period of one year from this date or until the termination of the existing collective bargaining agreement between KS and KSFA, whichever occurs sooner, unless cancelled sooner as provided in Section 2 below.

2. I agree and direct that this authorization shall be irrevocable for successive periods of one year each, or for the period of each succeeding applicable collective bargaining agreement between KS and KSFA, whichever shall be shorter unless:

- (a) I cancel this authorization by written notice to KS at any time or within ten days after the expiration of any such one year period; or
- (b) In the case of the expiration of any applicable collective bargaining agreement between KS and KSFA during any such one year period, I cancel this authorization by written notice to KS at any time during the period following the expiration of the applicable collective bargaining agreement and ten days after the effective date of any new agreement.

3. This authorization is subject to sufficient wages being available to comply with all other required deductions and existing federal and state laws. This authorization shall be suspended during any period in which there is no collective bargaining agreement in effect between KS and KSFA. This authorization shall end if my employment with KS ends. This authorization is made pursuant to the provisions of Section 302(c) of the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947.

Date: _____ Employee Signature: _____

Mailing Address: _____

SS# _____

Receipt of the foregoing authorization is acknowledged:

Employer _____

Communications and fear (cont.)

ably why so few are attempted). Face-to face meetings need to be frequent, regularly scheduled, governed by agenda, and short (i.e. 30 minutes normally, one hour maximum). Most agenda items, other than questions, should be summarized in writing prior to the meeting. Attendance at the headmaster's meeting should reflect the chain of command, include employee representation, and follow an agenda set by the leader. Attendees should know the agenda in advance and come prepared with problems paired with suggested solutions. The purpose of the meeting is to give the boss a chance to get his message across to his staff and employees, get some feedback, and get back to business. Discussions not requiring broad participation by most attendees should not consume valuable meeting time. Being frequent (about two times a week) means that participants can research and prepare timely response to previous agenda items and can wait until they are fully prepared to make an efficient presentation on new topics or make timely progress reports. Campus level meetings (KES, KMS, 9/10, HS etc) should be conducted prior to the headmaster's meeting and be equally efficient and short. With better communication up and down the chain of command, Kapālama should function more like a single team working together to accomplish a common mission giving each other advice and feedback on what's working and what's not, rather than a cluster of independent entities conducting programs whose curriculum plans don't focus on matching exit skills with entry level needs at the next level.

Another less structured procedure to enhance communications would be for our leaders to routinely visit classrooms and offices in their area of responsibility during work hours. The purpose would be to provide the leader with a reality check and the employee with an opportunity to discuss topics one-on-one with the boss in an operational environment. If the visits are going to improve communications, it must be clear that they are not inspections, evaluations or an opportunity to micro-manage. There are numerous other pro-

cedures that would encourage open communications that should be considered. Examples include a suggestion program with recognition and rewards for implemented ideas, voluntary social events (pau hana type meetings) which could rotate each Thursday afternoon from campus to campus (KES to KMS to 9/10 to 11/12 and back) each week, or even a campus newsletter where various administrators express themselves or respond to employee inquires. Changing procedures is a powerful way to influence cultural change and improve communications.

While new procedures provide opportunities to improve communication, new policies could reduce the fear that inhibits open communication. At least four policy changes are needed to clarify rules or establish rights that would improve communications. First, there needs to be a policy establishing that loyalty to the mission supersedes other loyalties in the organization. Managers and employees need to be explicitly told that the mission (the production of good and industrious men and women through education) supersedes other loyalties (i.e. personal, unit, department, office etc). This is necessary because these other loyalties are quite strong and emotional. Many people have difficulty saying "no" to a compelling need of a friend, allowing their unit/department/office to look bad, making the "union" look good, overturning a bad decision, forgiving someone who "went around" them, or objectively considering a helpful suggestion from a pain-in-the-ass employee. But if it's clear that the mission trumps other needs, then it's easier to justify or accept awkward or unpleasant decisions.

Second, there should be no boundaries. The right of an employee to communicate at all levels should be guaranteed by policy. Employees should know that they can discuss issues with or address problems to any level without fear of retribution or even criticism. There should be no restrictions on discussing non-decision making information. Knowledge and feedback are good for everyone. However, when asking a higher level

Communications and fear (cont.)

supervisor to intervene in the decision making process, procedures need to be established so that the immediate supervisor is kept informed and is not routinely bypassed. The supervisor being appealed to should refer problems back to the immediate supervisor if he/she hasn't been kept sufficiently informed and there is no overriding reason not to do so.

Third, there needs to be a policy requiring full disclosure. Open communications requires sharing information. If we are going to work together, we need to lay our cards on the table and respect each other's ability to handle the truth. By their nature, each organizational function has increased access to certain types of information. Teachers understand the classroom better than anyone else. Counselors have unique insights into a student's family problems. Various administrative functions have increased access to data, records, meetings and personal communications. Information acquired in the workplace needs to be shared for the benefit of the mission and should never be used for control. Withholding truthful information in order to hold on to an otherwise indefensible argument is an example of might making right. In this case, information is the weapon of power. We need a policy that makes sharing information the default position and withholding information justifiable only at the highest levels and only for specific reasons.

Fourth, there should be no surprises. It should be our policy that hiding a problem is at least as serious as the problem itself. Leaders can't fulfill their responsibilities if they are kept ignorant of unpleasant information and should make it clear to their employees that they need to be kept abreast of developing problems. Leaders should exercise restraint by not killing the messenger or taking over too soon. Sounds obvious, but problems can be embarrassing and are often denied. Not many managers are anxious to tell their boss that morale in their organization is at an all time low or that a climate of fear is growing or that trust

is non-existent. Yet, these are problems that affect productivity and don't get much attention because of our apparent "don't ask-don't tell" policy on problems.

Well, what do you think of the above analysis and suggestions? If you think they are great, I'd like to know. If they appear to you to be incredible stupid, idealistic, or impractical, I'd still like to know. However, I must warn you I have been in organizations that operated as I have suggested and, while I love it here, communications were better there. Finally, let me know what you would do to improve communications. Then, the next time I represent you at those wonderful meetings, I can speak with a better sense of the consensus.

— *Bill Follmer, Unit 11-12*

Ramona's story (cont.)

firmed by a second opinion.)

9. Whenever a performance evaluation is bordering on unsatisfactory and information is available or readily obtainable, student results should be considered. In sequential subjects (e.g. math, English, languages, and music), next level teachers and department heads are excellent sources of evaluating the teachers performance in preparing them for advanced levels.

(Rationale: Style is important, but so is whether or not the students are learning. If the students are learning, then the situation is less urgent and reevaluation should be considered.)

Good management would treat employees fairly in order to attract and maintain the quality of faculty necessary for mission success. What is the value in having an excellent retirement program if an organization will fire senior teachers within 5 years of retirement eligibility by applying vague standards to justify the termination?

— *Ramona Davis and KSFA*