

**W**hy would we make a political squabble within an association our cover story? Because, quite simply, the Professional Development Initiative has the potential to reshape the employment future of every superintendent in the United States.

First, a little history. Six years ago, the GCSAA membership slapped down a radical attempt by the association's leadership to eliminate the chapter delegates system — among other things — and give substantially more power to the Board of Directors and staff in Lawrence (which included yours truly, at the time).

Under the committed leadership of then-president Randy Nichols, a new broom swept the old HQ regime out and a new member-friendly team led by Steve Mona was installed.

Many issues faced the new leadership team in Lawrence, but none loomed larger than the growing need for new membership standards. Basically, the question came down to this: How can we claim that GCSAA members are better than other superintendents when any schmuck with three years' experience and \$250 in his or her pocket can get a gold card? If we want to be perceived as professionals and be treated and paid commensurately, shouldn't we have higher standards than that?

Thus was born yet another committee, the Membership Standards Resource Group, which spent thousands of hours (and lots of money on consultants) to study the issue and recommend a course of action. What emerged was a proposal to enact a strong set of standards that revolve around a college

degree and a complex, competency-based continuing-education requirement. When details of the proposal were announced last fall, a trickle of discontent started to appear in postings on the "Talking it Over" forum on the GCSAA Web site.

That trickle turned into a flood of viewpoints, both for and against, over the past few months. At times, the exchange of these electronic messages has been a marvelous example of professional discourse between reasonable people who happen to disagree about an issue. At other times, it has been downright nasty and personal.

What does Golfdom think about PDI?

Those of you expecting me to issue an opinion will be

disappointed. My opinion is that I'm not a superintendent — and I don't get a vote.

Instead, we asked more than a dozen different superintendents to express their views on both sides of the question. We felt it was important to present a balanced, unbiased story based on your opinions, not ours.

Whichever side you take, I hope you agree the debate over this issue is a sure sign of a vital and healthy profession. Could you imagine plumbers or pilots having this type of argument about standards?

Although some of the discussion has been heated, it has been, for the most part, civil. A decent percentage of members are passionately interested in the issue, not because of how it will impact them, but how it will shape the profession in the future.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "Vigorous disagreement feeds the soil upon which democracy grows."

TJ would love the great PDI debate. ■

*The discussion of PDI begins on page 38. Also see page 40.*

# PDI: Pretty Damn Interesting

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