

## **Palos Heights Education Association – Public Posting**

The professional educators of the Palos Heights Education Association (PHEA) are dedicated to the children, parents and community we serve. We're proud of our efforts to make District 128 the very best it can be – without question one of the premier K-8 school districts in this area. We know that our professional efforts, combined with those of supportive parents, education support professionals, administrators, school board and community, are making a positive difference in the lives of children.

The teachers of the PHEA have been working since last August without a contract. The lack of an agreement has been and remains of great concern to us, as it should be to the entire community. The lack of an agreement is unfortunate, but it is not because the teachers have demanded exorbitant salaries or anything else out of the ordinary. In fact, the most recent salary proposals from both sides are the same. Other critical issues, however, such as retirement, health insurance and others, remain unresolved.

Among other unresolved issues, teachers are asking the school board to continue to provide adequate funding for the employee health insurance plan – funding it at a level that does not cause teachers to pay an even greater percentage of costs. We are not asking for any new coverages nor are we asking the board to pay a greater percentage than it has in the past. In the current insurance framework, the school board's insurance cost is predetermined for the life of the contract, while the cost for teachers can change drastically from paycheck to paycheck. Insurance changes place the burden of risk directly on the teachers, while the school board does not share in any additional cost. In a school district with stable finances as healthy as in District 128, the board is proposing that an even greater amount of the health insurance cost be covered by the teachers, particularly those with families. That's unfair and unnecessary. And it's not comparable to the much-better plan provided to other professionals in the school district.

In regard to retirement, the board has proposed to eliminate retirement incentives entirely. Teachers are asking only to maintain the status quo as it currently exists in the school district, as developed in conjunction with previous school boards – a plan with stable retirement incentives for long-serving teachers comparable to most other school districts in this area.

These important unresolved issues are not new, and teachers are not asking for anything out of the ordinary. In fact, these types of items – salary, health insurance, retirement – are the kinds of financial matters that teachers consider when they first

seek employment in a school district and/or when they compare to see if better opportunities exist elsewhere.

Unfortunately, we have not been met at the table by a school board with the same commitment to fairness and recognition of teachers. The board's harsh financial proposals on insurance and retirement in particular have put roadblocks in the way of settlement. The board's demands, if accepted by teachers, would not only be costly for current employees, they would also make the school district less attractive to prospective new teachers for career employment.

Through all this, teachers have stated clearly to the board that we believe continuing good-faith talks are the best hope for a fair settlement for all parties. From the outset of negotiations, the board's negotiations team took a hostile rather than collaborative stance. The PHEA desired to continue negotiating in good faith, but the school board unexpectedly broke off negotiations and requested mediation. Unfortunately, and to our dismay, after only one mediation session, the school board on February 14th, 2017, declared negotiations to be at impasse, thereby invoking this public posting of each side's final offer. When impasse is declared by either party, the public posting of offers is a requirement of law that must precede a lawful teachers' strike. We want to assure you, at this time, a strike is not something the teachers of District 128 desire.

Finally, we want to emphasize once again that our focus, as professional educators, is on securing a fair settlement that maintains the kinds of salaries, benefits and working conditions that have made District 128 a destination school district for outstanding professional teachers. We want to maintain a district in which the next generation of teachers upholds the high standards of quality that the community has rightfully come to expect from its schools.

To that end, we offer the following proposals as our public posting:

#### **A. Insurance**

In order to remain competitive with neighboring districts, the PHEA believes that adequate health care coverage is crucial. With rising health care costs, we believe a 7% increase, which is in alignment with the average increase in board contributions over the last four contracts (12 years), allows district 128 teachers to simply maintain paying their current percentage of health insurance premiums. Providing adequate health care coverage allows the district to continue to recruit and maintain highly qualified teachers. The teachers also believe the school board should share the risk associated with changes to the enrollment in the district's health insurance plan.

Regrettably, the school board has also grievously misrepresented the cost of the PHEA's health insurance proposal by more than 30%.

