



NESHAMINY FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

"TEACHERS SPEAKING FOR TEACHERS"

September 21, 2011

To: Louis T. Muenker, D.Ed., Superintendent of Schools
From: Neshaminy Federation of Teachers

Dear Dr. Muenker:

In recent days there has been a lot of public discussion about Neshaminy teachers' participation in the Back-to-School Nights. As you know, teachers attended last week's event, and will continue to fully participate in following Back-to-School Nights, even though we are engaged in a work-to-contract effort aimed at keeping attention focused on our contract talks with the District. Wherever parents and students are, we will be there too—that was the commitment we made over the summer, and we are keeping it.

The Superintendent's September 9th letter to staff raised some concerns among teachers. The letter's declaration that teachers would not be permitted on the grounds of a school where they do not work has fed the chatter on local websites where some have called for local residents to stage direct confrontations with teachers. The overwhelming reaction from parents who attended last week's Back-to-School Night at Maple Point Middle School was positive, with many parents praising teachers' commitment to their students ("Parents pleased with atmosphere at Back-to-School night," Bucks County Courier Times, Sept. 16, 2011). Nevertheless, in comments posted on the story and on other websites, critics of Neshaminy teachers continue to incite confrontation with teachers—or worse: allude to violence against our colleagues.

Recently, teachers and some of their neighbors have experienced first-hand some maligned actions. There have been police reports of vandalism against yard signs supporting teachers that were posted on private property.

We continue to wait for you and other NSD officials to respond appropriately to such statements and actions. As teachers who are in the classroom every day with Neshaminy's children, we call on you to stand up for Neshaminy's educators and tell the community that the vitriol being circulated about us by a small number of residents is just not true. We are all on the same team, with the same goal: to enrich our students' education and ensure they succeed.

Your ongoing silence allows division to grow in our community as uninformed judgments are being made. Our neighbors in the community need to hear from the leaders of our school district. Please stand up to those who attack the integrity and professionalism of your staff. We ask you to speak out to maintain a level of civility in our community. It is unacceptable and irresponsible to allow these mischaracterizations and threats to go unanswered or to be taken lightly.

Because the unfounded criticism of teachers continues without a response from NSD officials, teachers have little choice but to defend themselves and our profession in the ongoing public discourse over the contract negotiations. As we announced in early August, we are taking several steps to reach out to parents and other community members—to everyone who cares about Neshaminy children and our public school system. The contract that teachers seek is about more than economics. It will continue a framework for establishing policies and practices that help determine the quality of the education that the Neshaminy School District is able to offer.

In our district, teachers, administrators, and parents have a tradition of working together for our kids. The school district administration and the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers have a long history of collaboration that has benefitted the kids in our classrooms. Teachers are speaking and acting publicly because no one else is telling that important story.

We call on you to publicly condemn those who misrepresent the facts of our ongoing negotiations and attempt to incite harm to teachers, and to take the necessary measures to maintain civility.

Sincerely,

NFT Leadership

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