

PRESS RELEASE

The Hillsborough Township Board of Education and the Hillsborough Education Association were unable to reach a contract settlement following three (3) lengthy mediation sessions with a State-appointed mediator. This followed approximately six (6) meetings of direct negotiations over the last five (5) months. The Association's contract expired on June 30, 2019.

The principle reason that a contract settlement has not been reached is because the Association has refused to present any counterproposals to the Board at the last two (2) mediation sessions. The Board attended the mediation session on September 12, 2019 with the understanding that the Association would be presenting a counterproposal for settlement. The Association did not present a counterproposal for the Board's consideration and as a result of the continued impasse, the State-appointed mediator invoked fact-finding.

The Board proposed a 3-year agreement with cumulative salary increases of 8.4% that are competitive with the Somerset County 3-year average settlements. The Board also agreed to the Association's request to reduce the time teachers are required to participate in professional learning communities, to provide child care leave for adoption, provide foul weather gear for custodians and to comprehensive procedures providing access to the District's facilities and its employees to conduct meetings with its members.

In exchange for the Board's concessions, the Board proposed that part-time teachers, like full-time teachers, arrive 15 minutes before their scheduled day and remain 10 minutes after students are dismissed to provide adequate supervision for the safety and security of our students. The Board also requested reasonable restrictions on the type of graduate courses eligible for reimbursement to preclude courses that are not acceptable by approved colleges and universities for graduate credit. Finally, the Board asked the Association to change the hourly rate of pay for all summer work consistent with the hourly rate paid to teachers who write curriculum. The savings from this rate reduction would allow the Board to continue to provide essential summer services that have been eliminated because of the District's loss of State aid.

The Association rejected the Board's final settlement proposal and continues to seek salary increases that are above comparable settlement rates in Somerset County. The Association also expressed an unwillingness to consider any of the Board's proposals that seek to provide additional student supervision and a minimal reduction

in summer pay in order to maintain essential summer services for students and parents.

The Board has offered a highly competitive salary and benefits package for all teaching staff members, secretaries, custodians and aides in consideration for their valued contributions to the District's outstanding educational and extracurricular programs. The teachers have recently been ranked third highest in median salaries in Somerset County and their healthcare contributions are already lower than any comparable school district. The Association's proposal would not allow the Board to maintain the District's outstanding programs within the financial constraints imposed by the 2% tax levy cap, continued State aid reductions and anticipated enrollment increases.

The State will now appoint a fact-finder who shall schedule a formal hearing, at which time the Board and the Association will submit their final proposals and evidence to support the reasonableness of their last offers. It is anticipated that the selection, appointment and scheduling of a hearing by the fact-finder will take several months and may extend well into the present school year. The fact-finder has the authority to recommend the terms of a settlement to the parties. However, the recommended terms of settlement are not binding upon either party. The costs for the services of the fact-finder are the responsibility of both parties.

The Board remains willing to meet with the Association at any time in an effort to settle this contract dispute before the process moves on to fact-finding.