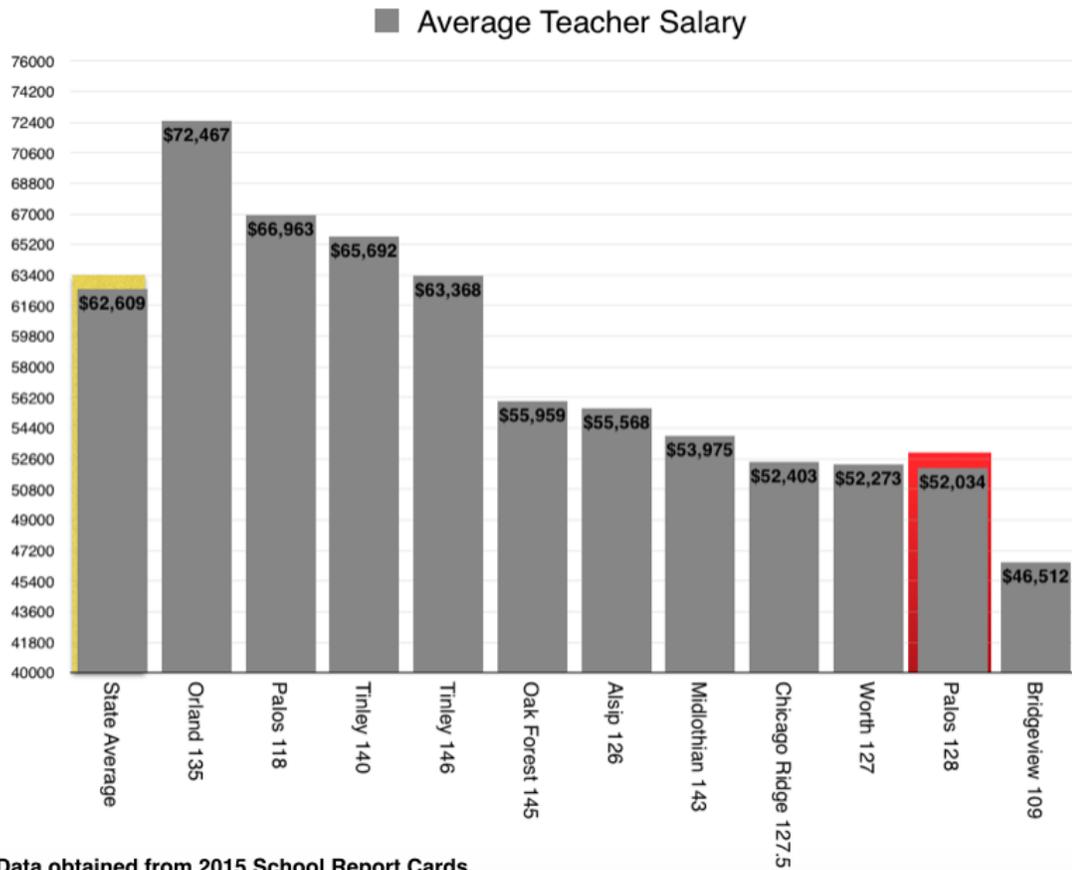
## **B. Retirement**

The PHEA is not asking for any increase in retirement incentives. The teachers simply desire to continue the state approved retirement incentives that have been in place for many years. The vast majority of districts in Illinois offer their teachers retirement incentives, which in the end could save the districts tens of thousands of dollars. To remove all retirement incentives would place District 128 in a competitive disadvantage in recruiting qualified teachers and would not show comparable recognition for teachers who have served the district and community loyally for decades. The PHEA has proposed several plans each of which has been rejected by the board for ideological/ political reasons. The board has expressed multiple times to the PHEA that they are fundamentally opposed to retirement incentives regardless of the financial benefit to the district. It is also important to note, that removing the retirement incentives for District 128 teachers would have little impact on the tax-payers of Palos Heights. The pension concerns in Illinois were not created by the teachers of Palos Heights School District 128, nor can the problems be remedied on the shoulders of District 128 teachers. We have repeatedly asked the school board to remember that removing the retirement incentives for District 128 teachers will not resolve Illinois' pension issues. However, as stated above, removal of the incentives will put the school district at a competitive disadvantage in attracting and retaining the best and brightest to educate the next generation of students.

