

# Strike Q & A

## **What is a teachers strike?**

- ✓ A strike is a long-accepted concerted withholding of our services as a means to bring pressure for a favorable settlement of our collective bargaining agreement with the district.
- ✓ Statewide, more than 60 local strikes have occurred since the first one in Aberdeen in 1972. The shortest was about half a day, and the longest was 50 days in Marysville in 2003.

## **Will we make up the days we miss?**

- ✓ State law requires districts to complete the full 180-student day school year unless a waiver is sought. Almost all school districts have completed the full school year, so you can expect to make up days when you are out during a strike and to earn your full year's salary.

## **What about a strike fund?**

- ✓ Because we can make up lost time and recover our full pay, FEA and other associations across the state do not have strike funds. WEA has a program of interest free loans that we can access if we miss a payday, but that would not be needed until after our first payday, Sept. 30, if we do strike.

## **What will happen to our benefits?**

- ✓ Coverage for all plans continues if the premiums are paid; Ferndale's are paid through Sept. 30. During some strikes, employees have paid their own insurance premiums to ensure continued coverage. Rates are at the group rate and most insurance companies extend a 30-day grace period for paying the group rate premium. The FEA Bargaining team will incorporate full insurance coverage into the conditions of returning to work after the strike.

## **Can we be fired?**

- ✓ In theory, this is possible. But it is not possible for the district to suggest that firing all 300 Ferndale EA members could possibly help education here.
- ✓ No teacher in Washington has ever been fired for going on strike, and the Association would vigorously challenge any attempt by the district to fire employees. The district also would have to treat all employees equitably so highly visible participants are protected in all strike activities.

## **If we're on strike can I go back into my classroom?**

- ✓ No. You should arrange to get any personal items you may need from your classroom before the strike begins.

## **What if we're on strike and I'm not happy about it?**

- ✓ The key to success in a strike is unity. But strikes also ARE hard emotionally because of the inherent conflict and uncertainty. You can help shorten the strike by boosting morale of a colleague who's struggling — and by letting others help you when you need it, so that our overall unity prevails.

**Can I go work in another district? Can I get out of my contract?**

- ✓ We do not recommend you violate the intent of your contract by working in another district while you're on strike here, especially since you will make up the pay. Some teachers do take unrelated jobs, such as the night shift as a grocery checker, for example, if they begin to struggle financially.

**What about sport practices? Games?**

- ✓ Practices and games will continue on schedule. FEA may ask our members to participate in organized activities around these events.

**What's it like to be on strike?**

- ✓ For many of us it will be scary, but the energy of all members being together creates powerful unity and shared strength. We won't know how long it will last, nor what the exact outcome will be. Even in the most successful strikes, some compromise occurs on the issues. Each day we will show up at our assigned sites and picket for all or part of the day. You will never be asked to picket alone. There will be a variety of activities and picket location assignments, but you will always be with colleagues from your work site. Each day a strike newsletter will be distributed on the picket line. And each day rumors will float around. Strikes are high profile. Anxiety will be the norm, but also a renewed sense of collective power and pride in our cause. Our visible strength will connect and unify our association.

**How do strikes end?**

- ✓ Strikes end when we vote to go back to work. Ordinarily, they end when our bargaining team brings us a tentative agreement they believe is acceptable to the membership. As a group, we vote on it and, if accepted, the strike ends and we go back to work.
- ✓ Part of the settlement will be a revised calendar that allows a full school year for Ferndale students. It will likely result in a later ending date for school, but that is small price to pay for a strong contract.

**What do we do all day if we go on strike? Do I have to picket 8 hours a day?**

- ✓ Your strength comes from your unity and your visibility in the community. Your picket captains will work with you on picket assignments and logistics. Part of your job will be to be on the picket line, to get updates on our efforts and to remain a visible presence for the public of our inability to get a fair contract from the district.