

The D-Y budget: It's in the numbers

Editor's Notebook

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Capistrano, CA — Teachers agree to 10.1 percent pay cut, saving district about \$19.9 million. (April 2010).

Providence, RI — 300 teachers will receive no raises and no step increases, saving the district \$1.6 million over three years. (July 2010).

Yarmouth, MA — Teachers agree to half-percent salary reduction, saving the district \$103,000. (July 2010)

When is a salary increase not a raise? When does a reduction in salaries cause an increase in the annual salary cost of a school district? Seemingly only in the Orwellian world of the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District, where in fiscal 2011 a large number of teachers will once again see their salaries increase, while the administration trumpets zero cost of living increases and salary reductions.

"Ignorance is strength"

To understand the mis-information about raises and salary increases taking place at D-Y, one must delve deep into the world of union contracts and study the process of the annual step increase. According to the terms of their contract, D-Y union members who have between one and 12 years of teaching experience receive a salary increase upon the successful completion of each year of service.

As an example, in the first year of the most previous teacher contract that ran from 2007-2010, a teacher who had five years of experience with a master's degree plus 15 additional course credits was scheduled to be paid \$50,077; over the next two years of the contract that same teacher would see their salary rise to \$54,266, and then \$58,412. Both the salary amount and the nearly 8 percent annual rate of increase at D-Y during that time

period were among the highest on Cape Cod.

"Who controls the past," ran the party slogan, "controls the future; who controls the present controls the past."

Last month the district announced a contract agreement with the teachers' union that contained no cost of living increase, a furlough day and a deferred professional development day that would result in a half-percent across-the-board savings in salary totaling \$103,000. Yet nowhere in their press release or in the reporting of the new contract was there any mention of the step increase that a large number of teachers would be receiving. To continue the example, our teacher would now be considered a step 8 and in the newest teacher contract be scheduled to earn \$60,934, resulting in not a freeze or a reduction in salary but an increase of 3.3 percent.

During the same three-year time period of the previous D-Y contract, while the country was in the midst of the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, many employees in the world of non-union contracts saw their salaries stay the same or in many cases decrease. Can the same be said for the D-Y teachers in 2011?

"Thoughtcrime is death."

Were annual salary increases of up to 8 percent for many teachers reasonable during the past three years?

Are severe budget cuts or a Proposition 2 1/2 override inevitable in Yarmouth?

Has the district adequately informed the people of Dennis and Yarmouth how much more they will spend on teacher salaries in 2011 compared to 2010?

Are additional teacher layoffs in the future?

Or could all these issues have been resolved if the district and the union had agreed to actually freeze or perhaps reduce salaries for fiscal 2011?

These are all questions that the voters in both Dennis and Yarmouth will need to decide in the coming weeks and months.

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