

# Going Postal

■ WE'VE GOT MAIL

## Is PDI necessary?

I don't think PDI should stand for "Pretty Dumb Idea," but is it necessary? There are some good points, some that are arguable and some that are just plain bad. While I don't think everyone should drop their opinions about PDI and adopt mine, I would like to raise some issues on it.

No other professional association that I'm aware of tells its members they must complete a self-assessment. While self-assessment is a good idea — it might be the best thing one could do to be a better superintendent and a better person — a professional group should never require such a subjective test.

Testing members to assure competent knowledge is a great idea. Other professional groups, such as lawyers and electricians, have ways of certifying their membership. A class that teaches us how to do that or improve how we evaluate our own weaknesses is a great idea. But a professional association, which is what the GCSAA is, should not assume that responsibility. A superintendent's evaluation should be between himself or herself and that person's supervisor.

Another argument for PDI is that our association needs to raise our average salary. That was a good argument 20 years ago. We should be thankful to the senior members of our association that did all the work to raise our association's professionalism. But these days it's not uncommon for the value of a superintendent's total compensation package to be almost 20 percent of the operating budget and 40 percent of the payroll budget. In the past several years, I've known more superintendents let go for budget-cutting purposes that any other reason. Do we really want

to end up in a situation like the PGA where assistants make under \$20,000 while their bosses sometimes make five times that or more?

One last point: Almost all superintendents are judged on job performance. Similar to professional coaches, lawyers and salespeople, the opinion of our competency is based solely on the product we provide. If a lawyer loses too many cases, he or she won't have any clients. If a salesperson doesn't sell, he or she is going to be terminated. How many times does a coach get let go despite having many successful seasons because he or she has a few bad years?

No collection of letters behind one's name or college degrees are going to protect a superintendent's job when that superintendent fails to meet an employer's expectations. We need to continue to improve the skills that make us successful, but that should be a personal choice depending on what each person wants.

While some members dream of being at a top club and being elected to the GCSAA Board of Directors, others want no more than to earn a good wage, keep their courses in better shape than the ones next door and to coach their kids' little league teams. Our association needs both types.

**Steve Rebhan, CGCS  
Battle Creek CC  
Battle Creek, Mich.**

**Feel like going postal? We want to hear from you. You can e-mail your letters to Pat Jones at [patrick.jones@advanstar.com](mailto:patrick.jones@advanstar.com), fax to 440-891-2675 or send them via snail-mail to: 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Make sure to include your name and phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length or relevance.**

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