

***Saddle River School District
Board of Education
97 East Allendale Road, Saddle River, NJ 07458***

March 20, 2019

RE: Negotiation Update

Dear Parents/Guardians/Residents,

The Saddle River Board of Education has been negotiating with the Teachers' Association since February, 2018. The Board's goal throughout the process has been to negotiate a contract that is fair and reasonable for both the staff and the Saddle River taxpayers. Over the summer, the parties met with a state-appointed mediator on two separate occasions in an attempt to settle the contract. When a settlement could not be achieved, the state-appointed mediator recommended the appointment of an independent fact-finder. The state-appointed independent fact-finder also met with the parties on two occasions in an attempt to settle the contract. When the fact-finder was unable to achieve a voluntary settlement, he scheduled and conducted a fact-finding hearing on February 13, 2019. The fact-finder further directed the parties to submit written briefs by no later than March 30, 2019. Just yesterday, we learned that the Teachers' Association has requested an additional two weeks to submit its brief; resulting in a further delay of this process. Upon receipt of all parties' briefs, the independent fact-finder will issue a written decision outlining his recommended terms for settlement.

Throughout the process, the Board has offered the Teachers' Association salary increases consistent with the settlements throughout Bergen County and to maintain the current health benefits coverage and the employees' contributions for that coverage.

Unfortunately, the Teachers' Association has rejected the Board's generous offer and is seeking salary increases in excess of the other settlements throughout Bergen County and is also insisting on a permanent reduction to the amount that the top-paid teachers contribute toward health benefits. Presently, the cost of the family insurance plan for the teachers is approximately \$38,000. On average, the teachers contribute eighteen (18%) percent toward the cost of the health benefits. The Board has repeatedly explained that any reduction in the employees' contribution toward health care coverage will have a deleterious impact on the District's budget and adversely affect the Saddle River students and programs.

While the Board is disappointed that the Teachers' Association has rejected its settlement offer, the Board remains committed to achieving a negotiated contract that is fair and reasonable for both the staff and the Saddle River taxpayers. The Board is looking forward to receipt of the fact-finder's written decision, which is expected in late April, 2019, and will share it with the public as soon as it is legally permissible to do so.

Sincerely,

The Saddle River Board of Education