

What is REALLY behind the contract impasse?

The SV School Board has been asked, “How can we possibly be entering the third year of contract negotiations, and the second year in which the start of school is again threatened by a strike, when the difference between the two sides’ proposals is so small?” The reason is that the differences are actually very large and of significant impact to both the finances and quality of the school district.

What is the actual salary increase for individual teachers? This negotiation has been presented in public as a difference between 3.5% and 3.9% salary schedules. In reality, the average actual increase for 190 teachers on staff in 2008-09 will be 6.5%, fully 3% higher than that which is presented as the “contract” increase. Table 1 shows the two proposals and Table 2 shows the range of actual increases that will take place in 2008-09 for all 190 staff members.

How does this happen? There can be up to three salary increases for each of our staff. The actual total % increase is more than the contract because there is a salary increase for completed graduate courses that is on top of the contract salary increases for longevity and cost of living in the salary schedules.

Has this always been the case? Yes. The presented contract rate of the previous three year contract was 4.25% per year. The average of actual individual increases for each of the three years was 6% to 7.5%.

Do we need graduate work for staff development? Yes we do. But we are not consistently getting either what we need or what we pay for. The courses being taken are often not primary to the educational needs of the school district. In many cases courses that are presented as being of masters and doctorate quality are not. The most troubling examples this year were 31 applications for masters and doctoral courses in Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel, and Web Site Design. We have been paying for such courses and awarding salary increases in the name of having an advanced degree staff.

What is the board’s proposed solution? The courses must meet the educational needs of the district and be part of a graduate degree program. They must be approved by the superintendent. The board proposal will allow one masters to achieve teacher certification, another masters to achieve specialization, and a doctorate to achieve the complete subject excellence. There will be a maximum course rate of 12 credits per year to insure that graduate study is taken at a pace necessary to be implemented in improved instructional practice. The path proposed by the board will normally be accompanied by a doubling of salary to about \$85,000.

Will the Teachers Association agree to correct this issue? The Teachers Association has not agreed with the board proposal. In the current year, the administration had to reject 49 course applications that were of inadequate quality, which was within the right of the administration to do so. In response, the Teachers Association has filed a class grievance against the district which is currently in arbitration. Table 3 lists the 120

administration acceptances and 49 rejections that are being challenged by the Teachers Association.

So is this dispute about the contract salary, the graduate courses, or the quality of our education system? We are told that this dispute is about quality education for our students. We believe the evidence is clearly in support of the board proposal to achieve that objective. We have been living with and paying for an unfavorable situation with respect to graduate study that must be corrected now. If we do not, we will have to face the same problem, the same resistance, and the same threat of a strike in four years, and nothing will have changed but the years that have gone by for our graduating classes.

Is the board unwisely putting finances before teacher professional development? Absolutely not. We spend about \$250,000 per year on tuition reimbursement, \$500,000 per year on salary increases, \$1 million on teacher retirement, and \$2 million on health insurance. The costs involved in graduate study are the lowest on this list of benefits. **Furthermore, the board proposal does not restrict the full upper range of professional development available to our teachers.** The comparable top salaries of Saucon Valley and neighboring districts is shown in Table 4. The board proposal does require that masters salary status will be accompanied by a Masters degree, and that doctoral salary status will be accompanied by a Doctorate degree.

What about the health insurance contract proposal? Our differences in health insurance premium cost share are not responsible for the impasse. We are relatively close, and the board offer is in our judgment quite fair. It will result in a 10% cost share by the fourth year, which will amount to about 2% of salary. The insurance proposals are shown in Table 5.

What about the retirement incentive? This was presented by the Teachers Association as a non-negotiable item. The board responded by proposing an incentive that actually had a higher payout for early retirement and that linked the amount of the payout to years of Saucon Valley service. The retirement incentive proposals are shown in Table 6.

In summary, we did not expect this contract impasse, nor do we believe it is justified. It is our hope that the questions will all have been answered in time to start the school year with a new contract in place.

Table 1.

2008-12 Salary Schedule Proposals

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Board	\$11,619,831	\$12,026,533 3.50%	\$12,459,489 3.60%	\$12,920,490 3.70%	\$13,411,471 3.80%
SVEA	\$11,619,831	\$12,137,729 4.46%	\$12,622,881 4.00%	\$13,119,750 3.94%	\$13,634,177 3.92%

Table 2.

**Actual 2008-09 increases with Board proposal
and graduate courses**

% Range		Number of Teachers	Average % Increase	Average \$ Increase
from	to			
0%	2%	27	0.7%	\$499
2%	4%	59	3.3%	\$2,116
4%	6%	25	5.2%	\$3,159
6%	8%	23	7.0%	\$4,135
8%	10%	23	8.9%	\$4,573
10%	20%	23	12.9%	\$6,223
20%	30%	10	23.8%	\$10,718
Total		190	6.5%	\$3,515
Average Salary				\$63,155

Table 3.

**Graduate course requests 2008-09
and Administrative Decision**

Years	Column	Course	Institution	Decision
4	B	Curriculum and Instruction	Wilkes University	Approved
13	M30	Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships	Seattle Pacific University	Approved
13	M30	Teaching Writing	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	B15	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	B15	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
15	M45	Teaching Readers to Think	Gratz College	Approved
15	M45	Excel: The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
24	M18	Helping Students Become Self-Directed Learners	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
24	M18	Including Students with Special Needs	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
24	M18	Introduction to Schools without Failure	East Stroudsburg University	Approved
24	M18	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
24	M18	Succeeding with Difficult Students	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
2	B	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
2	B	Succeeding with Difficult Students	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
32	M60	Including Students with Special Needs	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
7	M45	Assessment to Improve Student Learning	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
7	M45	Learning Differences: Multiple Intelligences	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
11	M6	Teaching Readers to Think	Gratz College	Approved
11	M6	Excel - The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
11	M6	Webquests: Tech Integration	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
11	M6	Multimedia Digital Imaging	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B	Assessment to Improve Student Learning	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B	Psychological Foundations	Wilkes University	Approved
6	B15	Action Research Thesis	Moravian College	Approved
6	B15	Reflective Practice Seminar	Moravian College	Approved
7	M6	Math: Teaching for Understanding	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
7	M6	Algebra I Content Refresher for Teachers	Converse College	Denied
7	M6	Middle Mathematics Content for Teachers	Converse College	Denied
7	M6	The High Performing Teacher	Indiana Wesleyan	Denied
2	B	Assessment to Improve Student Learning	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B	Social Foundations of Education	Wilkes University	Approved
7	M12	Excel: The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M12	How to Get Parents on Your Side	Indiana Wesleyan	Denied
7	M12	Multimedia Digital Imaging	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M12	Word: The Ultimate Writing Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
3	M	Active Bodies, Healthy Minds	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
3	M	Brain-Based Teaching and Learning	Gratz College	Approved
3	M	The Kinesthetic Classroom	Gratz College	Approved
3	M	Teaching Elementary P.E.	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
6	M6	Doctoral Qualifying Research Project	Lehigh University	Approved
8	M12	Graphics on the Web	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
8	M12	Power Point Presentations	Fresno Pacific University	Denied

3	M18	Assessment to Improve Student Learning	Walden University	Approved
3	M18	Curriculum and Instruction	Walden University	Approved
3	M18	Helping Students Become Self-Directed Learners	Walden University	Approved
3	M18	Including Students with Special Needs	Walden University	Approved
3	M18	Learning Differences: Multiple Intelligences	Walden University	Approved
8	M30	Character Development	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
8	M30	Cooperative Learning	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
8	M30	Intro to Classical Mythology	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
8	M30	Short Stories: American Lit	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
8	M30	Studies in American Novel	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M12	Into to Teacher Leadership	Walden University	Approved
6	B15	Leadership for Reading Education	Kutztown University	Approved
6	B15	Classroom Recreational Math	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
6	B15	How to Get Parents on Your Side	Indiana Wesleyan	Denied
6	B15	Patterns and Problem Solving	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B	Development and Administration of ELL Programs	DeSales University	Approved
5	M12	Chapter Book Reading	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	M12	Teaching Writing	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	M12	The Young Adult Novel	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	M12	Logic of Language	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
5	M12	Web Publishing: Microsoft Front Page	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
2	B	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
8	M24	Social History	Villanova University	Approved
8	M24	Topics in African American History Since 1865	Villanova University	Approved
3	B15	Secondary Education Seminar	Kutztown University	Approved
12	M30	Educational Leadership	Wilkes University	Approved
4	B	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
4	B	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
18	M60	School Law / Child Rights	Widener University	Approved
15	M6	Excel - The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
15	M6	Web Searching	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M18	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	B15	Active Bodies, Healthy Minds	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	B15	Teaching Tennis	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
4	M30	Intro to Statistics	Lehigh University	Approved
4	M30	Investigating with Integers	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
4	M30	Analysis of Experimental Data (Stat II)	Lehigh University	Approved
4	M30	Classroom Recreational Math	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
4	M30	Patterns and Problem Solving	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
4	M30	Website and Resource Development for Learning	Lehigh University	Denied
4	M30	Independent Study - School Law	Lehigh University	
5	M12	Assessment to Improve Student Learning	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	M12	Curriculum and Instruction	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	M12	Helping Students Become Self Directed Learners	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	M12	Including Students with Special Needs	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	M12	Integrating Technology into the Classroom	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B	Inquiry-Based Learning Science	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B	Project-Based Learning Science	Wilkes University	Approved
3	B	Intro to Research	East Stroudsburg University	Approved

