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### **Arbitrators Rule District's Last, Best Offer Reasonable and Feasible**

The Ambridge Area School District is pleased to announce the Act 88 arbitration panel has returned a majority decision in favor of the District's final, best offer to the Ambridge Area Education Association (AAEA). The decision, issued Aug. 11, determined the District's offer is the most reasonable and feasible option for all parties involved.

The arbitration team consists of the District's appointed representative, a Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) representative and a neutral third-party representative selected by the District and PSEA arbitrators. All three arbitrators possess extensive experience in labor negotiations.

"In a good faith effort, the District worked diligently and met frequently to develop an offer that the neutral arbitrator would find acceptable and fair, considering the state of the District and the restraints of the budget," said Dr. Jo Welter, Superintendent. "The District is satisfied with the decision and is hopeful that the teachers will have faith in the arbitrators making the decision."

Highlights of the District's offer include:

- **SALARY:**
  - 2017-2018: A jump of three step movements on the salary schedule upon the commencement of the contract to make up for past frozen wages in years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 plus \$750 added to the scale for 2017-2018. An additional one-time, lump-sum bonus of \$750 will be provided this year.
  - 2018-2019: \$900 added on the scale plus step movement
  - 2019-2020: \$900 added on the scale plus step movement.

Under the Board's salary proposal, an average teacher's salary of \$58,741 will be increased to \$67,112 at the end of the contract. This represents an approximately 9 percent increase for the average teacher over the course of the contract.

- **HEALTH CARE:**
  - Comprehensive health care and hospital care benefits provided through either the Beaver County School Health Consortium or the Allegheny County Schools Health Insurance Consortium at the discretion of the District.
  - District will cover the cost of 95 percent, 94 percent and 93 percent of the employee's insurance plan in each subsequent year of the contract. The teacher contribution to the premium cost will be 5 percent, 6 percent and 7 percent in each subsequent year.
  - Teachers choosing to opt out of healthcare coverage are entitled to a payment equaling 50 percent of the dollar value of its cost.

- RETIREMENT INCENTIVES

- Teachers with 30-plus years of service in the District or 20 years of service and age 55+ are eligible for an annual payment of \$3,500 into the employee's 403(b) account for three consecutive years.
- Access to the District's health care plan if he/she wishes to pay for it.

The arbitrators' ruling is non-binding and can be accepted or rejected by either the District or the teachers' association.

Savings achieved through changes to the healthcare plan will be used to support well-deserved teacher salary increases without an impact to taxpayers. The District has struggled with enrollment since the 2014-2015 school year, partially due to the labor relations dispute, with a total of 188 students choosing alternative options for their education. "The District's last, best offer is fiscally responsible to the community, while recognizing the value and importance of retaining a superior teaching staff," said Dr. Welter. "We are hopeful that the association will accept the arbitrators' decision by August 22, thus ensuring labor peace and allowing us all to focus our attention on the delivery of a quality education to every student in the Ambridge Area School District."