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## Moraga's teachers rally for fair wages

By Vera Kochan



Moraga Teachers Association members hold a Feb. 21 rally at the Rheem Boulevard/Moraga Road intersection. Photo Vera Kochan

so many locations doing this on the same day so that we can stand in solidarity with each other and support each other in our effort to fight for the best for our students," added Marin. "We are a coalition, and we want all students in the East Bay to have the best education and teachers. The rally is to raise awareness. We're not on strike yet."

For over an hour, drivers passing through the intersection honked their horns in support of the over 100 educators who were holding signs and passing out statistic-laden flyers. At one point, approximately 20 Campolindo High School athletes, out for a training run to the other side of town, had to pass through the assemblage and began to recognize teachers they'd had while in the MSD system. As both teachers and former students glimpsed each other, the volley of joyful greetings between them spoke volumes.

"After four sessions of negotiations this fall and progress on many areas of mutual agreement in contract language, the District and MTA were not able to reach an agreement on compensation," MSD Superintendent Julie Parks stated in a Feb. 12 email message to parents. "In December MTA declared an impasse. An impasse is the next step in the negotiation process and includes working with a state-appointed mediator to help the parties navigate the negotiations process."

The email continued, "Prior to declaring an impasse, MTA's last salary proposal to the District was an 11% increase in salary for the current school year and ongoing. The District's last salary proposal was a 4% increase in salary for the current school year and ongoing, plus an additional 3% bonus in one-time money." A confidential mediation was held on Feb. 16 that was described as "productive," and a second session is on track for March.

"The state has provided an 8.22% COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustment) this year for every district," stated California Teachers Association and East Bay Coalition for Student Success labor representative Gray Harris. "That's what we are asking be passed along to the employees so that we can retain and attract the best educators for our students."

Harris also added, "The Moraga and Orinda teachers are a few months from being legal to go on strike, but the Dublin and Pleasanton teachers (also coalition partners) are only a few days and weeks from a potential strike."

"The Moraga School District values our qualified and dedicated teachers," wrote Parks, in a Feb. 21 email response to this reporter's request for comments. "The District is committed to continuing to work with the Moraga Teachers Association through the negotiations process to reach an agreement that ensures a continuation of excellent educational programming for our students while maintaining competitive salary and benefits and highly desirable working conditions for our employees."

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