3	B15	Statistics in Education	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
3	B15	Utilizing Emerging Tech to Improve Instruction	Wilkes University	Approved
3	B15	Algebra II Content Refresher for Teachers	Converse College	Denied
4	B	Reading Clinic Practicum	East Stroudsburg University	Approved
4	B	Reading in the Content Areas	East Stroudsburg University	Approved
2	B15	Integrating Technology into the Classroom	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B15	Internet Literacy for Educators	Wilkes University	Approved
2	B15	Computer Graphics for Teachers	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B15	Excel - The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B15	Microsoft Access	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
2	B15	Word - The Ultimate Writing Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
5	M30	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
5	M30	Motivating Today's Learner	Walden University	Approved
5	B	Models and Methods	Wilkes University	Approved
5	B	Principle of Information Security	Wilkes University	Approved
4	M6	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
4	M6	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
1	B	Trans Atlanticism in the 19th Century	Lehigh University	Approved
28	M45	It's All about You: Wellness and School	Gratz College	Denied
1	B	Math Activities for the Primary Grades	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
1	B	Teaching Writing	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
7	M6	Classroom on Wire	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	Excel - The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	Graphics on the Web	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	How to Get Parents on Your Side	Indiana Wesleyan	Denied
7	M6	Power Point Presentations	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	Technology Use and Planning	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	Webquests: Tech Integration	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
7	M6	Word - The Ultimate Writing Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
5	M30	Neurological Bases of Communication Disorders	LaSalle University	Approved
16	M24	Reading to Learn: Comprehension Instruction	Wilkes University	Approved
16	M24	Successful Teaching for Acceptance of Responsibility	Wilkes University	Approved
19	M45	Helping Students Become Self-Directed Learners	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
19	M45	Including Students with Special Needs	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
19	M45	The Kinesthetic Classroom	Gratz College	Approved
1	B	Teaching in the 21st Century	Wilkes University	
3	B	Instructional Technology, Models & Methods	Wilkes University	Approved
3	B	Integrating Internet into K-12	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
2	M6	Foundations of School Counseling	Eastern University	Approved
2	M6	School Counseling Practicum	Eastern University	Approved
8	B15	Legal Aspects of Sports	California University of PA	Approved
8	B15	Public Relations in Sports	California University of PA	Approved
8	B15	Sport Marketing	California University of PA	Approved
5	B	Independent Professional Project	School for International Training	Approved
4	B	Utilizing Emerging Tech to Improve Instruction	Wilkes University	Approved
3	B15	Authoring Systems / Instructional Design	Wilkes University	Approved
3	B15	Teaching and Learning Online	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
3	B15	Classroom on Wire	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
3	B15	How to Get Parents on Your Side	Indiana Wesleyan	Denied
3	B15	Webquests: Tech Integration	Fresno Pacific University	Denied

10	M30	Building Communication & Teamwork	Wilkes University	Approved
10	M30	Character Development	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Intro to Cooperative Learning	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Computer Graphics for Teachers	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
5	M6	Chapter Book Reading	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
5	M6	Teaching Writing	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
13	M6	Learning & Teaching with Web	DeSales University	Approved
13	M6	Supporting Literacy Development in Elementary	DeSales University	Approved
5	B15	The Kinesthetic Classroom	Gratz College	Approved
26	M30	Assertive Discipline	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
26	M30	Motivating Today's Learner	Indiana Wesleyan	Approved
26	M30	Short Stories: American Lit	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
26	M30	Teaching Writing	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
26	M30	Studies in American Novel	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
10	M30	Excel: The Ultimate Information Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Internet: Exploration Course	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Power Point Presentations	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Teaching and Learning Online	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
10	M30	Word: The Ultimate Writing Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Approved
28	M30	Classroom on Wire	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
28	M30	Graphics on the Web	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
28	M30	Power Point Presentations	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
28	M30	Webquests: Tech Integration	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
28	M30	Word - The Ultimate Writing Tool	Fresno Pacific University	Denied
5	M6	Educational Leadership	Wilkes University	Approved
5	B15	ELL Programs	University of Turabo	Approved

Table 4. Top Salary and Graduate Degree

<u>District</u>	<u>Top</u>	<u>Salary</u> <u>Top 08/09</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Top</u>	<u>Salary</u> <u>Top 08/09</u>
Allentown	D	\$78,074	Pleasant Valley	D	\$78,000
Bethlehem	D	\$80,178	Salisbury	M+45	\$80,078
Catasauqua	M+30	\$79,918	Saucon Valley	M+60	\$85,674
Delaware Valley	M	\$79,350	Souderton	M+24	\$90,703
Easton	D	\$76,450	Southern Lehigh	D	\$81,960
Lehighton	M+45	\$69,050	Nazareth	M+45	\$82,551
Northern Lehigh	D	\$71,500	Weatherly	M+45	\$66,261
Palmerton	M+60	\$74,763	Whitehall-Coplay	M+30	\$77,158
Panther Valley	M	\$61,750	Wilson Area	M+60	\$77,350
Parkland	D	\$82,815			

Table 5. Health Insurance Cost Share Proposals

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Individual	\$0				
Board		\$25	\$40	\$50	\$60
Association		\$0	\$25	\$30	\$35
Family	\$45				
Board		\$55	\$75	\$85	\$95
Association		\$45	\$75	\$85	\$95
Major Med Deductible					
Board		\$250 / year Individual and \$500 / year Family			
Association		None			

Table 6. Retirement Incentive Proposals

<u>Years of SV Service</u>	<u>Early PSERS Retirement</u>	<u>Full PSERS Retirement</u>
Board		
35		35%
30	50%	30%
25	40%	25%
20	30%	20%
15	20%	15%
Association		
N/A		45%