

School District and association agree to fund balance distribution

By spokeswoman Laura Rumpler

The Coeur d'Alene School District shared this fall that the district was in the positive position of having a higher than anticipated fund balance. The school board and Coeur d'Alene Education Association (CEA) mutually agreed to re-open contract negotiations to specifically discuss how to allocate the unanticipated fund balance. This occurred during a two-hour negotiations session last night.

The negotiating teams came up with the following agreement:

- 2% increase to the base salary for all certified employees
- Award an "experience step" for certified employees previously not funded by the state
- Distribute a one-time payment of approximately \$325 to all benefitted employees

The school board met with Superintendent Matthew Handelman this morning to discuss the outcome of last night's negotiations session and to approve amending the teachers' contract.

Superintendent Handelman wanted the board to know that the agreement with "certified" staff will also be honored for all staff in the district – classified and administrators. As lead negotiator for the district, Human Resources Director Kelly Ostrom stated, "Our district has a practice of treating all classifications the same." The new agreement financially benefits more employees this year and into the future.

The school board directed the district to make certain that this agreement also reflects the intent to give money back to the taxpayers who take care of making our school district successful.

The school board will take action at their December meeting to authorize the district to reduce the taxes that the school district will collect next fall by \$450,000. This reduction will offset the emergency levy that was approved by the school board in September. The district will be able to do this as the new agreement includes enough one-time expenses to allow the district to budget accordingly for next year.

"We want to continue to do the right thing at the right time with the information we have," shared Trustee Dave Eubanks. Board members concurred.

The amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the teacher's association and the district reflects an opportunity to take care of all employees and honor the taxpayer.

"I couldn't be happier with this outcome," stated Superintendent Matthew Handelman. "This is a win for our employees, our district and the public we serve."

Trustee Tom Hamilton made the motion to approve the amendment to the negotiations agreement dated 11/21/2013. Trustee Christa Hazel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The CEA voted last night to ratify the agreement.