

Citizens for Accountability

Presentation to the Board of Education Community Consolidated School District 15 February 8, 2012

After hearing about the \$9 million budget gap that has eroded our fund balance to the point of a crisis, I took a close look at the numbers. Using actual salary data from the past ten years I compared all full-time employees year to year. What I found was shocking. For the first half of the ten year period the average salary increase was well over 10%. Many individuals were in the 20% range and others naturally below 10%. In the second half of the period, the average salary increases steadily declined but still remained well above 5% on average.

Looking a little deeper, a pattern emerged. Using a list of retiring employees by year, and comparing it to the detail of the salary increases by year, what I found was alarming. Before 2009, the norm for many of employees retiring was to receive between a 15% - 20% salary increase in each of their final three years. From 2009 forward, surely due to a new State law limiting pay spiking to just 6%, the norm became a 6% increase in each of their final three years. That is still way too much, particularly when compared to the private sector.

With revenue growth limited to between two to three percent, as stated by Superintendent Thompson, knowing that our younger teachers' salaries start out much lower with step increases, why in the world would we be giving our soon-to-be retired employees an increase that is two to three times the revenue growth rate? If I were one of those young teachers I would be wondering the same thing.

Just to mention a few examples of past abuses:

- In 2003 and 2008 respectively, former superintendents John and Robert each received 20% salary bumps of \$50K in each of their past two years before retirement, enabling John to receive \$1 million every four years in retirement.
- In 2006 and 2008 respectively, a teacher and a Principal each received in excess of 18% bumps in each of their final three years.

There are a whole lot more examples, administrators and teachers, who depleted our cash reserves over the past decade with these pre-retirement salary bumps. Should any of our fine teachers get impacted we can point to these bumps as a significant factor.

The practice of pre-retirement salary bumps must end as it serves only to artificially inflate an employee's salary to enable a larger pension and has nothing to do with the education of our children. Every dollar spent on a pre-retirement bump is a dollar removed from the dwindling fund balances. It will hurt some of those teachers who wish to remain teaching. It will hurt our children in some fashion. It only serves to benefit those teachers or administrators who are at the end of their careers to provide them a more comfortable retirement. If you truly care about the teachers who want to teach, if you truly care about the kids, this practice must end.

Mark Evenson