



THE SUPPORTER

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTINUES: UNION LEADERS FIGHT FOR A LIVING WAGE FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

On July 24, local union leaders met with district officials to begin the first round of negotiations for this year's collective bargaining agreement between support employees and Tulsa Public Schools.

In the spring, support employees were asked to complete a short survey about their current level of satisfaction with wages, benefits, and working conditions within TPS. Employees were encouraged to share their stories and priorities for this year's contract negotiations, and union leaders drafted strategies and proposals for the new contract using the survey responses as a guide.

"[The survey responses] gave us an idea of what our members want and expect out of negotiations this year" says AFT 6049 Oklahoma President and Chief Negotiator Ed McIntosh, "We're pushing for a wage increase for everyone, but we're basing our specific proposals on the survey responses we received from our members this year."

The 2014 employee survey findings were presented to the TPS Board of Education at the June 16

meeting, where President McIntosh and Paraprofessional Donna Garner were given the chance to speak about the issues and struggles that TPS support employees face on the job every day.

"I am support, it is what I do," Donna Garner declared in her opening remarks to TPS Board members, continuing, "I have worked for TPS for twenty years, yet I still worry every summer, snow day, spring break and Christmas vacation. Because like most support employees, I have bills to pay, food to buy, and a mortgage to pay every month, no matter what the weather is like or how many days classes are canceled."

Garner insists she isn't alone in her struggles to make ends meet during the summer months, and her speech to the TPS Board of Education echoed a problem that all workers in America are facing today: the minimum wage is not a living wage.

The Economic Policy Institute reported back in 2013, "The inflation-adjusted value of the minimum wage is lower today than it was in 1968. If the value of the minimum wage had kept pace with average wages since then, it would be \$10.50 today. If it

had increased alongside productivity, it would be \$18.75 today. And if it had increased at the same rate as the wages of the top 1.0 percent, it would be over \$28 per hour."

But our wages haven't increased at the same rate as the super wealthy, and education professionals like Donna Garner know that a change is necessary, and that union power is the key in securing better pay for workers. "I give my career everything I've got," she states, "and I give my students everything I've got. I just wish TPS would give a little in return."

President McIntosh is leading union members during negotiations this year, and his message is clear, "I'm fighting for two things this year: fair compensation, and respect on the job. Some of the supervisors in the district take this 'I can do no wrong' approach, but respect is a two-way street. You get what you give, and employees work better when they're working *with* you, not just *for* you."

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Local 6049 members will vote to accept or reject the new changes to the contract after negotiations close— check back with us for updates on this developing news story!

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT



PRESIDENT ED MCINTOSH

Here it is, almost time for school to start. Where has the summer gone? Hopefully you all had a chance to visit a nice,

warm, breezy and sunny beach. OK! Back to reality! For those of you who weren't able to take that fantasy vacation (as well as those of you who did,) let me try and bring you up to speed as to where your Union is. We've been working with National AFT staff and staff in Oklahoma City to help us through the financial strain this summer, and it has been somewhat successful. We started planning for contract negotiations back in February, but we haven't finished yet. There are a few more sit-down sessions to go before we can

come to you for approval of a contract we can all live with. We took into account the things that you, the support personnel of TPS, wrote in the survey we sent you, along with some other considerations.

I've had the opportunity to represent you at our National Convention this month in Los Angeles, and I met so many other brothers and sisters who are in the struggle with us for the betterment of all working class Americans. They are fighting the same battles that we are. The thing that I want you to know is that lifting

each other up makes life better for all of us. We're in it to win it! It's a lot easier if we all pull in the same direction.

Your Negotiations Team this year is myself, Ed McIntosh, Rick McCleanhan (Vice President), Donna Garner (Paraprofessional, Kendall-Whittier,) Suzanne Wagner (Craftsperson Mechanic, Transportation), and Lillian Graham (Bus Driver, Transportation). We need and appreciate your support more than ever as we take on this battle not **for** you, but **with** you.

Oklahoma Board of Education Still Without a Plan to Replace Common Core Standards

Earlier this summer, Governor Mary Fallin (R) signed a bill that effectively repealed the implementation of Common Core Standards for Oklahoma's students.

Gov. Fallin issued a statement about her decision to repeal Common Core, explaining, "They must raise the bar -- beyond what Common Core offers -- on what we expect of our students. Above all, [our standards] must be developed with the goal of teaching children to think critically and creatively and to complete high school with the knowledge they need to succeed in college and in the workforce."

Policymakers in the House passed the bill in a 71-18 vote. Our State Senate approved the measure with a vote of 31-10, and Gov. Fallin signed it into law on June 5, 2014.

On July 23, State Board of Education members met to discuss the framework for a new set of standards, but didn't get far before they voted to delay any new plans for moving forward. This is the second time they have voted to delay any plans for action since the repeal of Common Core in June. Board members did vote, however, to adopt Priority Academic Student Skills, (PASS) standards, and

will revert back to the old state standards until August 2016.

Common Core has been widely criticized in recent months, and the backlash from parents and educators across the country has been too severe for Gov. Fallin to ignore. The heated debate on Common Core's "federal overreach" and rigorous testing guidelines have made the standards unpopular with educators in Oklahoma, but "inaction" from our lawmakers isn't going to win them any popularity contests either.

This kind of policy gridlock is an unfortunate trend for Washington these days, and parents and educators are still asking the same question we asked ourselves when Common Core was first repealed: *Now what?*

The next regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting will take place on August 28, where board members and committee leaders will be expected to adopt a formal plan for the future of Oklahoma's students.

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How do you feel about Common Core Standards and Gov. Fallin's recent decision to repeal them? What do you think our new state standards should look like? Tell us what you think—join the discussion on the AFT Local 6049 Facebook page today!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

•The General Assembly Meeting schedule has changed from last year: all local membership meetings will be held on the **first Thursday** of the month beginning **September 4, 2014 at 6:00PM.**

• Your union contract allows 2 employee union stewards at each work site within TPS. If you don't currently have a work site steward, or if you'd like to learn more about the training program to become a steward at your school or work site, please contact Vice President Rick McCleanhan or call your union office today!

•Local 6049 is currently looking for activists to serve on our event-planning committee. We are planning a Welcome Back community picnic for Fall 2014, and we need volunteers to help make it a success! If you or any of your coworkers have a knack for party-planning, contact your AFT offices ASAP, at (918)-587-0886 for details on how to sign-up!

•"Like" AFT Local 6049 Oklahoma on Facebook to tag and post photos from union events, stay updated on TPS news, and learn more about our activist efforts for the upcoming school year!

•Your AFT Local 6049 Organizer, Emily Wallace, and President Ed McIntosh, will be visiting TPS campuses and worksites during the 2014-2015 traditional school year to meet with all of you! To request a meeting at your worksite, learn more about our community outreach and political activist efforts, or to view a calendar of worksite meetings and union events, visit us online or send Emily an email at: ewallace@tulsacoxmail.com for more details.

Local #6049 Leaders Born Ready to Rally



Before speaking out on the steps of the Capitol building, Local 6049 members paused to take a quick photo during the state Education Funding Rally held earlier this year. Congratulations to all our members who helped make the event such a huge success!

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