

Good Evening,

My name's Scott Rowan. I'm a second grade teacher here in Moorestown at Baker Elementary School.

I've done a **lot** of jobs in my life. I've been working since I was ten years old. I've pushed a crummy Sears & Roebuck lawn mower for thousands of miles cutting grass. I've delivered newspapers and collected from over 86 homes daily in all kinds of weather, sometimes pulling my papers around on a sled because the snow was too deep to ride a bike in. (I have an old fashioned dad and "those things build character, besides when you take on a job - you do that job until it's done!") I have stacked cinder blocks, framed houses, bailed and stacked 60 pound bails of hay (try that in 90 plus degree weather in July and August while you're stuck in a dusty old barn trying to breathe). I've washed dishes, waited tables, babysat, cleaned golf carts, worked on a fishing boat, sold musical instruments, managed a retail store, chemically treated plants in a nursery and worked in a chemical treatment plant removing hazardous materials. (And I'm happy to report that in 1998 it finally stopped glowing when I went to the bathroom. My kids are happy about that one, too!).

None of those jobs individually or collectively could compare with the challenges of working in education. Not for one minute, not for one second! Now, I'm a firm believer in not judging a person until I've walked a mile in their shoes, however I don't believe there are people in this room that subscribe to the same mantra. Yes, I am aware that some of you have spouses or parents who teach or have taught and say with all honesty, "Yes I do understand, I know what you go through."

You have no idea, you're not even close. It's like the difference between shooting a bullet and throwing it! These people you see before you work harder than you can possibly imagine.

I'm a 2 time negotiator for these people. I know what they do. I know what is at stake. This is our lives and our families. This isn't a game or a contest of "let's see who blinks first". This decides whether or not I have to ask my mother and father to watch my two small children during the day because we can no longer afford day care. I do this so that Matt and Bob and Marissa and countless other outstanding educators and staff members can continue to have the medical benefits that help lure them into education and in particular to Moorestown. These are extremely talented, bright people who, no doubt, could have succeeded in any field they entered. They chose to heed the call of an educator. They chose others bottom line rather than their own. We're not top salary earners. We're just dedicated, hard working people who love kids and love what we do! Don't use that against us. We pay taxes, too. We have kids we need to provide for. The economic climate plays no favorites with us nor gives us special dispensation. We don't come to your place of employment and rant that you make too much money or vilify your profession, nor would we dare.

Now some of you might think to yourself, "you're darn right you don't come to my place of business and begrudge me my salary... I've earned everything I have."

Yeah, well guess what, so have we! We're angry. We are all angry and we're looking at each other to argue with, which is exactly what the people who started this whole mess want us to do. It takes the focus off of them and this, in my opinion, is the scenario we are now locked into.

Board Members, I'm here to tell you that contract negotiations are going nowhere. I feel hypocritical using the term negotiations. I have seen the negotiation process in the past go well. All parties concerned were present and committed and we worked together for hours at a time for a common interest. We were partners. This year's negotiation process does not have the same atmosphere. Face to face meeting time has been at best for no more than two hours and at worst 19 minutes in duration. Each week my team has returned saying, "this is the week we make progress, and this is the meeting that's going to get things going." And each week we find ourselves staring at each other saying "we have accomplished nothing." We have had no real opportunity to negotiate. When we present issues we are met with the response that "we need to look at that more closely, or we need to get our figures together and get back to you."

One gets the feeling that your team has been told that they're not really allowed to play with us and they're not the most well prepared child in the class. (Sorry, education lingo. It's who we are.) You know, quite honestly, we all here know which kids really do have to go to the bathroom and which kids are just stalling for time. With that being said, perhaps you might want to take the bathroom pass away from your team. I'm not saying that to be glib, I'm just using code here to add a little levity, but still get the message across.

The situation in this district in the last year and a half has enigmatically turned into **us versus them**, and ladies and gentlemen, I cannot stress emphatically enough how detrimental to everyone that attitude can be. Can anyone in this room name a school district in this state that is thriving despite the fact that it's Board of Ed, Community, and Education Staff and Support are all at odds?

If Moorestown hopes to remain a ground breaking, premier school district in this state, we all; every single one of us, need to remove the blinders that our cantankerous convictions have placed over our eyes and get to work - together. We need to brainstorm ideas as a team, not shout rhetoric, telling educators to "suck it up" and "share in the burden." Believe me folks, as any educator in this room can attest to, we put on that proverbial corset of intestinal fortitude and lace that sucker up as tight as it will go every day. You don't know what "sucking-it-up" is until you've taught for a year. I'm personally in year 14 and whether things were flush or times were tough I have more than "shared in the burden."

It would be at this point in the classroom that I would (following the Charlotte Danielson's Framework For Teaching) pass out a worksheet for the students to complete a "Go, Go, Mo;" Give One, Get One and Move On. We should try these methods working together. Everyone in this room should give a good idea; get a good idea and move on to another person.

During the Cuban missile Crisis, Joint Chiefs of Staff member General Curtis Lemay remarked to President Kennedy, "You are in quite a fix, Mr. President" to which President Kennedy replied, "You mean, we are all in quite a fix, don't you General?"

We are all in this fix together and if we look at all of this strictly as dollars and cents and bottom lines, I promise you, this will have a very similar outcome as did my previous employers in the private sector before I had earned my teaching degree.

It was a wonderful, family owned Mom and Pop operation based in New York, which over 70 years had grown into a large Mom and Pop business with 14 locations in 3 states. But even with 14 locations spread over New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the old husband and wife drove to each location and personally welcomed each new employee and gave them the “family” speech. They even personally handed each employee their bonus checks each year. As the company grew, the couple decided it was time to turn their very successful business over to their three sons who had aspirations of turning their parent’s multimillion dollar family place into something much bigger. The “boys” hired the guy who took Wal-Mart from 5th to 1st and he began by slashing salaries and costs everywhere. Everything had to be the same. RESULT: Great people, talented people; people that made those stores something special had no choice but to move on in order to provide for themselves and their families; RESULT #2 – they found employment with competitors. The “boys” had turned something special into a faceless, revolving door of a company..., but that couldn’t happen in a school district, could it?

Once again following Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teachers, it is now time for an assessment to determine comprehension, only this test of understanding is really easy. How do we assess our understanding of tonight’s information? Simple; we have a fair contract worked out before September.

My colleagues and I would like to be preparing this summer for a challenging and stimulating 2010 – 2011 school year, rather than preparing for crisis next year.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.