

No raises for teachers means school system suffers

Posted by [TBN Editor](#) On 06/24/2015

Editor's note: The following missive was posted on Facebook June 19 following the conclusion of the 2014 - 2015 school year in Calvert County. The Bay Net is running this as a Letter to the Editor).

Today was a sad day at Northern High School. It was the last day for staff, and we watched the annual exodus of teachers. Under heavy demands of federal mandates that are costing the school system millions and a County Commission that year after year fails to fund the schools at near their needs, four and a half more teachers are being cut from NHS for next year.

Classes will be even more overcrowded. Programs are being eliminated. One good young teacher was fired. Others are leaving to go to other states and counties. One is quitting teaching. Some are retiring. By my count, half the staff has left in five years. Again, teachers will not be paid what their contract says they should. In my 28th year, I will be paid on step 21 - seven years behind where I should be. I spent the day saying goodbye to people. I did not feel like going to the staff end of year party.

I cannot believe I am watching one of the best school systems in the nation being dismantled year after year. I was proud to be hired here. For years, Maryland had the best schools in the nation, Calvert County had the best schools in the state, and NHS was the best school in the county. None of that is true anymore. Not even close.

Everyone was so proud of the Calvert County School system. Everyone who moved here came because of the great schools. The value of every home in the county was based on the reputation of the schools. I truly cannot believe the citizens of Calvert County are allowing this to happen. Teachers are writing letters and showing up at County Commission meetings, but no one else - no parents, business people, real estate agents - no one else seems to care. The county that arguably built the finest school system in the nation is sitting by and watching as it is decimated because the commissioners are afraid to propose the small property tax increase that is needed to save the schools.

But I want to make sure everyone knows what is happening. Teachers are again not being paid according to their contracts (while Charles and St. Mary's counties are working to restore their teachers to their proper pay steps). Teacher morale is horrible, and I promise that is effecting what they do, even if it is unintentional.

Teachers who can are fleeing the county in droves. No one wants to work here now. Consequently, the best young teachers are no longer fighting to get jobs here.

Classes will be more overcrowded which will definitely lower the quality of education. Good programs and after school activities are being cut. Budgets are being cut across the board for things like textbooks, lab supplies, maintenance, etc.

Federally mandated and unfunded programs - No Child Left Behind, Race To the Top, Common Core, PARRC - are sapping the lowered resources the county does have and not an additional penny has ever been budgeted to pay for them. Since 2008, the county has paid for them out of what teachers should be paid. Now, we've reached the point where even that is not enough to cover the bill.

Finally, anyone who tells people about the fine schools in Calvert County should stop. It's simply not true anymore. None of the teachers at NHS are so proud to work in the Calvert County School system after seven years of underfunding.

And, if you actually do care, share this. Maybe others in the county will finally recognize what's going on and maybe the citizens of Calvert County will try to do something to stop their schools from getting even worse. Or not. Maybe no one really does care anymore.

Gary Clites, Northern High School teacher