

August 31, 2015

To all LCEA staff and administrators,

There was progress in negotiations between LCEA and the District last week. Though no tentative agreements were reached with salary and benefits, both sides discussed the merits of their proposals and are moving toward compromise. The District explained why the amount of cost of living increase proposed by the Association was very difficult to financially manage since a 3% increase was already built into the District proposed steps for advancement. The Association argued that this was still not enough to be able to retain quality staff at all levels.

The Association counter proposed removing steps 19 and 20 from the salary schedule as a way of offsetting a portion of the cost of funding an additional COLA. The District countered the proposal with a 1.5% COLA for years 2 and 3 of the contract with the LCEA request to drop the two steps. Steps 19 and 20 affect many staff, and the argument was that the District was attempting to include the 3% growth for steps 19 and 20 within the intent of retention and years of service incentive. The District reemphasized that the increase in funding from the state has to correlate with the expenditures of the District. The district's increase in state allocation for students is less than ½ of 1 percent for next year. We cannot balance this with across the board salary increases of 5-7% and not dramatically affect other programs within the district. The District has implemented 3.5% cuts to programs and services for next year while adding new teacher positions. If additional resources are committed to salaries, it will be very difficult for the District to move toward smaller class sizes, purchase curriculum, improve facilities, provide value added incentives, and staff development that improves student performance. There was also discussion that even though the legislature increased funding to schools, the funding was not increased by the same percent increment to all districts.

The District proposal that included the "added value" stipends was withdrawn for the 2015-16 school year since the cost of funding the incentives was a result of the savings by offering a single insurance Plan G with an HRA account. Since a decision was not reached yesterday, the proposal is simply too close to the insurance cutoff date to implement this portion of the District's proposal for this school year. There was discussion about a committee structure to recommend value added stipends at some future date but will need to be tied to a revenue source.

Other Articles were discussed and is believed to be close to resolution once the salary and benefit portion is completed. We hope to finish the bargaining at the next meeting on September 14<sup>th</sup>.