

November 5, 2018

Statement from the Board of Education Regarding Negotiations and Strike Threats

The Franklin Lakes Education Association (“FLEA”) has released a document which alleges, among other things, that the Franklin Lakes Board of Education (the “Board”) took them to court “hoping to quiet ... demands at the bargaining table”, and that the Board is wasting tax dollars on unnecessary legal actions.

FLEA’s document is misleading and contains a number of factual inaccuracies. On October 22, 2018, the Board went to New Jersey Superior Court for the sole purpose of preventing a strike by FLEA. The Board’s court filing was a response to two developments: first, a vote by FLEA membership reportedly authorizing a strike; and second, multiple indications from FLEA’s leadership that a strike was planned, despite the fact that it is illegal for public-sector employees to strike in New Jersey.

The Board’s concern in taking this action was – and is – student safety. Despite the administration’s efforts to develop contingency plans, an illegal strike by teachers could pose a risk to the health and safety of the district’s students.

Superior Court Judge James DeLuca found sufficient merit in the Board’s complaint to order the parties to appear on October 24. Before hearing the Board’s case, the judge facilitated a settlement agreement in which FLEA agreed not to take any unlawful job actions (including a strike); both parties agreed to move forward with the fact-finding process and to continue negotiating in good faith; and the Board agreed to dismissal of its complaint without prejudice. The judge did not rule on the merits of the Board’s complaint, and the Board may re-file if necessary.

The Board and the district administration are optimistic that this settlement agreement will prevent a strike and its disruptive effects. Nevertheless, the administration is continuing to plan for a number of possible actions by FLEA.

The Board is serious about working toward a settlement, and recently contacted FLEA leadership offering to meet before the fact-finding hearing scheduled for December 13. Unfortunately, FLEA’s response, delivered by their representative from the New Jersey Education Association, indicated that they are not willing to meet. The Board reiterates its standing offer to meet with FLEA at any time.