



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **LACK OF DISTRICT LEADERSHIP IS THE KEY REASON THERE IS NO CONTRACT SETTLEMENT WITH THE NFT**

**LANGHORNE, PA (April 1, 2011)** — Why after three years and nearly 30 meetings, are the Neshaminy School District (NSD) and the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers (NFT) no closer to a contract than they were in 2008? The NFT believes it is due to the lack of leadership on the part of the school board.

Over the past five years, the Neshaminy school board has struggled to define its goals and long-range plans to provide the students of the district with the best education possible. Time and again, the board has made knee-jerk decisions that have had damaging long-term implications to the educational process, especially in the area of district personnel and consultants:

- Four and a half years ago, the district conducted a nationwide search and found former superintendent, Paul Kadri. Once Mr. Kadri began to support and defend teachers and the teaching process within the district, he was pushed out of service. The district then hired current superintendent, Dr. Muenker from within the district's ranks.
- The district's long-time business administrator (BA), Joe Paradise, announced his retirement in July 2010. Finally, in January 2011, they appointed an "acting" BA, having wasted valuable time and resources on the failed search.
- The district's Human Resources director, Pat Boylan, is retiring this month (after announcing her retirement in November) and it does not appear the district is any closer to finding a replacement than they were when Joe Paradise's retirement was announced.
- The district brought in benefits management firm Selzer Company in December 2009 as its healthcare broker - with less than impressive results as underscored by NSD School Board Member William O'Connor on Neshaminy Info. on 2.23.11: "Throughout 2010, we received less than stellar service from our broker, who was compensated by my estimation around \$330,000."
- Since negotiations began, the district has incurred nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in legal fees—and still no contract.

Unfortunately, for the stakeholders of the NSD, the school board does not know how to get the job done. Not surprisingly, and in keeping with its long history of failed leadership, board

president Richie Webb announced in the BCCT on 3.27.11 that the district is now reaching out to the community for help in resolving the contract dispute with the NFT.

“We’re not the least bit surprised,” says NFT President Louise Boyd. “The school board lacks leadership and focus and that is precisely why they have to reach out to the community to help them do the job for which ‘they’ were duly elected. We started preliminary contract talks nearly four years ago and have been officially negotiating for three years. We’re not one step closer now than we were then because the district has been ineffective. We’ve stated countless times that we’re open to discussions on ‘every issue’ on the table. That includes healthcare premiums and all of the fifty-five other District demands. However, the moment we try to negotiate specific parts of the package, they say, ‘take it or leave it.’ They won’t talk about anything unless we agree to ‘all’ of their other demands including the 17% healthcare contributions. That’s not negotiating – that’s an ultimatum. We can’t possibly come to an agreement that way.”

Since the start of negotiations, the NFT has made two counteroffers, both resulting in significant savings to the district. Meanwhile, the district not only failed to work with the NFT to realize said savings, they in fact added demands including a 50% increase in the employee premium share being sought and a refusal to properly place staff frozen on step once an agreement is reached.

“Mr. Webb and his board need to stop posturing for a handful of vocal anti-union, anti-teacher activists and sit down across the table with us to negotiate all of the issues,” Boyd says. “That’s the way to get things done. He needs to begin to make the right leadership decisions or things will continue to degrade within the district. The most critical leadership decision he can make is to sit down and negotiate – not dictate. For the benefit of the students and the community, the NFT urges the board to negotiate.”

## **ABOUT THE NFT**

The Neshaminy Federation of Teachers was chartered in 1966 and has been the exclusive bargaining agent for the District's certified staff since 1975. Today it proudly represents 675 members and has an active retiree chapter. The NFT is a member of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, founded in 1916 that today represents 1.5 million members in 3,000 local affiliates nationwide.

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