Fact or Fiction – Things you hear in the community.

Q. I heard that the employees at SWL received a pay increase of 6½% over the summer. Is that fact or fiction?

A. The SWLS settled a three year agreement with the Southwest Licking Education Association (SLEA) this summer that will give the teachers a 2.0 % increase in base pay for 2014-15, a 2½ % increase in 2015-16 and another 2½ % increase in 2016-2017. Prior to this agreement, the teachers took a pay freeze in 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 and a step freeze in 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. In addition, SLEA agreed to insurance concessions, including the elimination of an entire health care plan option in 2015-16.

The administrators also went through the same pay freezes and insurance concessions as the teachers plus taking an additional step freeze in 2010-11. In turn, the administrators received the same percentage increases as the teachers.

And...

Yes, the SWLS also recently settled a three year agreement with the Teamsters Local 413 that will give the classified employees a 2½ % increase in base pay for 2014-15, a 2½ % increase in 2015-16 and another 2½ % increase in 2016-2017. Prior to this agreement, the classified employees also had a pay freeze in 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14 and a step freeze in 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14. In addition, Teamsters Local 413 also agreed to insurance concessions that took effect for 2014-15.

In should be noted that the costs of these raises were included in the five year forecast submitted to the Ohio Department of Education by the SWLS Treasurer. On line 12.010 of that forecast, it showed that if current funding is maintained (no additional taxes) that the District would have a positive balance through the 2018-2019 school year.

Q. I heard that the raises given out this summer increased the cost to the general operating fund by $2.6 million annually. Is that fact or fiction?

A. In 2011-12, the actual expenditure for salaries was $19,856,547. In 2012-13, the actual expenditure for salaries was $18,760,354. In 2013-14, the actual expenditure for salaries was $18,089,444. According to the five year forecast, the forecasted expenditure for salaries for the 2014-15 school year will be $18,933,336 (includes raises). Using the actual number from FY2012 ($19,856,547) and the estimated value for this year ($18,933,336), we will see an approximate decrease of $923,211 in salaries paid. It should be noted that this also includes the costs required for the implementation of all-day every-day kindergarten.

Q. I heard that SWLS will not be transporting high school students next year. Is that fact or fiction?

A. On January 15th, the Board of Education approved a list of reductions to be put into place should the district not pass the renewal emergency operating levy in May. A part of these reductions included changes to the transporting of students to school. Changes in transportation would include:

1. No transportation for students in grades 9-12. In Ohio Revised Code (ORC 3327.01), it says that a board may provide transportation for resident school pupils in grades nine through twelve to and from the high school to which they are assigned and/or to and from the nonpublic or community high school.

2. No transportation for students in grades 6-8 that live within two miles of the middle school. In Ohio Revised Code (ORC 3327.01), it says that a Board must transport pupils in grades kindergarten through eight that live more than two miles from the school.

3. The District will look to establish bus stops of ¼ mile apart. In Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-13, it says that pupils in grades kindergarten through eight may be required to walk up to one-half mile to a designated bus stop. Therefore, the District will be consolidating stops to meet the ¼ mile criterion approved by the Board.
Q. I heard that because of changes to the transportation department, half of the bus drivers will lose their jobs. Is that fact or fiction?

A. The Board of Education approved changes to the transportation department should the district not pass the renewal emergency operating levy in May. Changes did not include the reduction of any drivers. The District will be maintaining all elementary routes and reassigning the high school/middle stops based on ridership of students in grades 6-8. It is impossible to determine how much driver time and fuel will be saved until actual riders are assigned a route and a driver. This activity is not done until August of each year.

Q. I heard there will not be athletics/band next year. Is that fact or fiction?

A. At the January 15th Board of Education meeting, the Board listened to a presentation made by the athletic director and head coaches. In that presentation, the group included a recommendation to not offer extra-curricular activities next year, should the district not pass the renewal emergency operating levy in May. It was their position that the pay to participate fees would increase substantially without the Board of Education funding. The Board of Education accepted this recommendation.

The changes to the athletic program/facilities will also affect the middle school and biddy programs.