



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Hinds County School District Responds to Possible Strike

Raymond, Mississippi, October 21, 2009

In light of the most recent statements in the media and actions by the Teamster's Local 891 regarding their intent to strike only in the Hinds County School District, we feel it is important to set the record straight on several important points.

1. The ongoing contract dispute regarding the bus drivers who serve the children and families of Hinds County School District is between First Student and the Teamsters.
2. For the Teamsters to state or imply that their current stalemate with First Student is somehow due to any actions or inactions by the Hinds County School District is not true.
3. The Hinds County School District has never been a part of the contract negotiations between First Student and the Teamsters. Since the restraining order was signed on October 13th, neither First Student nor the Teamsters have asked the district to participate in their ongoing contract negotiations.
4. While First Student provides bus drivers for all four of the impacted school districts (West Point, Yazoo County, Madison County and Hinds County), their contract with each district is different and contains unique considerations and obligations.
5. Isolating the children of Hinds County School District appears to be posturing by the Teamsters to financially hurt First Student. First Student is in the fourth and final year of their current contract with our district. Their contract with the Hinds County School District is the only contract of the four that does NOT include a provision for employee strikes. Therefore, should the drivers strike in Hinds County School District, First Student would be in violation of their contractual obligations and subject to significant financial penalties by the Hinds County School District.
6. The Teamsters decision to target Hinds County School District in their strike threats is also confusing with their stated objective. If the Teamsters are primarily interested in securing higher wages and benefits for their potential members, why would they strike in Hinds County where First Student pays one of the highest hourly wages of the four districts involved in this dispute?

While we are clearly disappointed in the failures of First Student and the Teamsters to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, using the children of the Hinds County School District as pawns in this process is outrageous. The Teamsters stated intent to refuse to provide adequate notice of a strike will needlessly endanger children and is irresponsible.

As the Hinds County School District continues to plan for a variety of contingencies, we sincerely hope that cooler heads will prevail and that children will not be needless hurt in this process.

Stephen Handley
Superintendent