

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION
OCTOBER 18, 2011
NEGOTIATIONS STATEMENT

The Holland Township Board of Education is committed to providing students with the best education possible which is fiscally responsible and reflects the diverse needs of the community. All members of the Holland Township Board of Education respect and value the work our teachers, aides, clerks, secretaries, and custodians do for our students, school, and community. We recognize that our staff members are dedicated to providing our students with an educational environment and experience that provide them with a foundation for success.

The Board of Education is in the difficult position of negotiating a contract that we believe is fair to our staff and responsive to the economic needs of the community. The current state of negotiations is not about failing to recognize the care, commitment, and dedication that our staff demonstrates daily. It continues to be about responding to the current state of the economy at the national, state, and most importantly the local level. It is imperative that the Board of Education remains sensitive to the economic challenges that face our community members. The Board of Education believes that it has negotiated in good faith while attempting to balance the interests of the community with appropriate contractual terms and conditions.

The Holland Township Board of Education's negotiations team has been negotiating in good faith with the Holland Township Education Association since January 2010. After more than one year of face-to-face negotiations, the Board of Education and the HTEA mutually agreed to file for impasse and enter into the process of mediation.

After three sessions of mediation, the mediator assigned by the NJ Public Employees Relations Commission ended mediation and directed both sides to enter into the fact-finding process.

During the mediation and fact-finding processes, members and officers of Holland Township Education Association have been attending board meetings. At many of these meetings HTEA representatives provided comments and/or prepared statements to the Board of Education during the "comments from the public" portion of the meeting.

Each time the HTEA made a statement at a board meeting, the Board of Education listened and accepted the statement without response or comment. Although the Board of Education would have liked to respond, we felt that it was important not to engage in a public debate on the merits of the Board or HTEA positions during the negotiations process.

Recently, the Holland Township Education Association mailed a flyer to parents designed to demonstrate their commitment to our students and our community, thus attempting to garner support for their position in negotiations.

Therefore, after many months of silence the Board of Education feels compelled to respond.

To expand on some of the information provided in the flyer the Board of Education offers the following:

- The HTEA indicated that their members have accumulated more than 4,002 days of unused sick time.

It should be noted that the contract between the Board of Education and the HTEA provides for the severance payout of accumulated sick leave after 20 years of service in district for teachers and 15 years of service in district for support staff. An eligible teacher or support staff member is entitled to a maximum of \$25,000 in sick leave severance upon leaving the district based on a formula outlined in the contract.

- The HTEA indicated that 34% of teachers hold graduate degrees and several paraprofessionals are college graduates.

The contract between the BOE and the HTEA provides for tuition reimbursement for graduate and undergraduate courses taken by members of the bargaining unit. An individual is limited to reimbursement for up to 15 credits per year. The maximum payment by the Board for all graduate and undergraduate courses taken by members of the bargaining unit is \$55,000 annually. Also, the teachers' salary guide included in the contract provides for additional salary for a BA +15, BA +30, Masters Degree, MA +30.

- The HTEA indicates that there exists a low faculty turnover rate.

The Board of Education also acknowledges that there is a low faculty turnover rate. Board of Education members believe that there are many factors that contribute to the low turnover rate including a positive working environment created by the administration and board, hard working, well behaved students, and supportive parents striving for excellence.

Members of the Board of Education are also members of the community. Many of us are volunteers in local organizations and activities and spend countless hours sharing our talents and serving the community. We too, are committed to our school district and the students we educate.

On Wednesday, September 14, the Board of Education and the HTEA met with the state appointed fact-finder. The Board of Education and the HTEA presented their demands and background information for the settlement of the contract. The Fact-Finder then reviewed that information and produced a Fact-Finding Report that was received by both parties on September 29, 2011, and posted on the district website on Tuesday, October 11.

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED THE FACT-FINDERS REPORT AT THE OCTOBER 18, 2011, BOARD MEETING.

THE HTEA ALSO ACCEPTED THE FACT-FINDERS REPORT.

THE HTEA AND BOARD OF EDUCATION CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT OF THE CONTRACT.