

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT #205

**932 Harrison Street
Galesburg, IL 61401
Phone: (309) 973-2000**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On behalf of the Galesburg School District administration and board, we wanted to clarify some of the issues involved in the contract negotiations with the teachers' union and the union's recent action to stage a strike as the new school year was about to begin.

We have wonderful teachers and staff and we are hoping for a quick resolution to this unfortunate situation. Given the state's cuts in General State Aid, Transportation and other budget line items, we simply cannot go beyond our final offer and still fulfill our obligation to continue to provide top-quality educational opportunities for Galesburg students not only now but in future years.

During the past four years, the Galesburg school district has lost \$2,783,391 in General State Aid, not to mention state cuts in various other line items.

The union points to the reserve funds our district has managed to save by being good stewards of tax dollars, but those reserves have been drained from \$13.3 million three years ago to a projected \$8.3 million by the end of the 2014-15 school year primarily because of the aforementioned state budget cuts. Judging by the news reports and political rhetoric coming out of Springfield, we can reasonably expect the state's budget situation to get worse, not better in the foreseeable future. Those reserve funds do not replenish themselves during times of deficit spending. They are a school district's last line of defense against state cuts, late state payments and unexpected expenses – and when they are gone, they are gone.

While we wish that we had the resources to offer the teachers more, we believe that our last offer to our teachers for what amounts to a 5.04 percent increase over the next three years was fair given the economic situation in Galesburg and in our state and nation.

The bottom line is as administrators and the Board of Education; we must be fiscally responsible and do what we think is right for the students currently enrolled in Galesburg public schools as well as those children who will be attending our schools in the next decade and beyond. We will continue to do everything in our power to bring this strike to a quick resolution so our teachers can get back in the classroom to help educate our students. However, we cannot and will not mortgage the future of our school district or of the students who depend on us to provide them the best possible educational opportunities to succeed.

Bart A. Arthur
Superintendent

Michael D. Panther
Board President