

Teacher pay topic at USD 415 board meeting

Editors note: The Hiawatha Teachers Association voted Thursday to accept the latest contract offer for the current school year mentioned in the article below. The agreement will now go to the Board of Education for ratification at their November 11 meeting.

(KNZA)--A group of teachers were present at Monday's Hiawatha School Board meeting, with two speaking out against the latest contract offer for the current school year.

Teachers have a deadline of October 17 to vote on the current offer on the table. It calls for a 7.21 percent increase in the base salary from \$37,310 to \$40,000 plus movement on the salary schedule. The proposed salary schedule includes \$510 "steps" for years of service and \$800 "steps" for education level.

A mediator met with both sides October 7 after an impasse was declared in contract negotiations, and the teacher's negotiating team decided to take the same offer made in August back for another vote.

If the current offer is not accepted, negotiations could move to what's called the "fact-finding" stage. Under that stage, both sides would submit their "best and final" offers to a third-party reviewer (or panel of reviewers). The reviewer then issues a report outlining a recommended settlement.

According to district officials, the Teacher's Association had asked for \$4,000 to be added to the base, a near 11 percent increase over last year's salary.

Hiawatha High School teachers Patty Davis and Robyn Saunders told the Board Monday evening that with the increase in state funding, teachers should get more money. Davis called the district's offer "insulting."

Davis said higher salaries would attract better qualified teachers. "By increasing teacher salaries, education would be a much more desirable profession, and competition would be created to attract only the best teachers. That's what I want for USD 415, top-notch highly qualified teachers, not long-term subs, not teachers in transition."

Saunders said she loves what she does, but her value as a certified teacher in the district feels almost non-existent.

According to information provided by the district on Big 7 League schools, the offer by the Hiawatha School District to their teachers would place them at the

top, based on salary, if the current offer of a 7.21 percent increase to the base is approved. Coming in second is Perry-Lecompton with a base salary of \$39,400. The other Big 7 League schools have approved their contracts for the current school year.

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