## **C. Salary**

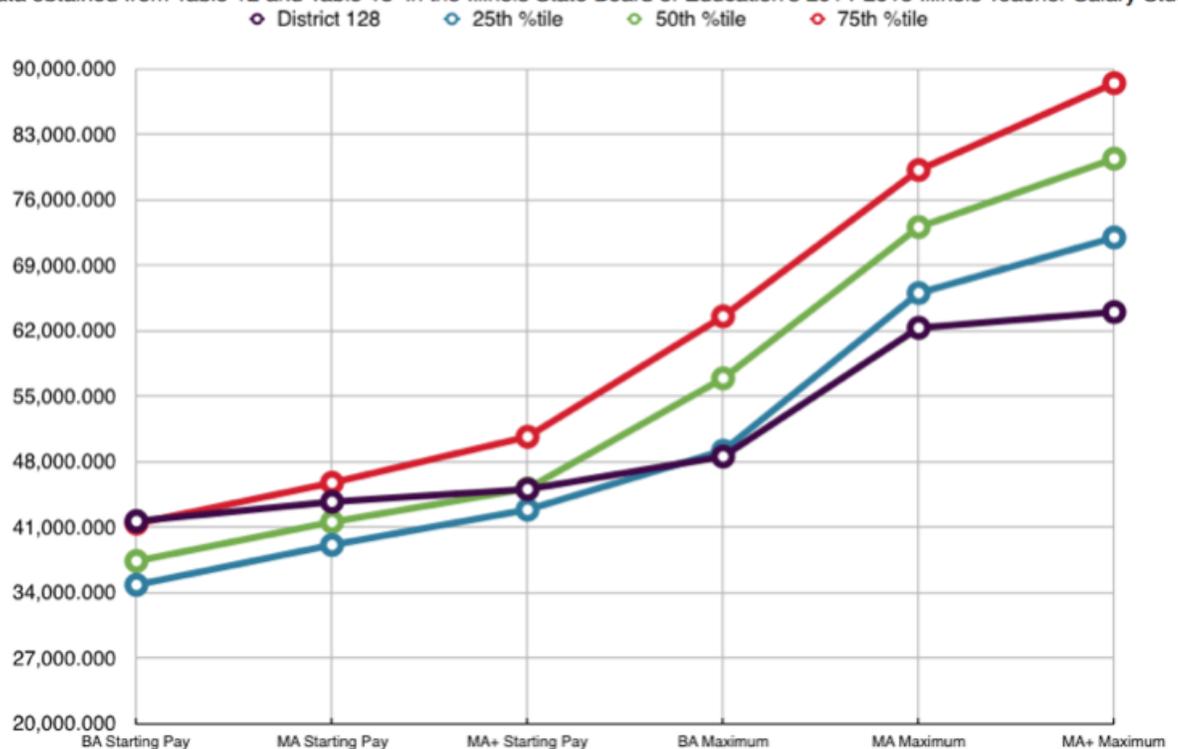
The PHEA recognizes the board's salary offer, which was accepted by the union on January 31, 2017, as a fair compromise. The offer includes a one-year salary schedule adjustment. In 2013, both the board and PHEA agreed that a new salary structure was necessary to recruit and maintain highly qualified teachers. The one-year salary adjustment provides veteran teachers with larger salary increases, while teachers early in their career will receive as little as a 1% increase in their annual pay. It should be noted that the salary adjustment and subsequent raises in the salary agreement are long overdue and would not have been necessary had the district provided Palos Heights 128 teachers with competitive salary increases in previous contracts. The average salary for teachers in our district are near the bottom when compared to surrounding districts, as shown in graph A below. Graph B below, shows that District 128's starting salary is competitive, but as teachers gain more experience and education, the salaries fall below the bottom 25% of comparable school districts in the state of Illinois.

**Graph A**



**2014-2015 Salary Comparison Between District 128 and All Illinois Elementary School Districts with Enrollment Between 500-999 Students NOT Including Longevity**

**Graph B** (Data obtained from Table 12 and Table 15 in the Illinois State Board of Education's 2014-2015 Illinois Teacher Salary Study)



#### **D. Extra-Curricular Pay**

The board proposes a freeze in extra-curricular pay. The PHEA sees value in the clubs and sports available to the students, and therefore, believes the stipends for these activities should be increased according to past practice in previous contracts. Extra-curricular stipends for coaches and sponsors are currently competitive with other districts. Should the board freeze extra-curricular stipends during this contract, Palos Heights 128 will begin to fall behind our neighboring districts. The Palos Heights Education Association's proposal calls for 3% raises on extra-curricular stipends for the 2nd and 3rd year of the contract.

#### **E. Class Sizes**

The teachers in Palos Heights School District 128 know that smaller class sizes are imperative for the education of all students. The board proposes that a class size could reach 30 students before the board attempts to provide assistance to the teacher. The PHEA proposes that class sizes should be limited to the following numbers:

PreK-K: maximum of 20 students

1st-3rd: maximum of 25 students

4th-8th: maximum of 27 students

By limiting class sizes, students can receive more individualized attention and instruction. The board states the PHEA's class size proposal would require the district to hire 10 new instructional aides, costing thousands of dollars. In reality, the PHEA's class size proposal, which we believe is necessary to continue the excellent education that has been provided in District 128, would require the board to hire fewer than half that number, resulting in a fraction of the board's estimated cost.

## Cost Summary

PHEA contract proposal will not force the district to cut academic programs. Palos Heights School District 128 is in good financial standing. The minimal cost difference between the PHEA's and the school board's proposals would have no impact on the excellent academic and extracurricular programs offered by our district.

The PHEA estimates the additional cost of their proposal over the Board's proposal is minimal:

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Insurance	\$29,576*	\$46,490*	\$65,180*
Class Size	Approx. \$12,000**	\$0 ***	\$0 ***
Retirement	Contingent upon how many teachers elect to retire. The cost is estimated to be no more than \$30,000 over the life of the contract		
Extra-Curricular Stipends	\$0	\$2,098	\$2,161

\*Based on current insurance elections of the teachers (Single, Family, etc.)

