

Good Evening,

As you know, bargaining has stalled between Mitchell Community Schools and the Mitchell Education Association in regards to this year's Master Teacher Contract. Both sides have mutually agreed to go to mediation through the Indiana Education Employment Relations Board. Our teachers are very disappointed that an acceptable agreement could not be reached prior to tonight.

We realize that the new money from the state this year was not as much as it has been in the past. However, the amount of money that has been offered to teachers is dismal, at best.

Per the current contract, the corporation has agreed to contribute their percentage to the health insurance increase this year and has offered an average of a 1% increase in the salary schedule for the average MCS teacher. However, this calculates to even less than 1% for many teachers, especially those who do not participate in the school health insurance plan.

If the corporation were having financial difficulties, we would understand and we would, as we have in the past, agree to less money.

However, according to the Form 9 filed with the Indiana Department of Education on June 30, 2024, the corporation had a cash balance in the Education Fund of \$3.42 million dollars. On that same form, filed in June of 2023, the Education Fund had a cash balance of \$2.99 million dollars. The cash balance in the Education Fund, which is the fund from which teachers are paid, has had an **increase of nearly a half million dollars from 2023 to 2024**. Additionally, between the Education fund and the Rainy Day fund the corporation has a cash balance of \$5.93 million dollars on an annual budget of \$11.6 million dollars. That's a 51% cash balance between just those two funds, **which is more than triple** what the state suggests that schools maintain in order to remain healthy and solvent. What the teachers are asking for would not take an exorbitant amount of the money that is currently available. We believe our request is well within the financial abilities of the corporation and we have already decreased our original request by more than 50%. That original request was submitted October 2, and we did not receive a response from the board and administration until November 4. This delay added insult to injury with a bargaining deadline that was looming.

We want the corporation to be able to hire quality candidates and retain the outstanding teachers that we currently have. However, our salaries are substantially less than surrounding school corporations and the pay raise that is currently on the table is the lowest of any neighboring school corporation. For example, the teachers at Orleans just settled for a salary increase of \$2,000 per teacher. North Lawrence teachers are

receiving a \$3,000 salary increase this year. This year's contract at Shoals includes a salary increase of \$2,800.

The current offer on the table from this board is **\$500 per teacher** on salary, and an even smaller one-time stipend. This is problematic on its own, but we also find it especially troubling when many teachers' years of experience are not reflected in their steps and salary already. We find all of this unacceptable, and frankly bordering on insulting.

We ask that between now and the start of mediation the board re-examine its stance on our master contract and reconsider its dismal offer to teachers. We have dedicated our professional lives to this school corporation and what's currently being offered is an insult to our fine group of professional, dedicated teachers who deserve consideration and respect.

On behalf of the Mitchell Education Association, we thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to mediation and a resolution to this situation.