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Teachers protest over lack of contract

IPS teachers protest in and out of school

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INDIANAPOLIS (WISH) - As IPS teachers continue to fight for a new contract, they also continue to make their unhappiness heard. Teachers and supporters came out in force to protest again at Tuesday night's school board meeting.

From the schoolroom to the sidewalk, protestors expressed their frustration at the lack of a new contract. They asserted their frustrations with both signs and words.

"A key issue is how the superintendent and the board deals with teachers. Money is the subject under discussion, but how we are treated...in that discussion, also figures," said IPS teacher Dr. Bonnie Fisher.

The teachers have been without a contract for two years and they are not happy with the one percent pay increase IPS has offered. So they are protesting, not only at meetings, but also at work.

"Fridays we wear black to show we are in mourning. We don't have a contract and we are only working -- what we call working -- to the contract. It means we only work our contract hours and we only do what is stated for us to do in the contract," said IPS teacher Rhondalyn Cornett.

It means teachers aren't contributing anything after school and aren't taking work home. With both sides at a stalemate, a state mediator is trying to work out a deal.

24-Hour News 8 tried to talk to Superintendent White but he declined because of the ongoing mediation talks. However, a district spokesperson insisted that at least two-thirds of teachers are getting raises and the median teacher income of \$55,000 a year is very generous, especially with the tough economy.

"We know economic times are tough. But when we see the top getting raises from \$6,000 to \$18,000 and there's nothing at the bottom for teachers, that's not fair," said Cornett.

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The teachers may be fighting an uphill battle for more pay. The district is aggressively trying to cut costs, considering almost 500 layoffs at the end of the year and \$25 million in budget cuts.

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