

October 24, 2009

Dear Friend, Neighbor, and /or Colleague,

A Wyoming teacher, wearing her #1 in Ohio Wyoming t-shirt, walked into the Apple Store in Kenwood Towne Center last week. A stranger who had read one too many negative articles regarding Wyoming in the local paper approached her and said, "I'll bet you're ashamed to be wearing that." Ashamed is not an emotion that we have ever felt as Wyoming teachers. Yet we currently find ourselves in a frustrating situation. This letter is a request of you, our friends, neighbors, retired faculty, and colleagues, to call the Board of Education members. There are issues circulating within our community, and we believe that the only group with the power to resolve those issues is the Wyoming Board of Education.

First, in salary negotiations, the two sides met on October 15th for the first time in six weeks. At the end of that meeting—after receiving essentially the same salary proposal from the Board that the Wyoming Education Association membership unanimously rejected in August—the WEA team found it necessary to declare impasse. We are not asking for top salaries, just ones worthy of our efforts and within the community's capacity. With income and property taxes coming in above estimation and a nearly \$11 million surplus, the budget allows for a WEA proposed salary increase while arriving at a 2013 levy at the earliest. Additionally, we dispute a teacher salary increase will result in a 10 mill levy. Obviously, the Board is much less concerned about finances in other matters, because recently an option for the Board to purchase the house at 428 Springfield Pike has been initiated. What's the purpose of this property purchase?

Second, we are currently in the middle of a controversy over the selection and challenge of high school literature. What is most upsetting is not the book in question nor an individual's right to challenge it, but rather the rumors circulating that the teachers are not following long-standing policy in selecting materials. In the newsletter *School Chatter* sent electronically to parents in early September, Dr. Kist-Kline stated that the process used to select books for the high school reading lists had not been followed. This is simply not true. When the book currently in question was added to the supplemental reading list, the high school teachers did follow the selection process. For more than ten years, the process the teachers used has been the standard by which supplemental literature has been chosen.

In 2008, the Board of Education purchased an online collection of board policies from a company called NEOLA and adopted it as the district's own. At no time did the superintendent or any administrator in the district notify the teachers that a new materials selection process was part of that collection. Furthermore, the selection process in question is part of an administrative guideline and is password protected, which means only administrators have access to it. So, the teachers are being accused of not following a process they did not know existed, nor would have had access to had they known.

At the heart of both of these situations is the loss of collaboration among the Board of Education, teachers, and community members that made Wyoming the great district we have always been proud to call our own. Deterioration can be seen in the new board policy that does not allow teachers to speak directly to board members regarding school or district matters, and any district-wide committees that still include teachers are now advisory only and do not have any decision-making power. Wyoming teachers care deeply about the schools, the community, and most of all, the well-being of every student, and we value the opportunity to be a part of the important discussions that shape the district as it moves forward.

Please feel free to call any of us for more information. Once more, we ask you to communicate with the Board by asking them to sit down at the table, resolve the contract, revise the selection policy with teachers, and to re-establish communication among all of the groups who care about Wyoming's future.

Thank you for all you have done for us.

Sincerely,

Concerned Wyoming Teachers

If you have any questions, please contact our Resident Teacher Contacts:

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