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South Park Education Association Walks Away From Jointly Created New Professional Agreement

Fairplay, Colorado –The Park County School District RE-2 (the “District”) and the South Park Education Association (“SPEA” or “Association”) met over the course of two days to discuss entering into a New Professional Agreement. Following productive conversations on October 9, 2019, the parties had reached agreements on the substantive provisions of the draft New Professional Agreement. This included mechanisms for immediately being able to discuss compensation or other matters pressing to SPEA this fall, as well as a process for negotiating salaries in the future. The remaining substantive item to discuss at the meeting on October 10, 2019, was the term of the New Professional Agreement. Instead of finalizing the document to become recognized again by the District, the Association chose to walk away from the jointly created New Professional Agreement.

After the Association withdrew its lawsuits against the District in September, the District’s Board of Education’s President was in a position to be able to speak directly with SPEA’s President. Those conversations were initiated in an effort to create a new climate and new beginning for a positive working relationship between the parties.

In these one-on-one conversations between the Presidents, the District learned that the most important matter to the Association was the reinstatement of a professional agreement. The Association also understood that the District would not be discussing current year salaries at the same time that the New Professional Agreement would be agreed upon; however, there was discussion that if a New Professional Agreement was ratified, then there would be a need for further discussions regarding school finances. These individual conversations resulted in the District and Association being able to meet earlier this week to discuss the District’s proposal for a New Professional Agreement that has been pending for the past month.

The District was extremely hopeful that the dialogue for a New Professional Agreement would result in the recognition of the Association and a path forward for discussing all matters important to the parties, including salaries and benefits. Unfortunately, after all substantive provisions of the New Professional Agreement were jointly agreed upon, SPEA demanded to return to discussing current year salaries. Although the Association has been aware for months that the District would not be negotiating salaries prior to the reinstatement of an agreement, the Association unilaterally inserted this topic into the agreed-upon dialogue for this week’s meetings and chose to walk away from the productive conversations with the District last night.

If the jointly created New Professional Agreement is rejected by the Association, this will be the second time in six months that the teachers and SSPs will have rejected having a professional agreement in place.

On the other hand, if the New Professional Agreement were to be ratified by the Association, it could be approved by the Board at its October meeting. Immediately following the reinstatement, the parties could utilize the agreed upon mechanisms to discuss salaries, District finances, and other matters of importance to the Association. Although the District does not believe an additional raise – beyond what has already been provided for the 2019-2020 school year – is financially feasible or fiscally responsible, the Board (including incoming new Board members) is willing to have these fiscally transparent conversations with the Association once they are recognized.

The Board is disheartened that the Association is choosing a strike rather than move forward with a positive working relationship with the District that includes favorable avenues for SPEA to handle the salary negotiations that it desires.

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