

District: Letters, bulletin boards part of contract

31 Aug 2010 — Bucks County Courier Times

neshaminy schools

Superintendent Louis Muenker wrote to teachers, who have been working without a contract since June 2008.

Teachers are obligated by the terms of their employment contract to write college recommendation letters and decorate classroom bulletin boards, the superintendent of the Neshaminy School District has informed them in a letter.

Louis Muenker expressed that view in a letter to the district's 669 of instructors, amid concerns they wouldn't do so when school begins this week.

Muenker addresses the contract dispute between the district and the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, calling it "a very difficult and emotional time for all."

The NFT has instructed teachers to continue with their work-to-contract action into the new school year. The action calls for educators to work to the letter of their contract to show how much extra they do and to raise awareness about the contract impasse.

Regarding the work-to-contract action, Muenker said he "must respectfully and professionally take issue" with the possibility of two activities being affected.

The first issue deals with the possibility that bulletin boards and other displays won't be decorated or maintained by the teachers.

Muenker said the district expects this duty to be "an integral part of your (teacher) responsibility, which is significantly aligned with creating a comfortable and stimulating learning environment" as outlined in the staff handbook.

Last week, members of the Lower Southampton Elementary Parent Teacher Organization decorated 24 hallway bulletin boards - a responsibility usually taken on by the teachers. It was unclear if teachers at the school would have decorated the boards themselves before the first day of classes today.

The second area of concern, Muenker said, is making sure that teachers continue to prepare college recommendation letters for students.

"It is the district's expectation that (teachers) will provide college recommendations as (has been) done in the past," the letter states.

Muenker states that not writing recommendations - which can be done "at times beyond the workday" - goes against the language in the previous contract under which the teachers are working as negotiations continue. He cited section 10-41, which states that "the Federation shall encourage all staff members to provide service beyond the regular school day to participate in programs designed to improve teaching skills, as well as help and counsel children."

The newspaper was unsuccessful in reaching Muenker or NFT President Louise Boyd for comment Monday.

Teachers have been working without a contract since June 2008.

The board has offered teachers an annual 3 percent salary increase, which includes steps, and a requirement that employees pay 15 percent, 16 percent and 17 percent toward health care premiums over three years. Teachers currently pay nothing toward their health care premiums.

At the Aug. 25 negotiation session, the NFT delivered a verbal counteroffer that, according to the school board, included concessions in some areas, but not to employee health care contributions.

The next negotiation session is scheduled for Sept. 23.

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