**LEADING WITHOUT EASY ANSWERS**  
There have been so many changes in our lives over the last few weeks that it is difficult to know exactly where to begin.  Let me start by thanking all CASA members for leading with courage without easy answers. When we stand together in solidarity, we win. Concerning the last several issues (i.e. asbestos crisis, funding for asbestos, coronavirus), CASA has had to become far more aggressive as we fight for not only the rights of our members, but, also the safety of our members.  We will always first and foremost try to problem solve issues that will lead to a win-win for everyone, but when our voices are repeatedly not heard, we have to turn to other venues to ensure that our voices are heard.    
   
Please note that CASA’s Political Team has been instrumental in calling politicians, teleconferencing with me (Dr. Robin Cooper), sharing strategies, and speaking on behalf of CASA.  CASA is extremely proud of this team and when it is time to fight for CASA, they show up and yes, sometimes, they show out. We want to share information and updates from last Friday, March 13, 2020 until now.    
   
**THE START OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**  
The coronavirus pandemic is something that we have not seen in our lifetime and unfortunately, as its consequences were brought to light, the decision-making entities held alternative ways to address it. It was CASA’s position that schools should be closed for the safety of all. We asserted that only health and safety should come first.  CASA opposed the idea of schools remaining open for reasons we saw as babysitters and housing of students solely for feeding purposes. CASA agreed with the premise that students need to be safe and fed as stated by the city and our district. It was also CASA’s position that schools were not the only agency in our city that should be taking the full responsibility to keep students fed and safe especially if keeping schools open meant that we might be exposing vulnerable citizens throughout the population to the virus.   This was a huge responsibility and it was one that we felt should be shared in a fair and equitable way instead of it being the sole responsibility of the principals and school personnel to shoulder such a massive task to house students during the coronavirus pandemic that has never been witnessed before.   
   
**PRESS RELEASE TO CLOSE SCHOOLS**  
On Friday, March 13, 2020, CASA sent a Press Release to all media hosts to get the word out that WE did not believe leaving our schools open would be in the best interest of your children, families, and our members. We pointed out that a number of our children have underlying medical issues, that our buildings are not clean, and also that the School District of Philadelphia does not have the infrastructure of crews of cleaners to disinfect our buildings effectively.  Just as importantly, the SDP did not provide the proper cleaning substance (60 % or higher alcohol content) to keep many of the classrooms or the common areas clean, nor did the district have the appropriate 60% or higher alcohol content in the hand sanitizer that was being disbursed to schools (Please see the attached Press Release).  
BREAKING NEWS: SCHOOL DISTRICT TO EXPAND FEEDING SITES FROM 30 TO UP TO 80 SITES; BUT REDUCE FEEDING SESSIONS TO MONDAYS & THURSDAYS **ONLY** FROM 9:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M.  
SEE PHILASD.ORG OR PHILA.GOV FOR MORE DETAILS.  
   
**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS (IBT) CONFERENCE CALLS**  
We are very fortunate to be affiliated with our strong and vibrant International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). The IBT has stood firmly with us during contentious contract negotiations, the asbestos hazards, and now throughout the coronavirus crisis. We have held meetings and phone conferences with the Teamsters Environmental Department Chief Lamont Byrd, the Public Sector Director Jason Rabinowitz, International Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, Canadian International Vice-President Francois Laporte, and International President Jimmy Hoffa. The overarching message from all of these meetings and phone conferences is that the Teamsters stand on the front lines with us in the fight to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of our members, as well as to ensure that the employers honor all of our contractual provisions, especially during these extraordinary times.  There were several phone calls that have been held since the beginning of the pandemic and these conferences will continue to be held so that presidents of Teamster Locals can be kept abreast of the very latest of the Teamsters involvement in this national crisis.    
   
**COMMUNICATION**  
When things happened in real time, CASA members called, texted and emailed me to share collective concerns that they knew would affect us all.  We have been trying to keep the interests of the members of Teamsters Local 502: CASA in the forefront concerning the following items:  
   
   
**INCONSISTENT COMMUNICATION MODALITIES**  
As you are aware all district employees were labeled in two categories:  essential and non-essential personnel. None of the union leaders were included in the dialogue of who is considered essential or non-essential personnel.  Of course, essential personnel would be expected to do much more than those deemed as non-essential personnel.  With these categories, all of the non-essential personnel are working at home, with some of the essential personnel working from home as well. Once it was decided that employees would be working remotely, the inconsistencies began with some examples listed below:

1. Requiring morning check-ins of some of our members at 7:00, 8:00, or 9:00 A.M.
2. Asking for members to repeatedly get online for (what in some cases) can be deemed as **‘busy’,** but meaningless work or **tracking of the time**.
3. Asking for supervisors to constantly have check-ins with their own staff to the point of badgering them several times a day.
4. Using several different technologies when one or two will suffice (ex. Zoom, facetime, google hangout, . . .).  We requested that members be allowed to phone in to conferences if they are not comfortable with the use of all of the various device strategies being utilized.

  Our position is that we are CASA administrators, and we recognize that our work is asynchronous, often carrying into times outside of our defined workday.  We have informed district officials that working remotely looks very different from physically being in a school setting. We are asking to be trusted and treated as the professionals that we are.

**RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH OUR OWN STAFF MEMBERS**  
Just as we have asked the district to avoid harassing CASA with meaningless work from home just to have a way to ‘track’ what we are doing, we ask for you to treat your staff respectfully and not badger them with early morning (i.e. 7 or 8 am) calls just to track their time.  CASA is cognizant of the fact that our members are home with their children and as such, there is a lot going on while we try to deal with work demands as well. We need to be respectful of that fact as we attempt to juggle two worlds at once. It is our belief that everyone is trying to do the very best they can under very stressful circumstances.  We do not want to be the entity to add to their already heavy burden.   
   
Several of our own administrators have shared that they are feeling badgered by their Assistant Superintendents with early morning ZOOM and/or HANG OUT directive (log-on).  We do not want to pass the same mistreatment down to our staff. It is our job to encourage teachers to help our students, not clock every minute they are home to ensure they are not ‘stealing’ company time. This is not what working remotely looks like.  CASA’s stance is to treat staff members like the professionals that they are just as we hope the Assistant Superintendents will view us as professionals and not slackers just because we are working from home.  
   
**REMOTE LEARNING**  
Our students' continuity of educational programming is of paramount concern to us. We were charged with providing windows of time the last few days for teachers to enter school buildings safely to retrieve necessary materials such as computers, textual materials, and curriculum guides.   
   
Our dedicated and devoted members ensured the safe passage of our faculty members in and throughout our school facilities. The School District, after consultation with PDE, subsequently determined that any and all of the learning activities are non-credit bearing, non-gradable activities, due to the inequitable access of our students to online, computer based instructional programming. As a result of this email and subsequent communication thereafter, please ensure that you are in compliance with the district’s directive and that none of the work students perform from home is included in any form as “graded activity”.  
   
**DISCIPLINARY PROCESS & PANDEMIC CRISIS**  
As we work within this ‘new normal’, we must find a way as Stephen Covey says, *“to prioritize and put first things first.”* First, the nation, state, city, and schools are focused on the safety of their citizens.  Simply put, *“Safety is first.”* CASA was disappointed to learn that in the beginning of a pandemic, a district official sent out a hearing notice for a conference that was to be held virtually. The 2nd level conference was offered to a member via google hangout, or telephone conference, both of which have the potential for misleading & biased messaging from SDP, as well as a serious breach of confidentiality. Needless to say, we headed that potentially very harmful action off at the pass.    
   
This was insulting because for the district to even make that a priority in a pandemic speaks volumes of their ability to prioritize and “*put first things first”*.  Even the City of Philadelphia temporarily halted the judicial process, and the police halted immediate arrests knowing that this pandemic is first and foremost, with disciplinary measures being of secondary importance.  Apparently, this district official does not understand that holding a disciplinary conference was not putting a priority the very first week of a national crisis. This was a very tone-deaf decision and it shows that some of our officials do not have their hands on the pulse of the nation.  In all fairness, CASA doesn’t believe that every district official was involved in that decision but CASA is disturbed that a mishap as serious as this could occur. Also, again be reminded that this is only the first week of this pandemic.    
   
**RETENTION PROCESS**  
The school district had shortened our retention window (the period where ten month employees have to declare whether we are retiring or not to maintain health benefits through the summer) by two days to March 13th, instead of our contractual date of March 15th, which was a Sunday. They could have moved the date to March 16th as the original deadline. Then, they tried to make up for that shortage by extending the deadline to March 20th, right in the middle of the coronavirus crisis. We have requested that the new deadline should be April 15th, when we could be returning back to work from being self-quarantined. April 15th would be a better deadline, rather than March 20th. If the IRS can extend the tax return deadline by three months from April 15th to July 15th, then it is reasonable for the School District to extend the retention deadline for CASA members to April 15th.  Please note that currently the deadline date is still Friday, March 20, 2020.  
   
**TRANSPARENCY AND SOLIDARITY**  
One of CASA’s goals is to always be transparent with our members. There is a lot going on from day to day, hour to hour and of course, minute to minute.  There are many phone conferences from many different entities taking place at various times throughout the day. Sometimes, it is from district to individual union, union to union, IBT to CASA, politician to union, district to all union leaders, union to lawyer, member to CASA, etc.  So, the day is filled with informational gathering as we must all stand together as one to fight this pandemic. We stand in solidarity with you as one as we work with the School District of Philadelphia, City of Philadelphia, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to ensure that a plan is put in place that has all of the coordinated parts necessary to make up the whole. Currently, we have a return date of March 30, 2020, and, while we are not sure if we will actually return by that date, we do know that we expect all members to take heed of the important updates regarding the coronavirus and its deadly implications. In short, your health comes first.  Please practice *‘social distancing’* and keep our *‘essential employees’*, who are being deployed daily, in your thoughts and prayers.     
   
**SIDENOTE:** Please find the following attachments to this email:

* Press Release – CASA’s action when the coronavirus had just begun- [click here](https://local502casa.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=fcee2b3da3423fe7b66c72c60&id=4d47d44311&e=932ff1bcb6)
* FAQ-questions that our members wanted answered is attached to this email- [click here](https://local502casa.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=fcee2b3da3423fe7b66c72c60&id=872c235171&e=932ff1bcb6)
* Lindback Award Winners- [click here](https://local502casa.us18.list-manage.com/track/click?u=fcee2b3da3423fe7b66c72c60&id=0169d7ae2c&e=932ff1bcb6)

 In Solidarity,  
   
Robin  
  
  
  
 