

Union plan has parents upset

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Neshaminy

A few parents acknowledged the good that teachers do, but were still saddened by the work-to-contract document.

The Neshaminy school board has released a teachers union document obtained from a faculty member that outlines a work-to-contract plan for Neshaminy High School.

Considered to be less disruptive than a strike or lockout, working to contract, also known as working to rule, is an action many unions take across the state and country. Members will do no more than the minimum required to cause a slowdown, raise awareness about a labor dispute, and prove how much extra things they do for which they don't get paid, according to online reports.

In this case, the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers is instructing teachers when to begin and end their day, to not volunteer for anything extra, to resign from certain committees, to take down bulletin boards, and to not write recommendations or attend events such as proms, according to the document.

The newspaper was unsuccessful in reaching union President Louise Boyd, who's the spokeswoman for the teachers, for comment.

Board President Ritchie Webb questioned how the educators' actions will affect children.

"The NFT mantra is that they always support children, yet, this document clearly hurts students in so many ways," he said. "Unfortunately, it is painfully obvious who they are supporting!"

Many parents said they've already started seeing teachers remove classroom decorations.

"This is totally ridiculous," said Sharon Rudnitsky, a Feasterville mother of three Neshaminy School District students. "What does this teach our kids? What are we supposed to tell our kids? I just don't understand why they'd do this."

While other parents such as Denise Boyle said they're saddened by the action, they also acknowledge all the good that teachers do.

"I have no intention of teacher bashing because my children have had some fantastic teachers over the years," said Boyle, mother of two district pupils. "But I'm sad that they're allowing this matter to involve the kids and I would like them to get that point."

Board member William O'Connor said the action would punish students by using them as a way to get the public to pressure the board. Parents want to support the teachers, O'Connor added, but this will cost them public support.

"By taking their frustrations out on the children, the teachers have lost so much more than they can ever regain in any future contract," he said.

In November, the Hatboro-Horsham teachers union instructed its members to only work the hours and perform the duties they were contracted to do. The union compiled a list of the activities that teachers volunteer for and indicated which ones they can and cannot take part in, and how they should respond if asked to volunteer for a task.

To what degree activities were affected by that recommendation remains unclear.

Recently, it appears the situation is getting more serious as a large number of teachers in the district paid to coach sports teams and participate in other extracurricular activities have said they are not signing new extracurricular contracts to return in the fall.

Union president Jackie Anderson said the decision not to return was not directed by the union. While the district's administration continues to sift through the details of who is and who may not be returning in the fall,

Supt. William Lessa has said the district will do its best to ensure all activities continue as scheduled, with or without the teachers.

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"Union plan has parents upset" Bucks County Courier Times 23 May 2010: A1