



# Press Release

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## **Riverview School District Reaches Early Bird Contract** Early Settlement Shows Collaboration and Commitment to Education

**December 18, 2013** - The Riverview School District Board of School Directors and Riverview Education Association (REA) have reached an Early Bird contract for its 97 full- and part-time teachers. During a special meeting held at 8 p.m. on Wednesday evening, the Board of School Directors unanimously approved the new contract.

The four-year contract, effective July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2018, (which can be found on the school district's website) is a collaborative effort that will allow Riverview's educators to focus on student achievement and help administrators manage the budget in the years to come. The agreement is the result of teachers, school directors, and district administrators demonstrating their commitment to retaining small class sizes, maintaining neighborhood schools and providing high-quality academic, art, enrichment and other opportunities to its 1,023 students in grades K-12. It also demonstrates a commitment to taxpayer needs and the future sustainability of the school district.

Union members ratified the contract with a unanimous vote on December 18, 2013. Mark Capsambelis, a Math Teacher for the district who represented the teachers during the negotiation process said, "With the contract behind us, the teachers are excited to collaborate with the administration and focus on building stronger educational programs that will allow our students to be better prepared for their life and education after high school."

Early Bird negotiations between the school board and teachers began prior to the state required, January 2014, formal timeline. Negotiation discussions focused on financial items and one important section of contract language that had been troublesome to both parties during the past year. Historically, more formal Riverview contract negotiations, like most Allegheny County School District negotiation sessions, have been conducted over an 8 to 18 month period of time.

The contract was created taking into account budget implications that are anticipated over the next four years. Challenges facing the District and its taxpayers over future years, especially the next two years, were found to be daunting as a result of employee benefit and salary increases. Most particularly, school employers are required to increase contributions to pensions at about 4.5% each year. While the state compensates local districts for 50% of the pension increase, those costs to the state budget are seen as likely precluding any increase to the District's state subsidy allotment. As a result, almost all budget increases will be funded by local sources. However, the school board indicated it will work to moderate millage to the extent possible.

In addition to pension cost increases, the district, like other employers, anticipates increases in health care costs. To offset these costs, teachers have agreed to make additional contributions to health care, including a 66% increase over the four years of the contract. The increased employee contributions will also allow the District to bolster its emergency fund balance and continue to offer varying opportunities to students that are atypical of many similar small school districts in the region.

Other highlights of the agreement include teacher salary increases similar to increases the teachers have received over the past few years. On average, teachers will receive an increase of \$2,700 per year, which is

approximately 4% per year. The average 2013 salary of the work group is \$60,543, which is below the average teacher's salary of \$65,342 in Allegheny County. Most increases in wages are a result of teachers moving up a salary scale that rewards teachers more as years of experience increase. In the next four years, Riverview has many of its teachers moving up through the steeper part of the salary scale.

Board President, John Hackworth, said that the Board of Directors is very pleased with the collaborative effort put forth by both parties and that an Early Bird contract helps to keep our educators focused on students and learning while it greatly reduces the additional legal and negotiation costs often incurred during typical contract negotiation timelines. Board members indicated that they believe the contract is fair and reasonable and they emphasized the importance of beginning a new year without slow and distracting negotiations so that educators are able to focus on improving education in an environment that fosters positive professional relationships. "This contract, we believe, provides for a fair and equitable use of district resources. We value our teachers and appreciate the expertise, experience, and passion they bring to our classrooms. We also understand the value of high performing schools to real estate, and we recognize the obligation that we have to being fair to taxpayers," Hackworth said.

Although many factors contribute to a student's academic performance, research clearly shows that teachers matter most. To date, the district continues to place among the county's highest in academic performance. In fact, Riverview High School is rated as a top ranked high school by U.S. News and World Report. In addition, all three Riverview Schools have earned an average of over 81 points on the PA School Performance Profile, and Riverview elementary schools have often been recognized for earning PSSA scores that place them in the top 10% in Reading and Math in the region. Riverview Superintendent, Dr. Margaret DiNinno, said that the administration appreciates the role that teachers have in providing quality instructional support to our students. "Our goal is to provide our students with the best teachers we can find and then work together so that students who graduate from Riverview are prepared for life. We are fortunate to be able to educate our students in neighborhood communities like Oakmont and Verona, where quality schools are appreciated and a customized approach to education can be honored."

Michael McNally, President of the REA stated, "This settlement is a tribute to the collaborative spirit that is shared by our teachers, administration, and school board, and it reflects a recognition and commitment from all stakeholders to proactive and positive efforts to make changes that improve education. We share the school district's belief that the concessions made in this settlement will contribute to the overall quality of Riverview's schools, and most importantly will serve to ensure the best possible learning environment for all of our students."

For more information, contact Dr. Margaret DiNinno, Riverview School District Superintendent, at 412-828-1800.