



**HAMILTON HEIGHTS**  
SCHOOL CORPORATION

## **Heights to Close School to take Red for Ed Message to Statehouse**

Hamilton Heights School Corporation is planning to have a strong contingent of educators, administrators, and board members at the upcoming "Red for Ed" Action Day at the Indiana Statehouse on Tuesday, November 19. They will join colleagues from districts around the state to advocate for increased teacher pay and funding for our public schools at the State House for Legislative Organization Day.

Districts from around the state are looking at various options from canceling classes for the day to scheduling an e-learning day to allow for educators, administrators, and school board members to attend en masse. To help make its voice heard, Hamilton Heights School Corporation in cooperation with the Administration and the Hamilton Heights Classroom Teachers Association, has made the difficult decision to cancel classes on Tuesday, November 19. This will allow for our educators to take a personal day to join colleagues from around Indiana to advocate for increased teacher pay and funding for our public schools at the Statehouse for Legislative Organization Day. This day will be made up with the pre-set flex day on Friday, February 14, 2020.

"Public education is under attack and our teachers need support," said Superintendent Dr. Derek Arrowood, Hamilton Heights School Corporation. "As a former 5th grade teacher and spouse of a Physical Education teacher, I think it is more important than ever to show support of our teachers. I am proud to have been a public-school educator for almost 30 years and I want our teachers to know how much I value what they do every day."

"My own children attended a public school from kindergarten through 12th grade as did my wife and I and that experience has shaped all of us because we were taught by outstanding educators that made a positive difference in our lives," he continued. "As a superintendent I do believe our local legislators appreciate and support our public education teachers. I think the Red for Ed Rally is a great way for our teachers to demonstrate that they do have a voice that matters."

"During our recent contract negotiations, I learned how closely Hamilton Heights administrators work with the Classroom Teachers Association," said Julie Davis, a retired educator and current member of the Hamilton Heights Board of Education. "Everyone involved is focused on attracting and retaining the best teachers and staff, with a common goal of working to benefit students. We also need to present a united front to Indiana legislators, urging that their actions fully support public education!"

"We are passionate about improving teacher compensation, funding of public schools, and advancing the teaching profession not just in northern Hamilton County but throughout the state," said Jennifer Luce, an Educator and HHCTA President. "We hope our lawmakers see and hear our strong, collective voice because we have reached a critical crossroad in public education. We are supported by our board, administrators, and community. We need that same type of support from our legislators."

Indiana is not alone. This is an issue impacting the field of public education around the county with more teachers having to strike to really be heard. The goal is not to let it come to that in Indiana.

Indiana has fallen into the bottom third in the nation in total teacher compensation. Many of our young teachers and even our tenured ones have taken on second jobs just to pay their bills. Compensation has long been imbalanced for this profession which requires advanced degrees, continuing education, long hours, and most importantly, the invaluable influence teachers have on young minds.

Education reforms over the years have made it more difficult to be a teacher as well as made it more difficult to attract and retain good teachers across the state. There have been some changes at the state level that have negatively impacted the teaching profession, including reducing collective bargaining rights, teacher pay scales, incentives for advanced degrees, and seniority rights to name a few.

“We are at a critical point in K-12 public education,” Luce pointed out. “To continue to give our students the best chance to learn and succeed, regardless of where they live, we need to ensure we can hire and retain the best educators and offer the best opportunities in curriculum and the classroom. Simply put, compensation and funding are essential components to these goals.”

“It is our hope to get the word out, enlist voices from throughout our community and work to generate more support for public schools,” continued Luce. “We need our fellow educators, parents, and public-school advocates to help our lawmakers understand that we are in desperate need for increased teacher pay and funding for our public schools. Public education is a gift and we need legislators to get on board to make public education a priority through fair compensation and funding.”

The rally is being hosted and organized by the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA), the state’s largest teachers’ union with over 40,000 members.

While the ISTA continues to work with lawmakers on this important issue, we encourage members of our district to help by calling, writing, or emailing their legislator,” noted Luce. For the latest developments on this topic and for more information go to: <http://advocacy.ista-in.org/Engagements>.

*According to data provided by the ISTA:*

- 72% of Hoosiers say public school teachers in Indiana are paid too little.
- 7 in 10 say public schools need more funding.
- Investment in attracting and retaining quality teachers is a top priority for Hoosiers.
- More than 8 in 10 want to see funding go to classroom instruction rather than administration.
- On average, Hoosier educators are paid less than educators in the surrounding states.
- Hoosier educators spend a lower proportion of funds in the classroom than other states. The impact is out-of-date textbooks, the elimination of programs like art and music, increased class sizes and even laying off teachers.
- Any funding increase below 3% is simply not enough for our students or educators.