

## Neshaminy slow down

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Picking on children

A work-to-contract order from the teachers union alienates a struggling community.

Like their brethren in the Pennsbury School District, teachers in Neshaminy are now taking their frustrations out on the children. A bit cowardly in our view since the kids can't fight back.

We refer to a union-directed work-to-contract plan for Neshaminy High School. Dissatisfied with the pace and substance of contract negotiations, the union has outlined a plan of action - more accurately, inaction - that essentially directs teachers to boycott anything outside the classroom. Call it a work slowdown: No new bulletin boards, no parent phone calls, no volunteer work, and no attending orientation, gym night, homecoming or the prom. The list goes on.

Dampening the atmosphere at the school has no direct impact on school board members with whom the teachers are at odds. It affects the kids. And that affects parents, who the union apparently expects to pressure the school board.

That's the way it's worked in the past. Rather than deal with the inconvenience of a strike, parents would prod school boards to give teachers what they want. And that's partly why school districts are in the financial mess they're in now. And things are only going to get worse.

The pension time bomb is ticking; meaning taxpayers are going to have to make up what the teachers' pension fund lost in the stock market. And it lost a bundle. But so did the retirement funds of most anybody working in the private sector. Nobody's going to bail them out.

That sort of double standard is driving a wedge between teachers and the community. And no single issue speaks to the situation more profoundly than the union's demand that its members keep free health benefits. It is a selfish, unrealistic and insensitive position that ignores the reality of the private sector but also the hard times that are upon us. Unemployment is up; income is down. What doesn't the union get?

It's why a once supportive community cannot muster sympathy for the teachers, who under the existing contract are very well paid for a very short work year. In comparison, taxpayers - many having suffered pay cuts, salary freezes or layoffs - are just getting by. Picking on their children simply adds insult to financial injury. The community won't soon forget it.

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