

South Eastern School District

School Board approves new 4-year agreement with Teachers' Association

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After 11 months of contract negotiations, the South Eastern School District ("District") is pleased to announce it approved a new four-year collective bargaining agreement with the South Eastern Education Association ("Association"). The agreement establishes the salaries and fringe benefits for approximately 250 teaching professionals employed by the District. The starting date for the new contract is retroactive to July 1, 2008 and runs through June 30, 2012.

The District and Association reached a tentative agreement for a new contract after a lengthy bargaining session on Thursday, November 13th. The state mediator assigned to the negotiations urged both parties to use the fact-finder's recommendations as starting point for their continued negotiations that evening. After more than five hours of bargaining, the District obtained several important concessions on salaries, employee health care costs and the work day rules, which resulted in a tentative agreement for a new contract. Over the next 10 days, the parties hammered out the wording of the new 30-page contract, and presented the agreement for ratification votes to their respective parties on December 3rd and 4th.

Some of the key provisions of the new contract are as follows:

Teacher Salary Increases – The District previously rejected the fact-finder's report largely because it proposed a salary increases totaling 19.6% over four years. The fact-finder recommended this increase in light of salary increases provided by other York County school districts. The District ultimately agreed to a lower salary increase --on average a 4.70% annual salary increase -- which is comparable to increases made by neighboring school districts in recent contracts. While agreeing to the salary increases was not an easy decision, the District felt it was important to address its current standing as one of the lower-paying school districts within York County in order to attract and retain quality teachers.

Health Care – The District and Association agreed to a significant overhaul of its existing health care plan. Effective January 1st, a three-tiered health care plan will be introduced with single, two-party and family coverage. Teachers electing two-party or family coverage will pay between 14 and 33% more than what they currently pay for such health care coverage. In subsequent years of the contract, all teachers will pay an annual 10% increase for the cost of their elected level of coverage. The District also achieved significant concessions regarding retiree health care coverage by substantially increasing the cost of what eligible retirees pay for coverage and tightening the eligibility criteria for retiree health care coverage offered through the District. The District believes these changes will result in substantial savings over the life of this contract.

Tuition Reimbursement - The District and Association agree substantial changes to the tuition reimbursement procedures. Under the new contract, the maximum tuition reimbursement rate per credit will be ***reduced*** by 57% (from \$616 to \$357). Teachers will only be eligible for reimbursement for college courses directly related to their certification or their current professional assignments. The District also strengthened the rules to require teachers to pay back tuition reimbursement, if they leave employment of the District for any reason. The District believes these changes will stabilize its tuition reimbursement costs in the future, and further ensure that the students derive the benefit of the teacher training programs paid for by the District.

Child Rearing Leave – The District eliminated the long-standing practice of paying for teachers’ health care coverage while they were on unpaid child rearing leave. Teachers will now be responsible for paying the full cost of their health care coverage once they exhaust their rights under Family Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) to purchase such coverage. This change will result in cost savings for the District, while still allowing teachers to take unpaid leaves from their employment to be with their new-born children.

Educational Attainment for New Teachers – Under the new contract, all newly-hired teachers will be required to earn Master’s Degrees in a field directly related to education in order to be eligible to receive salary increases in the future. The District believes this new requirement will introduce an even greater level of professionalism among newly-hired teachers in the future.