



# RIDGEWOOD

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**July 23, 2015** – The Board of Education has released the following statement regarding negotiations with the Ridgewood Education Association:

The Ridgewood Board of Education and the Ridgewood Education Association (“REA”) are parties to a Collective Bargaining Agreement that began on July 1, 2012 and ended June 30, 2015. Negotiations with the REA towards a new Agreement began in February 2015. At this initial meeting, impasse was declared over the differences in the REA’s and the Board’s proposals pertaining to health insurance premium contributions. The REA proposed a reduction in Chapter 78 contributions. The Board told the REA that it would not agree to change or reduce the formula percentages set forth by Chapter 78.

In 2011, Governor Christie signed into law P.L. 2011, c. 78, better known as “Chapter 78.” Chapter 78 mandated that all public sector employees contribute to their health benefit premiums. These contributions were to be phased-in over four (4) years under a statutory formula; after which they would be subject to collective negotiations. On June 30, 2015, teachers and secretaries of the Ridgewood Public Schools completed the mandatory four (4) year phase-in.

Since our first meeting in February, the Board and the Association have met four more times in March and April and with the state appointed mediator in May and June.

Our last meeting was on June 2, 2015, when the Board and the Association met with the Mediator for several hours, without success. The Mediator advised us that she would be deferring the negotiations to the fact-finding stage. Fact-finders are assigned through the NJ Public Employment Relations Commission and they, like mediators, specialize in public sector negotiations. A Fact-finder's initial role may be very similar to the role of a Mediator, and likely attempt to mediate a settlement.

The Board and the REA will continue to negotiate with each other in good faith in a respectful manner.

While the parties work with the Fact-finder, all of the terms and conditions of the current Agreement continue. During this time, the teachers and secretaries will continue to receive their full salaries and benefits.

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