



# Advocate

September 6, 2017

PORTLAND ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS

## What's Up With My Paycheck?

Because our contract is still not settled, we are starting our second year without any increase to the salary schedule. I know just how difficult this is. Both the District and PAT have proposals that include retroactive increases.

Because our contract is "status quo", the salary schedule remains the same as last year. However, you do get step increases and credit advancement if you're eligible. Also, due to staffing cuts, we are not working the extra two days we agreed to last year. This means we aren't being paid for those extra two days and your paychecks will reflect this shorter school year on the September 29<sup>th</sup> paycheck.

## Salary Placement Problems

The past two years we've seen a marked increase in the number of members having problems with their placement on the salary schedule. If you believe you should be on a different step or column on the salary schedule, please let us know by completing the form on the PAT website.

PAT will be able to analyze your situation and identify any trends or common causes for these salary placement problems. Based on our findings, we may file a class-action grievance to address any violations.

## PAT Picnic

Rain or Shine! Join your fellow PAT members and community at the annual picnic. Food, drinks, ice cream and live music will be provided. Families welcome!

Friday, September 8th, 2017  
3:30 - 6:30 PM  
Laurelhurst Park  
Picnic Area D

## STILL Fighting for the Schools Portland Students Deserve

Welcome back! This is the second year in a row we're starting the year without a contract and I know it's really tough. I hope you were proudly wearing your "2<sup>nd</sup> Year, No Contract" button when the students arrived last week. This is just one of the many activities we've got planned to show the District we're serious about settling a fair contract.



If you've been following our negotiations over the summer, you know that despite more than a year trying to bargain collaboratively with the District, **we're right back where we were in 2013**. PPS is pushing for major concessions and we're *still* fighting for the schools Portland students deserve.

## HOW WE GOT HERE

One of the major obstacles to settling our contract has been **the District's continuing dysfunction**. You've seen it firsthand, so you know how much harder it is to do our jobs and educate our students as a result. From the lead crisis to the latest series of HR scandals, PPS administrators have continued to pass the buck and sweep problems under the rug. Turnover among senior administrators is so high it's been hard to figure out who's really in charge.

We tried very hard to build a productive working relationship with the District. But after more than a year in Interest-Based Bargaining, dealing with a rotating cast of characters from PPS, it was clear that **the District isn't really serious about reaching an agreement**. In June, things went from frustrating to downright insulting with District officials backtracking on things we'd agreed to, and refusing to discuss topics that are already in our contract!

**Over the summer, the District became increasingly confrontational in negotiations**. Rather than go back to more traditional bargaining, PPS immediately called for mediation—the first hurdle that they need to clear before they could impose their proposals on us. Fortunately, they haven't taken the next step and declared impasse yet, so all of the terms of our current agreement are maintained. We've had two sessions with the state mediator since July, and we have more mediation sessions scheduled including September 11<sup>th</sup>, and September 19<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>. There is some hope that the new School Board members, together with the new Superintendent, can provide some much-needed leadership and help us reach a fair settlement.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

But while we hope for the best, we have to prepare for the worst. **The District is still proposing significant givebacks** that will weaken our contract and make your work lives—and our students' learning conditions—substantially worse.

These include: *Elimination of workload language; Backpedaling on school safety; Cuts to PE, library and media services; Cuts to special education and other support services; Raises that leave Portland educators further and further behind neighboring districts.*

**We're not going to let that happen.** In 2013, we almost went on strike for our vision of the schools our students deserve, and we won't let them roll back the gains we've made.



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We're not just trying to protect what we have—we've also got significant issues we're fighting for in bargaining, including: *Protecting our workload language, and making sure that the District recognizes that workload is much more than the 6 of 8 high school schedule; Providing more prep time for elementary teachers; Securing raises that make PPS competitive with other districts in the region; Ensuring we have a better school day, and school year, before we have a longer one; Restoring early retirement benefits to all members; Providing adequate time and reasonable caseloads for SPED teachers; Making sure the District lives up to our safety agreements, including funding the Rapid Response Team; Addressing HR dysfunction, whether it's putting people on the salary schedule, dragging their feet investigating complaints or putting people on indefinite administrative leave; Snow days, parking, and many other issues.*

Given the dysfunction in the District, I know it won't surprise you to hear that we've got a backlog of grievances that could make your head spin. We've repeatedly offered the District a chance to wipe the slate clean and settle these outstanding grievances as part of our negotiations, but they continue to drag their feet.

**NOW IS THE TIME**

The District may think they can wait us out or wear us down, but **this fall we're going on offense**. We're going to continue to push PPS to live up to our current agreement and aggressively pursue outstanding grievances, including going to arbitration if we have to. And we will continue to push hard at the bargaining table. Most important, we're moving into full-scale organizing mode. Our back-to-school buttons are just the beginning of what we have planned, because **when we stand together publicly we can move both the School Board and the District**. We saw that this summer after scores of PAT members showed up at the School Board meeting. The Board reversed course and agreed to follow our contract, settling on a 190-day school year, instead of 192 days. Many of you remember all the work we had to do in 2013 to build unity and support—with coworkers in our buildings and with parents and the community. We need to be prepared to do all that, and more, again this year if we want to defend our standards. There's an old saying in the labor movement that **the best way to avoid a strike is to be prepared for one**, and now's the time to get ready. We don't want to walk off the job, but we won't let the District bully us into a settlement that is bad for teachers and bad for kids.

In Solidarity,

Suzanne Cohen

PAT President

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**Personnel Investigations and Paid Administrative Leave**

PPS officials are unfortunately making headlines again, this time for the District's dysfunctional approach to personnel complaints, investigations, and paid administrative leave. PAT has been pushing the District to fix these problems for years. Given the frequent media mischaracterizations of the role of our union, it's important to stress that only PPS can fire its employees, or initiate and pursue investigations. **We believe that it's in everyone's interest for the District to conduct timely, thorough, and objective investigations of personnel complaints—something we've spelled out repeatedly in bargaining.** For example, in our last round of negotiations we secured new language requiring the District to conduct prompt investigations, and to provide a reason for putting any educator on administrative leave for more than 10 days. Unfortunately, PPS has repeatedly ignored these requirements, and just like the lead crisis two years ago, administrators continue sweeping problems under the rug.

We will continue to defend everyone's right to due process, and to fulfill our duty to fairly represent our members. No one should have their professional reputation ruined by unsubstantiated rumors or be tried in press where they are assumed guilty until proven innocent. We continue to demand that the District do its job of investigating complaints and taking appropriate actions, while adhering to core legal principles like due process and innocent until proven guilty. Contrary to the media's insinuations, **following the procedures spelled out in our contract doesn't lead to troubling personnel problems like these, it helps avoid them.**