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IPS teachers to impliment work slowdown

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INDIANAPOLIS (WISH) - Many Indianapolis Public School teachers are staging a work slowdown for two weeks. It means they won't be staying after school for student activities, or to grade papers.

The IPS teachers have been without a contract for nearly two years, and they want one. The teacher's union said the drastic action is to get the attention of the IPS administration and the support of parents.

"Most teachers put in much more time than their contract hours. They work until five o'clock. They take work home. They're doing work at home," said Indianapolis Education Association President Al Wolting.

The School 31 parents support their teachers. The union is seeking a retroactive three-percent pay raise for last year and a five-percent raise this year. IPS said it can only afford a one-percent raise because it has a \$25 million deficit.

"I think they deserve a little bit more. Some people say, 'Oh well, one percent should be fine.' Some of these teachers go out of their way to do things on their own that the school doesn't want to back them on," said parent Julie Fedducia.

IPS is preparing to slash 400 teaching positions at the end of the year. Spokesperson Mary Louise Bewley said a raise larger than one percent could mean more teachers could lose their jobs. The district has been losing 1,000 students a year for several years.

"When we lose those students, that means we lose money and the ability to provide the kind of raises we would like to provide," said IPS spokesperson Mary Louise Bewley.

Wolting said it's not just about money. He said teachers want better working conditions.

"Teachers are commiteed-out. They've met so many times on different committees and they keep piling on more and more work," said Wolting.

A third party mediator has been assigned to help both sides reach an agreement.

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