\*\*The estimated salary of two instructional aides for the remainder of the 2016-2017 school year (approximately 70 days at \$12 per hour each).

\*\*\*No aides will be needed if student/teacher schedules are properly created, also dependent upon enrollment.

**The following is the offer sheet that the Palos Heights Education Association presented to the district's negotiations team on January 31, 2017:**

**PHEA**

**Response to January 25, 2017 Board of Education Package Proposal  
January 31, 2017**

2.3 Class Size: (Maintain Proposal)

To maximize student growth and achievement, administration will keep class size to the following:

PreK-Kindergarten max of 20

1-3 max of 25

4-8 max of 27

If class sizes exceed the stated limits, an aide will be provided.

3.1 Work Day (Withdraw Proposal)

3.2 Required Meetings Beyond the Work Day  
(Withdraw Proposal)

10.1 Sick Leave (Withdraw Proposal)

10.2 Personal Business Leave

TA 1/25/17 (Maintain Proposal) Each teacher shall be entitled to two (2) days of personal business leave without loss of pay. If a teacher uses five (5) or fewer sick days in a school year, they will receive a third personal day the following school year.

Article XI-- Retirement: Association rejects Board proposal to remove retirement incentive

Maintain current language or replace with a Lump Sum program

13.1 Tuition Reimbursement--

TA 1/25/17 (Maintain proposal)

Official transcripts shall show grades of B or above for all courses.

Teachers will also be reimbursed for online courses.

Reimbursement for undergraduate courses are limited to lanes MA and above

13.2 Insurance--Association rejects Board proposal

(Maintain proposal)

- A. 1. For the 2016-2017 school year, the pool amount will be increased by 7% over the 2015-2016 school year.
2. The district will contribute an additional 7% to the insurance pool for each year of the contract

(Maintain Proposal)

New language:

6. Should a teacher, during the school year, experience a qualifying event that impacts his/her original selection of insurance coverage, and the effect from this qualifying event compels the teacher to change his or her coverage to single plus one (1) or family, the district or board shall increase their contribution in the insurance pool to cover that year's employer portion of the newly elected insurance.

7. If a teacher who is currently not taking health insurance or single insurance from the district or board selects to change his/her coverage during the enrollment period to single plus one or family, the parties agree that the district or board will contribute an extra two percent (2%) to the pool amount.

#### 14.4 Salary

Accept board's salary offer of 1/25/17

Year 1 - Salary adjustment with all lanes

Year 2 - 4.5% Raises

Year 3 - 4.5% Raises

#### 16.2 Term Agreement--

Agree to 3 Years

#### Appendix B. Extracurricular Activities

(Counter Proposal) Extracurricular activity stipends will stay the same for 2016-17. They will increase by 3% in 2017-18 and 3% again in 2018-19.

(Maintain Proposal) Remove Appendix B (per hour pay and logs)

Open to discussion of readjusting extracurricular stipends based on the logs

TA 1/25/17 Choir-Accept board's proposal from May 18th, Choir stipend=\$2,000

#### Tentative Agreements

4.2 Notification of Procedure--Association Accepts Board proposal 4/6/16

(teacher evaluation notification of procedure)

TA 4/6/16

6.3 Board Meetings-- Association Accepts Board proposal 4/6/16

(board meeting notification)

TA 4/6/16

6.6 Association Meetings-- Association Accepts Board proposal 4/6/16

(district email)

TA 4/6/16

6.10 Contract Distribution-- Association Rejects Board proposal 4/6/16

(BOARD WITHDRAWS)

10.13 Bereavement Leave--

Teachers are allowed 2 paid bereavement days for the death of a relative specified in 10.1 Section A. Although, a teacher may request bereavement for relatives not listed in 10.1 sec. A pending approval of the administration.

TA 4/6/16

15.2 Any teacher that involuntarily loses a planning period at the junior high will receive an

additional \$3,700 during the 1st year of the contract. This amount will be increased by \$100 each year for the life of the contract.

TA 4/6/16

15.4 Committee Work, etc.

2016-2017 \$33.00

The amount of compensation will increase by \$1 each year for the life of the contract.

TA 4/6/16

15.5 Internal Substitution--Association accepts Board proposal 4/6/16

Any teacher required by their building administrator to internally substitute will be paid \$20 per occurrence.

TA 4/6/16

Extracurricular Stipends

TA 4/6/16 Environmental Club \$1017

TA 4/6/16 Chemistry Club \$1017

TA 4/6/16 Running Club (Chippewa) \$1017

TA 4/6/16 Basketball Scorer and Timer \$400

TA 4/6/16 Fine Arts Night \$400 (Not applicable to Band or chorus)

Addendum-- Association accepts Board proposal to remove

TA 4/6/16