Watchung Hills Regional Education Association

August 31, 2022

Dear WHRHS Community,

The teachers and staff at Watchung Hills Regional High School will be starting the 2022-2023 school year without a new contract. This means that our salaries are "frozen" at the levels of our expired contract, which makes planning and decision-making for our families and our careers difficult.

We are entering a school year where:

- When adjusted for inflation, teachers' salaries are at a 4% decrease. -NEA
- Teachers are paid significantly less than similar professionals. - EdWeek.org
- New Jersey is experiencing a teacher shortage. - TheCenterSquare.com
- New Jersey has lowered the standards to become a teacher in order to keep up with the teacher shortage. - Casbo.org
- Lack of support for educators is one reason education students are leaving their programs. -NJ.com
- Teachers are struggling with burnout from the last three years. -NEA

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Watchung Hills Regional High School was one of the few districts in New Jersey that did not shut down for a significant amount of time, and that was largely due to the hard work, dedication, and perseverance of our faculty and staff. These last three years have allowed for a lot of introspection about what it means to be a great teacher, how to create a better work-life balance, and the importance of social-emotional wellness for not just the students, but ourselves as well.

The highly qualified teachers and staff of Watchung Hills Regional High School are committed to delivering high-quality instruction to all of our students. Many of our faculty and staff are intrinsically motivated to work beyond their contractual obligations, which often means working outside of our 7:25am- 2:40pm hours, volunteering for unpaid positions, or even working with students through our lunch and prep periods. However, until a new contract is agreed upon, the WHREA has decided to focus solely on our contractual obligations under the old contract.

We love the students of this district and feel it necessary to be transparent with the members of the community so they know where the negotiations between the Board of Education and the Association stand.

We thank you for your understanding and continued support,

WHREA