



Red4EdNC

Put Down the Gradebook and Vote

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Let me say as a precursor, I am not trying to vote shame anyone, but looking at public election records, (https://enr.ncsbe.gov/voter_search_public/) educators do not consistently cast a vote. We are agents of change, beacons of hope, role models for youth. As metaphors for many positive aspects of the future, why, *why?* are we educators not consistent voters, directly affecting the future?

In so many aspects of our lives as teachers, we put ourselves last: We go to school sick rather than stay at home. We use our own money to purchase classroom supplies. We give up parts of our summers for extra training. We sometimes put our own children in line behind our school children (*more of them*, we often think). Many educators I know (myself included) even planned pregnancy due dates around school calendars.

So on Election Day, I can hear us: Rather than going to the polls, we say, *I need to grade this stack of papers. I need to attend this parent conference. I need to set up my classroom for tomorrow's lab. I need to work out the kinks in this lesson. I need to copy these worksheets.* These tasks do need to occur, but not at the expense of voting on November 8.

No doubt, if you are a veteran teacher, the current political ads on NC television exasperate you. *\$50,000? Where? Who? When?* And if you are a new teacher, you probably do not realize the bold lie being told because you look at that number as realistic. After all, you go to college, work hard, save with the belief raises will come; so you assume \$50,000 will happen.

If not part of the education sector, you might look at that \$50,000 touted by some current NC legislators and think, *\$50,000? I made that at my first job out of school.* Again, sadly, that is what NC teachers aspire to, but may not reach. The ads further fail to explain how some local school systems have kicked in a supplement, putting the burden upon local taxpayers, rather than state government, to get anywhere near that salary amount.

So back to my point: If we as educators choose not to vote, if we choose to do anything else in place of voting, we yet again put ourselves last. But this time, it is not money we

sacrifice, nor a week of summer vacation, nor a day to recoup our health; it is our voice we have ransomed off with self-inflicted martyrdom. So call it vote-shaming if you will, but put down the stack of papers, shut the classroom door, and get to the poll. Because if we do not, that \$50,000 salary will continue to be a lie that we ourselves helped perpetuate.