

## MSEA Bargaining Update

MSEA received the arbitrators 26-page report earlier this week and the bargaining team has spent the past few days carefully reviewing the document. The report is the arbitrator's recommendation for a fair contract settlement. It does not bind the parties and does not have the force of law, like a court order.

The arbitrator's decision has a lot of good recommendations and some that aren't. We'll use the report to frame the discussion at the next bargaining session in attempt to reach a contract settlement with the District. Again, this doesn't tie our hands and we'll continue advocating for the changes the membership has told us are most important.

Here are the highlights from the arbitrator's decision...

**Health Insurance:** The arbitrator recommended MSEA's proposal which would require the District to pay a base monthly contribution of \$1860 and 80% of any additional premium costs. The employee would pay the other 20%. The arbitrator specifically supported increased investment in health insurance benefits:

*"While the Association's proposal places the District as contributing more to health insurance in comparison with other districts, in light of the overall decline in total compensation comparability, and the need to constrain the salary increments, it seems the wisest allocation of resources. It also sends to the teachers a signal that their health, especially in today's uncertain times, is considered paramount."*

**Salary:** The arbitrator's recommendation roughly split the difference between the MSEA and District's proposals on salary. His suggestion was a retroactive increase of 1.5% for FY20, an increase of 1.5% for FY21, and another increase of 1.5% for FY22.

**Initial step placement:** The arbitrator recommended giving newly hired specialists credit for up to four years of experience for placement on the salary schedule, up from two. He also endorses allowing newly hired teachers up to step four. Currently newly hired teachers can be credited for three years of experience.

**National Board Certification:** The arbitrator recommended an increase of \$1,000 to the bonus paid to anyone with national board certification including those in hard to fill positions. This would increase the annual bonus from \$2,000 to \$3,000. The arbitrator said this, *"recognizes the need to show support for the hiring and retention of those who have special skills."*

**What's the next step?** The MSEA bargaining team has already reached out to the District to schedule a bargaining session. Right now it sounds like the session will happen sometime shortly after the Board's Executive Session on August 5<sup>th</sup>. Many members have asked about the ability to strike if negotiations do not progress. While MSEA leadership prefers to settle a contract over having to strike, state law allows us to take a strike vote 30 days after receiving the arbitrator's report and meeting once with the District. We will have a lot more information on what the future holds after this next bargaining session.