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## Letter: Teachers ask only for what they deserve

December 13, 2019

The teachers of Del Norte have been struggling to get a fair contract for nine months. As of right now, the school board and the teachers are still in gridlock over negotiations.

As John Murphy stated in his previous letter to the editor, "Del Norte teacher pay is 9.2% less than the state average" in the state of California. The school district has a reserve that is "five times the required level" and they're also experiencing increased enrollment, which means bigger class sizes and more money for the school district.

You would think that with all the money my school district has, they could give the struggling teachers of their county fair pay, but sadly, no. And if a contract isn't reached soon, the teachers will be forced to strike for the pay they deserve.

In the original contract proposal, the teachers asked for a 6% salary increase and a \$1,000 increase to health premiums. The district came back with 1% only, either to health insurance or salary. That was last spring, and no matter how much the teachers try to negotiate, the school board still will not offer more than a guaranteed 1%, with a possible additional 1% for one year based on student enrollment numbers.

As I said in a letter that I wrote to my previous school board in September, "Teachers in this county deserve more than 1 percent. All the teachers who taught me and impacted me deserve more than 1 percent. My mom deserves more than 1 percent."

Because of the low pay, my hometown district has a severe attract-and-retain problem for teachers. During the past three years, there has been a 47% turnover rate among teachers, and many open positions have had only one or two applicants.

During my senior year of high school, I sat on the school board as the student representative, representing the students' voices and their point of view. I sat through countless meetings where the public would make comments to the school board about the unfair treatment of teachers across the district, and the

school board would sit there in silence, not making the changes necessary to improve the conditions.

I saw the budget for the school district first-hand. I sat through numerous presentations describing the spending of the budget on fire alarms, paint, classified staff members, etc., but never a single word about the spending on teachers.

I know that the district has the money, they just don't see the teachers as deserving enough, which is totally demeaning to the teachers.

Look back on your childhood and your upbringing. Where did you spend a majority of your time? Who impacted the things you did throughout the day? Where did you learn crucial skills such as writing and math?

Who helped you learn and grow?

Teachers.

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