

FRANKLIN LAKES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Franklin Lakes Board of Education

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The Franklin Lakes Board of Education (the “Board”) and the Franklin Lakes Education Association (“FLEA”) were scheduled to meet last night for a formal fact-finding hearing. The Board was looking forward to this next step in the collective bargaining process, as it would have produced a written settlement recommendation from the state-appointed fact-finder, providing our community with the viewpoint of a neutral third party.

FLEA asked that we cancel the fact-finding hearing and instead meet for mediation (i.e., a negotiating session facilitated by a professional mediator). The Board agreed, simply out of a desire to cooperate with FLEA and despite the continuing belief that a fact-finder’s report will help move the process forward. The Board approached last night’s session with a positive outlook and prepared to compromise in search of resolution.

FLEA was not willing to negotiate any contract terms unless the Board first agreed to permanently reduce teachers’ contributions to health insurance premiums. Those contributions are the result of New Jersey’s 2011 law known as “Chapter 78”. Before Chapter 78, most teachers in New Jersey – including Franklin Lakes teachers – were not required to make *any contribution* to the cost of their health insurance. Chapter 78 required teachers (and other public sector employees) to pay a share of health insurance premiums, ranging from 3% to 35% depending on salary and insurance plan selection. For example (based on actual district data):

	<u>Teacher #1</u>	<u>Teacher #2</u>	<u>Teacher #3</u>	<u>Teacher #4</u>
Teacher annual salary	\$ 54,427	\$ 93,753	\$ 59,762	\$ 112,340
Insurance selection	Single coverage	Single coverage	Family coverage	Family coverage
Teacher premium share	20%	34%	14%	35%
Teacher pays	2,774	4,715	5,494	13,736
District pays	<u>11,094</u>	<u>9,153</u>	<u>33,752</u>	<u>25,510</u>
Total Premium	13,868	13,868	39,246	39,246

The Board demonstrated flexibility and offered a number of alternatives that were consistent with – *or better for teachers than* – recent settlements. Unfortunately, FLEA remained unwilling to negotiate without a permanent reduction (a “cap”) of Chapter 78 contributions. After almost 6 hours, the session was adjourned without agreement, and the fact-finding hearing is now scheduled for late November.

The Board continues to recognize the need to provide a competitive salary increase and Chapter 78 relief to our teachers, and, notwithstanding FLEA’s resistance, remains committed to reaching a fair and reasonable settlement. The Board is willing to meet with FLEA at any time to expedite this process.

Please direct any questions or comments to the Franklin Lakes Board of Education at:
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