



VEA Members are the MVPs!



The VEA members are the MVPs (most valuable people) in the Vancouver Public Schools AND are the most valuable asset to the association. The district moved the August 14th school board meeting to the commons at Roosevelt elementary in anticipation of a larger audience. VEA members and supporters packed the room to capacity with standing room only to provide a message of support behind the VEA bargaining team. Impassioned speeches were provided by VEA President Lynn Maiorca and VEA Executive Director, Dr. Rick Wilson.

Lynn Maiorca’s Speech: Good afternoon. I’m Lynn Maiorca, President of the Vancouver Education Association. Standing with me today along with Dr. Rick Wilson is the VEA bargaining team: Deb Fanning, Jon Lauderbaugh, Susan VanHouten, Carol Patrick, Shannon McClelland, and Mona Rominger. Dr Webb, School Board, Cabinet, community guests, and friends of labor, I am here today to speak on behalf of the educators dressed in red throughout the audience. Red for Education or Red for Ed is the symbol for educator action. The educators dressed in red are the MVPs or the most valuable people in Vancouver Public Schools because they are with children and families every day in every building in the district. They perform the mission of the district and have provided dedicated service. The educators in red are the reason we are all in this room every other Tuesday throughout the year. As elected and selected officials, the school board, cabinet, and Dr Webb have pledged to support, protect, and compensate educators who are here today dressed in red.



Vancouver Education Association is presently bargaining all parts of the contract this year, and this is also the year that the court and legislature settled the McCleary lawsuit, which VPS supported, to fully fund education. A major part of the narrative of funding education is also the improvement of teacher compensation. WA state has been at the bottom of teacher compensation along the west coast for a number of years. Attracting and retaining quality educators with better compensation even in SW Washington school districts is needed at this moment. In districts with comparable demographics, Vancouver is dead last in compensation. While we made improvements in compensation during the last two-year contract, VPS teacher salaries are still behind at least two other neighboring districts. While members thank the district for helping to bring VPS educators to contemporary levels and models of compensation during the last two-year contract, educators know that the legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction intended new monies sent from the state to further improve compensation in Vancouver and provide opportunities for new models of pay because the State Allocation Model or SAM no longer exists.

So why am I speaking to this today and why are educators here in red today? I'm here today because Vancouver Public Schools and certificated teachers are far apart regarding the improved compensation sent from the state and any new ideas for a model to deliver that compensation. Instead the district continues to hire employees for services outside the classroom or loosely related to the classroom, has not considered meaningful proposals on time, would rather pay overload pay than deal with classroom numbers already stated in the contract, and continues to grow the ending fund balance. After many months, there is the same salary model showing less than a 10% increase and spreading additional compensation over another two school years.

Offering additional help to students, communicating with parents, and collaborating with fellow teachers for the best student outcomes are duties related to teaching. Members, through surveys, have indicated that they need time during the day for some of these duties related to the job and for collaboration---this equates to time. Early release Mondays are presently split between 8 principal directed times and 8 for teacher directed time that are set up according to the needs of the building. Additionally, principals have weekly hour-long faculty time. Teachers want all Monday's to be early release days for job related duties and to end the confusion about which days are early release and which are not early release. The district and the board have not addressed this need for time even from the viewpoint of collaborative time for best student outcomes.

Why, you might ask, are teachers determined to address the new monies sent from the state? The landscape of teaching has changed dramatically in the last decade when teachers went without major improvement in compensation. As I've met 1:1 with teachers, here are the changes to the teaching landscape. Due to increased licensing hoops to jump through and higher education costs, teachers are coming into the profession with \$50,000 to \$100,000 in debt just to get the degree and enter the classroom. Many of them are making \$500+ education loan payments that could potentially continue through half their teaching career. The cost of housing in Vancouver is high and teachers, even in Vancouver, find themselves slipping out of the middle class. They can't find affordable apartments to rent and many believe they will never own a home. Single parents who are teachers are living at home with parents or friends, living pay check to pay check and often qualify for public assistance and reduced lunch rates for their children. Many are working long hours and on weekends trying to balance family and the teaching job and wondering about the struggle. Many work other jobs to make ends meet. That's why teachers are leaving the profession or switching jobs. This is why compensation is at the forefront for all the people in red today and relates to attracting and retaining teachers in VPS.

Two days from now, there will be an all member meeting. Members will vote on the recommendation of the bargaining team. If a package that includes compensation and time is not recommended by the end of August, the question will be whether teachers will or will not start the school year without a contract and without an accepted compensation package. VEA will bring the outcome of the vote to the district. Teachers and fellow educators want district priorities to reflect the intent to attract and retain quality educators and to, indeed, show that they are the most valuable people in VPS.



Dr Wilson’s speech: Our members care about our students’ emotional, physical and educational well-being. They want to teach and support student growth and learning. None of us want to strike but we lose many great educators every year because of the financial pressures Lynn shared with you. Talented new teachers and highly experienced veterans alike do not appear to be a priority in this budget based on the proposals that have been offered at the table. We ask the board for your help in changing this.

In a Columbian article published on July 15th, 2015 one of the current board members in justifying an increase in the superintendent’s compensation package stated “It’s hard to find talented, capable leaders in this environment. In any environment. I

know we don’t want to drop down to mediocre. I don’t think the public will want that. We have national awards.”

We agree it is hard to recruit talented leaders and even harder to retain them. That is the fight we bring you today. Our members have had a significant role in all the national awards you are so proud of.

At this time, I would ask our talented members to stand. Each and everyone of them are committed to this district, its families and students. This is what talented leadership looks like! These are the individuals who change the lives of students every day.

So here we are. Promises were made by the Supreme Court, our legislators and our Governor regarding compensation and the money earmarked for these purposes. We believe the money is there. We ask the Board to do the right thing and keep those promises. It is our sincere hope that with your leadership we will start school on time.

Thank you for your time.

Important Dates to Note:

August 15 – Next bargaining session

August 16 – All VEA member meeting 4:30 pm - Columbia River Gym

August 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 27 – Bargaining sessions



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