



EAST ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of School Directors

Tele: (412) 824-8012

Fax: (412) 824-1062

Mr. Lou Gerbi, the President of the East Allegheny Education Association, who represents the teachers in the East Allegheny School District, was recently quoted in the newspapers about bargaining and Fact Finding with the East Allegheny School District. Mr. Gerbi accused the Board of School Directors of “playing games.”

The District has met many times over the last six months in bargaining with the Teachers Association without the teachers once accepting that the District and its taxpayers are making a great effort in good faith to provide education for the District’s youth and to reach a settlement with the Education Association. Mr. Gerbi says that the District should raise taxes. The fact is that the District has the highest taxes as measured by the State Department of Education of every school district in Allegheny County, except Wilkesburg. In fact, the Board has to admit that East Allegheny unfortunately has the fourth highest tax burden in the State among all of the State’s 499 school districts. (Wilkesburg is first.) By comparison, the teachers in the East Allegheny School District have one of the best wage and benefit programs in Allegheny County. The average teachers’ salary is higher than 35 out of the 42 school districts in Allegheny County. The teacher starting rates and top rates are among the highest among the County’s 42 school districts. Mr. Gerbi said that the teachers did not like the recommendation that they increase their health insurance contributions. The increase recommended is from \$60 to \$100 a month over three years. This is not nearly enough. This would increase the teachers’ contribution to about 5% of the premium for the best health insurance money can buy with low co-pays and deductibles. Those taxpayers lucky enough to have health insurance pay on the average four to five times what the teachers’ would pay for plans that have higher co-pays and higher deductibles.

The East Allegheny School District is one of the most financially challenged school districts in the State. When the District bargained and settled with the Teachers’ Association three years ago, it did not account for the dramatic reductions in State and Federal subsidies that would take place over the last two school years. In fact, most Pennsylvania school districts did not. Because of the challenges that resulted, the District hired a consultant in 2010 to recommend ways to meet the challenges and implemented all of the recommendations. It was not enough. Wages and benefits for teachers in the District make up the biggest part of the budget. The entire support staff has agreed in bargaining to a reasonable accommodation of the financial challenges of the District. The East Allegheny Education Association and the teachers it represents also need to give the District greater management flexibility, pay a fair share for health insurance, like other District employees and the taxpayers, and agree on salary schedules that the District can afford over the next few years.

The Board of Directors of the District believes that the education of the District’s youth is not a game, but a very serious and challenging matter which has become very difficult to fund since the start of the Great Recession, the cuts in education funding by the State and the Federal Government over the last two years, and the five per cent (5%) a year increase in the costs of the teachers’ very generous pensions...a cost that will continue to escalate at 5% a year for a number of years into the future. **IT IS NOT SERIOUS TO SUGGEST THAT HIGHER TAXES ARE THE ANSWER.** The people of the District are taxed enough. High taxes have not helped Wilkesburg and did not help Duquesne. We hope that the East Allegheny Education Association will come to accept the reality of the District’s financial challenges and bargain in good faith to cooperatively address these challenges.

THE EAST ALLEGHENY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS