

HARFORD TEACHERS PICKET OVER STAGNANT SALARIES AND ADDITIONAL WORK DAY



Unhappy over unsettled work and salary related issues, Harford County teachers, picketed outside of the Ring Factory School, Friday afternoon, after the schools had been let out for the day. Teachers gathered along the sidewalks, near the school, carrying placards reading, "Fund public education" and "Save our schools." At its height, the protest had gathered around a 100 teachers. One of the protesting teachers, Seth Ranneberger, a third year teacher at Patterson Mill High School, said, that she has no option but to supplement her current job, with another, to support her family. Cayce Thomas, a first year teacher at Edgewood Middle School, said she was participating in the protest, as she felt that long-serving teachers were unjustly treated. She magnanimously accepted, "It's not fair they're getting paid the same amount as I am." Sharon Oliver, with 14 years of teaching service at the Edgewood Middle, said the teacher have begun to feel that the county government is "treating us like second class citizens." Off the hundred teachers, at the peak of the picketing, by 4:30 only 50 to 60 teachers remained. "This isn't over," said Randy Cerveny, president of the Harford County Education Association, the union representing the teachers. The protest was organized by Randy Cerveny who threatened that "planning to do what they have to do" and are "tired of working for free." Earlier in the day, talking over the phone, he said, that the protest was against the lack of salary increases and an additional workday on the school calendar year. On being asked about the extra working day, Cerveny did not elaborate beyond saying that it "has to do with lack of negotiations." The protest overlapped with a visit to the Ring Factory School, by Harford Superintendent Robert Tomback. The School had been named among the state's Blue Ribbon Schools, earlier this year. Teri Kranefeld, Harford County Public Schools communications manager, via email clarified the schools position: "Negotiators for the Board of Education have twice met with representatives of the Harford County Education Association (HCEA) in the past week as part of court-ordered re-negotiations over the terms of its current (2011-2012) contract. As the original agreement, which would have included [cost of living increases] and step increases for teachers, was not funded by the Harford County fiscal authorities, the board was unable to agree to the HCEA's singular demand of a retroactive COLA of two percent and a one-step increase." The e-mail went on to say, "The board reiterated its previously made offer of a paid bonus day on the last day of school for teachers (June 14th), but the HCEA bargaining team rejected that offer, which means that we cannot provide the bonus day for teachers at this time. The HCEA bargaining team made no other proposals besides the two percent [cost of living] increase and one step, retroactive to July 1, 2011. The board's negotiating team responded by indicating that there was no county funding available to pay for these demands, at which point the union chose not to bargain any further, having made no other proposals." Owing to this stalemate, the last day for teachers this school year will be June 14, whereas the last day for other HCPS 10-month employees, mainly support staff, will stay at June 13. Harford County Executive David Craig, said that the recent mandate from Annapolis, which said that the that the counties must start paying for teacher pensions next year, made him withdraw his legislation that would have given the second part of a one-time bonus to all county government and school employees in June. He said that the bonus money will be required for the pension commitment. County employees and a few school employees received the \$625 first segment of the planned \$1,250 bonus in December. The teachers received theirs in March, even though Cerveny and other union leaders had reservations about taking the bonus money, even as there was a salary dispute with the schools. However, it seems that pending final approval of the 2013 county and school budgets, Harford's teachers and other public school employees are looking at no raises for the fourth straight year. Looking for Teacher jobs? [Click here](#).