



MCS D-MCEA Bargaining Update: Apr. 1, 2015

DISTRICT DECLARES IMPASSE!

STUART FL — After twelve bargaining sessions spanning ten months, the Martin County School District formally declared impasse at the conclusion of negotiations on April 1. The issues at impasse include: Terminal Sick Leave Pay, the 15% Retirement Bonus, Retiree Health Insurance, Active Employee Health Insurance, salaries, Advanced Degree Supplements, and Annual Contract renewal.

The MCEA bargaining team has truly made every effort to meet the District's cost-savings needs while impacting employees as little as possible. MCEA's last package of economic proposals included (you can see the details of MCS D's and MCEA's most recent proposals under "Negotiations Documents" front and center on [the MCEA website](#)):

- Agreement with the District's idea to switch Medicare-eligible retirees from the District health insurance plan to giving a subsidy to purchase Medicare Gap or similar coverage
- "Freezing" the accrual of years of service for all current employees for the purposes of calculating post-retirement health benefits and the 15% retirement supplement
- Agreement with the District's proposal to instead contribute a flat \$6,750 to the cost of health insurance, ending the previous practice of subsidizing the additional cost of the HMO55 and PPO117 insurance plans
- Restoring advanced degree supplements to amounts comparable to surrounding school districts
- Agreement with the District's proposal to take \$980,000 of the realized savings to put into the General Fund Balance
- Agreement with the District's proposal of no permanent salary increase for 2014-2015
- In exchange for all of the above cuts (totalling over \$2 million, a figure not disputed by the District), MCEA proposed restoring the two furlough days taken from all employees last year (an even lower amount than the District's March 9 proposal of a \$900 one-time bonus)

The District and the Board held an Executive Session on March 16 to review and develop responses to MCEA's proposals. But despite the MCEA bargaining team's best efforts to achieve a resolution, the District's "last, best, and final" offer to MCEA not only still included draconian cuts

to virtually every benefit available to both active and retired employees, but provided for no increase in compensation whatsoever. The District withdrew its March 9 proposal for a \$900 one-time bonus, an act that can only be interpreted as retribution for MCEA's refusal to overrule the Health Insurance Committee's recommendation to retain the HMO55 plan for another year.

It is an understatement to say that the MCEA Bargaining Team — and every teacher in the room — was shocked and flabbergasted when the District team summarily rejected nearly every single one of MCEA's proposals (it was willing to accept MCEA's proposal on retiree health insurance on its own, however MCEA is not willing to agree to a major cut for nothing in return). No rationale was offered for the rejections. When the District told MCEA that this was their final offer, the MCEA team expressed that it needed time to consider the proposals. The District responded by declaring impasse.

Members of the public who have attended negotiations all year may recall MCEA's repeated requests to see a compensation package to accompany its proposed cuts, arguing that MCEA may be more amenable to benefit cuts if a considerable salary increase were given as well. In response, the Board requested "trust" from teachers through its Chief Negotiator, Kim Sabol. Ms. Sabol's statement bears quoting in full (you can see the video by clicking [here](#) and fast-forwarding to the 19:30 mark):

You said that it's difficult to talk to your membership about accepting these proposals that include drastic cuts to benefits without knowing what type of money they could see in their paycheck as a result. And what the Board wanted me to communicate to teachers in response to that is that they want all their employees to be paid well, and that you will learn to trust them when they put their money where their mouth is, and that you will see their intention when they do what they say that they're going to do.

MCEA gave the Board over \$2 million in budget cuts in its proposal package on March 11. In response, the Board demanded even more cuts, and proposed to give exactly \$0 back in compensation. Of all the statements made by the District, this may be the one that MCEA — and the citizens of Martin County — can believe in the most.

Your MCEA Bargaining Team and Executive Board will begin work immediately on putting a strategy for impasse into action, so don't put your blue T-shirts in the closet just yet! In the meantime, keep an eye out for updates, and call and e-mail Board members any chance you get!