



## NEWS RELEASE

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# **Per contract protocols, Board renders final decision regarding salary and benefits for teachers**

At its regular business meeting Monday evening, the District 6 Board of Education voted to render a final decision on the financial compensation items of the teachers union contract for the 2009-10 school year.

The Board approved the following compensation package for teachers for the 2009-10 school year:

- The district will pay the increased cost of contributions to the state retirement system (PERA)
- The district will pay the increased cost of health, dental and vision insurance
- The district will pay for educational advancement on the salary schedule for teachers (often referred to as “lane” raises or “horizontal movement” raises)
- The district will increase the per-hour pay rate for teachers’ non-contract work to \$25 per hour (currently is \$18)

The master agreement contract between District 6 and the Greeley Education Association calls for the Board of Education to make the final determination on matters that have not been resolved through the regular negotiations process or through meditation (Article 5-e-3). Mediation between the district and the union was held on Sept. 25, with the assistance of a federal mediator, but ended without an agreement on salaries and benefits.

“This was a difficult decision to make, because we do care deeply about our teachers and hold them in high regard. But these are very difficult financial times for the district and also for our local communities and our state,” said Board President Bruce Broderius. “Financially, this is the best we can do. As disappointing as it is for all of us to be in the situation that we are, I truly hope we can still develop a partnership with the union to preserve jobs, to avoid layoffs, and to do what we can to lessen the fiscal crisis that will strike at the heart of our district in 2010.”

Salaries and wages for all of the district’s administrative and support staff employees were frozen at the beginning of the 2009-10 school year, remaining at last year’s levels.

“Under the terms of this decision, many teachers can still receive salary raises this year through educational advancement,” said Broderius. Educational advancement raises a teacher’s pay by 2.6 percent. Approximately 300 District 6 teachers are eligible to receive these raises in 2009-10, which will cost the district about \$250,000.

“We will reduce spending wherever we can, districtwide, in order to come up with that money,” said Wayne Eads, the district’s chief operations officer. “Current budgets and spending plans will have to be cut.”

Prior to the mediation on Sept. 25, the negotiating teams for the union and the administration had reached tentative agreements on several contract provisions relating to working conditions. On Monday night, the Board directed the administration to work with the union to finalize these tentative agreements and prepare a final master agreement document for 2009-10.

The Board responded to statements GEA has made about step raises, which are vertical advancements on the salary schedule, being mandatory each year.

“Steps are not mandatory. The contract clearly states that the financial obligations of the contract are subject to annual negotiations and Board appropriations,” said Broderius. “We clearly would like to give steps this year, but we do not have the financial ability to do so. We are not alone in this. There are other districts in Colorado that have also not been able to give steps to teachers this year.”

Mapleton Public Schools and Douglas County School District have not been able to give teachers step raises or base raises this year.

A step raise on the District 6 salary schedule is a 3.75 percent salary increase, the largest such increase in the state. Giving a 3.75 percent raise to all of the district’s employees in 2009-10 would cost \$2.7 million.

“To raise that much money would require us to lay off more than 100 employees at winter break, or entirely eliminate our school bus transportation service for students, or entirely eliminate custodial services at all schools,” said Eads. “Doing any of those options, or others, would have a very detrimental impact on the quality of service we can provide to our students, staff and families. Our students’ academic success is our primary focus and objective.”

The Board pointed to the district’s low ranking on the list of statewide per-pupil funding as another financial stress. In 2008-09, District 6 received the 170<sup>th</sup> lowest per-pupil funding among Colorado’s 178 school districts, caused by a combination of low state funding and the lack of a local mill levy override for schools.

“We just don’t have as much money to operate our schools as the vast majority of other districts do, which exacerbates our financial difficulties,” said Eads.

The Board addressed the union’s call, prior to Monday’s meeting, for the two sides to return to the negotiating table.

“We were aware that the union had asked for a return to negotiations, but the contract clearly states that if the regular course of negotiations and then mediation does not resolve an issue, then the Board will make the final decision on that issue,” said Broderius.

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