
Letter: Teachers need not be rattlers to win a battle

January 15, 2020

Dear Editor, In regards to the Del Norte Unified School District contract dispute and the impending teacher strike:

Mr. Napier, which is more dangerous, a small juvenile rattlesnake or a large, fully mature rattlesnake? One might compare the Del Norte teaching staff to a young rattlesnake readying to strike.

While I am an elder staff member, a veteran of more than 20 years, I am also in the minority.

I am not so keen on striking, largely for personal reasons, as it is likely to wreak havoc on my retirement plans.

But I am also well aware of a strike's many other negative effects - no one will surface a winner.

A protracted strike will cause a great deal of financial harm to our teachers. Low morale will sink much deeper. We will lose staff. Already-challenging teacher recruitment will become that much more difficult.

Students will miss out on important education. Standardized test scores will nosedive. Your legacy will be permanently stained.

But, as I have said, I am in the minority. We have a young coil of teachers; somewhere around half of our staff have been hired within the last five years.

And they are deeply agitated. They're fired up, they want to strike!

And why not? Their roots here are not yet deep. They can and will leave if our needs are not met. Already, we have seen so many turnovers.

You know it's true; why, just consider how many math teachers Del Norte High School has lost in the last five years!

Baby rattlesnakes are more dangerous, because they will strike at anything.

And when they do, they sink their fangs in fully and inject every last bit of their venom, leaving themselves defenseless against further dangers.

The old, grizzled rattlesnake knows its poison is an absolute last resort, to be used sparingly. Make no mistake, though, that old rattlesnake is still plenty dangerous.

Teachers aren't looking to get rich, they just want to keep up with inflation and provide for their families.

Let us use common sense to reach a fair deal, and avoid the perils of a strike altogether.

Jeffrey Hanck

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