

In the Matter of)

REETHS PUFFER PUBLIC SCHOOLS)

- and -)

REETHS-PUFFER EDUCATION ASSOCIATION)

Douglas Hillman)

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FACT FINDING REPORT
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Reeths-Puffer Education Association petitioned the Labor Mediation Board on July 9, 1968 for fact finding. An Answer was filed by Reeths-Puffer Public Schools on July 17, 1968. On July 22, 1968 the undersigned was appointed as fact finder to conduct a fact finding hearing pursuant to Section 25 of Labor Mediation Act (Mich. Stat. Ann. 17.454(27); Mich. Comp. L. 423.25) and Part 3 of the General Rules and Regulations of the Michigan Labor Mediation Board.

Arrangements were made with the parties for the hearing beginning at 7:30 p.m., August 6, 1968 at 1500 North Getty Street, Muskegon, Michigan.

Appearing for the Reeths-Puffer Education Association were the following:

Dave Hartman
Dilane Robinson
Bill Druker
Thomas O. Shively
Betty Gzym
William Radakovitz
Ruby Hildreth
William Simmons
Jeffrey J. Hinman

Appearing for the Reeths-Puffer Public Schools were the following:

Donald Dechow
Ken Cooper
Edward Postema
Richard Arter
David C. Hickman Sr.

Reeths Puffer Public Schools

The position of the parties was ably presented by spokesmen for each group. Following the hearing, negotiations were resumed but without reaching an agreement. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 a. m.

ISSUES

The sole dispute between the parties centers around the salary schedule index. It appears that the index was originally adopted by the Board only after long and difficult bargaining. When originally adopted the index was apparently not at a level satisfactory to the Reeths-Puffer Education Association (hereinafter called Teachers). It had at least so to speak its foot in the door. It is equally apparent that the Reeths-Puffer Board of Education (hereinafter called the Board) accepted the index principle with great reluctance. However, once accepted, the Board has been unwilling to renegotiate the index points. (Although it did at the last meeting on August 6th add a 12th step at the 1.51 level for the B. A.). Both parties frequently refer to the dispute as a "philosophical dispute." If the index remains the same an increase at the base favors those teachers with less experience. The Board maintains the beginning salary must be high enough to be competitive. The Teachers on the other hand, believe the present base is competitive and that a change in the index to benefit the more experienced teachers improves morale, encourages further teacher training and education and is basically more equitable. The Teachers further claim that the present morale is low and that teacher turnover is higher than the national average. The Board denies both of these charges. With respect to the philosophy

behind the index system the Teachers claim it (a) focuses attention on good structure rather than dollar amounts; (b) it facilitates revisions of dollar amount schedules; (c) it insures proportionate adjustments at all steps and training levels, and (d) it reveals inter-relationships at a glance. The Board, on the other hand, objects to cross the board fixed salary increases. The system, it claims, is inflexible and rewards the inefficient as well as the efficient. It tends to impersonalize the whole promotional system and deprives the Board of rewarding the outstanding meritorious teachers.

With respect to the index itself and resulting pay levels the Teachers offered 11 written exhibits in an effort to demonstrate Reeths-Puffer was (1) below in salary schedule for Muskegon County (2) below the mean and median for Class "L" Districts which have already settled; (3) that the Reeths-Puffer SEV per pupil exceeded the mean and median of other Class "L" Districts which have already settled; (4) that the salary schedule index currently in existence is below that of Muskegon Heights and Mona Shores, and (5) that of Michigan's 531 K-12 school districts, Reeths-Puffer ranks 114th in SEV per pupil, 114th in student enrollment yet instructional salaries per pupil place 182nd. The fact finder has spot checked the factual data set forth in the Teacher's exhibits (that is pay schedules of other districts, etc.) and has no reason to believe the information supplied in the exhibits is not accurate. Also it should be noted that the Board was given copies of these exhibits at the time of the hearing by the Teachers on August 6, 1968 and the undersigned has heard nothing from the Board since that date which would be expected if any of the Teacher material was inaccurate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If in fact the pay schedule for the Teachers at Reeths-Puffer Public Schools is at the present time too low (as both parties appear to agree) it seems to the fact finder unrealistic for the parties to be at loggerheads over a "philosophical" issue. The index system appears to be here to stay. The Board's dislike for the system is completely understandable in that it tends to dehumanize the principle behind meritorious pay increases. Yet, on the other hand, if the index is fairly set up it simplifies the system, avoids favoritism, and should be much easier for the Board to administer. Despite the philosophical differences over the value of the index system itself, no good reason was advanced why the index itself should not be subject to bargaining just like any other economic fact that is open to bargaining between the parties. The fact that the index was agreed upon last year does not make it perfect and if it has not proved to be totally satisfactory efforts should be made to re-adjust the index itself. Consequently, it is the first recommendation of the fact finder that the parties themselves immediately resume their bargaining and direct their attention to the logic and fairness (or the lack of logic or unfairness) in the present index point system.

In an effort to be of assistance to the parties the fact finder has attempted to do just this and has come to the following conclusions: The present index system at the higher steps (9, 10 and 11) is disproportionately low for comparable schools in and out of the District. At the same time the proposed change suggested by the Teachers is at an unrealistic level under all

of the circumstances. The fact finder, consequently, in an effort to find middle ground which will fairly and adequately compensate the Teachers and still be within the ability of the Board to pay, recommends the following:

- (1) That an initial salary for the new teachers with a B.A. be established at \$6,400. It is the finding of the fact finder that this will keep the school district competitive with the other schools in the area.
- (2) That the index for the B.A. be in 11 steps rather than 12 with a maximum at the top of 1.54. (See attached schedule).
- (3) That the index for the M.A. be in 12 steps with a maximum at the top of 1.60. (See attached schedule).
- (4) The fact finder makes no findings or recommendations concerning rules and regulations pertaining to professional growth, date of starting certain factors and other related items since these items were not in dispute.

Date: August 30, 1968.

Douglas W. Hillman,
Fact Finder.

						MA in Subject Field				MA not in Subject Field			
STEP	60-89	90-120	Pts.	BA	BA+20	MA	MA+10	MA+20	MA+30	MA	MA+10	MA+20	MA+30
0	5000	5200	1.00	6400		7000	7100	7250	7450	6800	6900	7150	7350
1			1.03	6592		7210							
2			1.07	6848		7490							
3			1.11	7104		7770							
4			1.15	7360		8050							
5			1.19	7616		8330							
6			1.23	7872		8610							
7			1.29	7998		9030							
8			1.35	8640		9450							
9			1.41	9024		9870							
10			1.47	9408		10290							
11			1.54	9856		10780							
12			1.60	x		11200							