

## **Bargaining Update**

9/15/15

The district and LCEA bargaining teams met last night to try and reach resolution on a new three year contract. Unfortunately, we have come to a point where both sides are either unable or unwilling to relent their current positions. While there are still some lingering language issues, the biggest difference is economic benefit.

The district has offered what it considers to be a fair and reasonable offer that works to address the issues facing Lincoln County schools:

**Increase teacher compensation** – Under the current proposal, the average teacher compensation will increase by 5% in year 1 and increase by 4.5% in year 2 and 3 for all teachers except those that max out the scale. Those at the top of the scale would receive 1.5%.

**Recruit/Retain new teachers** – The district is offering some of the highest beginning compensation in the state. This will help us recruit new teachers and allow those new teachers to become better invested in the community.

**Honor experienced teachers** – The district has offered to extend the scale by 3 steps allowing our most veteran teachers the opportunity to increase their compensation accordingly. It also increases the top end of the scale to again be some of the highest levels of compensation in state. This will allow an economic incentive for our most experienced teachers to remain in the classroom.

**Value-Added Stipends** – The district offered some ways for teachers to control some aspect of their compensation while at the same time filling valuable needs for the students and the district. Many of the ideas came from the work the creative compensation committee did through the collaboration grant. The district is open to reconvening the committee to study the stipends further and offer recommendations for future stipends.

**Health benefits** – The district has offered a Health Reserve Account (HRA) program that is similar to our self-insured vision and dental program that will provide MODA plan C coverage for no out of pocket expense.

**Future considerations** – The past few years in Lincoln County have been difficult. The recession combined with decreasing student enrollment have caused the district to eliminate teachers, programs and to even close buildings. Over the past two years, the economy has improved and the district has seen increased student population. Our class size is concerning and we will need to add teachers to adjust our class size to appropriate levels. In addition, increased requirements for PE will necessitate additional staff. Furthermore, we need to work toward bringing back previously cut programs and continuing to add programs that are beneficial for our students. This will also require additional staff. Our district's financial health will determine the level of staffing we are able to achieve.

To give some perspective on the value we place in our best resource, this year, the district received less than one half of one percent increase in per student allocation from the state. Cuts were made to programs, classified staff, and administration, while the teaching staff was increased by 15.

At this point, the district is requesting to enter into mediation with the association. It is still our hope to come to an agreement that is fair, reasonable, and honors the hard work our teachers do while at the same time maintains the fiscal health of our district that allows us to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the students of Lincoln County.