

Fort Gibson School Community

Today our teachers and support staff voted to close school starting April 3rd for approximately two weeks, or longer if needed. They made this decision because they felt they were left with no other option.

Over the last decade, our school children have experienced the largest cuts to education funding in the nation! They have seen class sizes grow, programs cut, tattered textbooks, teachers leave for other jobs-other states and a deep reduction in the number of individuals entering the profession to teach them. A **GENERATION** of students has walked through our halls enduring these realities.

Over the last few months, our legislature has had the opportunity to take action to show they value public education and will provide adequate funding. They could not compromise, consequently failing our school children. Since 2008, our state budget has been reduced over \$1 billion dollars because our state leaders felt that meager income tax cuts (which most people never noticed) and giving up hundreds of millions of dollars in oil production tax reductions is more important than funding our schools. The current request for funding to correct these poor decisions is almost identical to the amount of money given away over the past eight years.

Our school and our community have made more than one trip to the State Capitol to ask our lawmakers to make public education a priority. For the last two years, we have been told that teacher pay will be increased so we can both retain quality teachers and also attract young talent into the teaching field. Instead of providing funding to avert a growing teacher shortage crisis, our school has faced cuts as recent as \$40,000 last month!

Teachers are constantly standing in the gap when children are in need, and because our state legislators refuse to make public education a priority, they are willing to go stand for our children again. **It is absolutely imperative for our communities to know that no teacher, board member, administrator or support staff employee wants to see teachers walk out of schools in April.** In fact, in three previous teacher rallies, our teachers have chosen to stay in the classroom and our community has gone to rally for them. The Fort Gibson board of education and administration unanimously agree that we support our teachers and will stand with them as they take bold action to improve funding for schools and the professionals within our school system.

The legislature has a chance to get this right, and we hope they will get to work and carry the torch to ensure revenue is supplied to the funding formula and show that they truly value public education. This is not about raises for teachers. **I have not had a single teacher come to me and ask for a raise.** This is about providing enough funds for schools to pay a competitive salary that will retain and attract high quality teachers, and provide funds for textbooks and programs.

No educator wants this, but teachers feel as if this is a last resort after a decade of neglect. We want to declare our public support for our teachers and hope real substantive solutions are brought forward as a result of our teachers leading the charge to better the lives of our kids.

Our board of education and our administration stand in support of our teachers as they fight for the future of education in our state. I hope you will too.

Sincerely,
Derald Glover