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Expanded Statement by School Board Regarding BEA Decision to Strike

The Burlington School Board is dismayed by the outcome of negotiations with the BEA yesterday. In returning to the table, the Board increased a wide range of offers to the BEA and made every attempt to improve the proposed contract provisions. Very surprisingly, we received no counter-proposals from the BEA except for one, and the Board conceded on that request almost immediately.

Despite hopes that we were close to a deal, yesterday's contract negotiations resulted in the BEA walking away from the table after 9 hours of negotiation and calling a strike. Since late last week it was the Board's understanding that language dealing with high school operational issues was the major sticking point, not money.

However, after the Board agreed to refine the operational language the BEA informed us they had additional concerns.

Despite this sudden change of position the District attempted to satisfy the BEA's new salary demands with a number of proposals, which included offering a more than eight percent salary increase over three years. This three-year offer, which would increase average teacher salaries by \$6,000, was rejected by BEA leaders, who then walked out of the mediation.

The Board remains ready to resume talks with the BEA for a multi-year contract that will lift imposition, and is hopeful they will return to the table so our children can return to school.

Another area the BEA claims led to stalled negotiations is working conditions in Burlington elementary schools. Early on in negotiations, the BEA proposed that elementary teachers be relieved of door duty, lunch duty, and recess duty. They stated the request was a result of time stresses teachers in the elementary schools were experiencing. The Board indicated to the BEA that it wanted to understand their concerns and find a way to address the issue. As a result the Board proposed an end to door duty, which would result in an increased cost to the district of about \$120,000. We also extended duty-free lunchtime from 20 to 25 minutes.

However, the Board could not agree to an end to lunch duty or recess duty. We have heard in no uncertain terms from principals and many parents that lunch and recess are times when bullying occurs, including instances of sexism, racism, homophobia and bullying of students with disabilities. Teachers, who are

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closest to their students, are best equipped to spot and stop bullying and supervise during these periods. This is because they are aware of the dynamics and student relationships that might lead to problems outside the classroom. The Board therefore offered to form a labor-management committee to work to find alternative ways to address the time stresses elementary teachers are experiencing. This proposal was rejected by the BEA.

Yesterday in negotiations the Board tried again, and revised the proposal so teachers would only be given three of these duty assignments each week. This has a financial cost to the District, and we made this concession to the BEA even though we believe it was not necessarily in the best interest of students. Nevertheless, even this proposal was rejected by the BEA.

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