

Press Release

End of Teacher Walkout

The Ponca City Public School superintendent Shelley Arrott has written a letter to patrons, parents and community members regarding the teacher walkout. Her letter is below.

Patrons, Parents, and Community Members,

On behalf of the entire district, I want to express our appreciation to our wonderful patrons and parents for providing unwavering support, extreme generosity, and selfless patience throughout our teachers' movement to improve education in Oklahoma. Thank you for the honks, cheers, gifts, encouragement and flexibility during the teacher walkout. Our staff worked tirelessly to improve educational success for the students of Ponca City and in the state of Oklahoma.

Because of these efforts, the FY19 budget appropriates \$2.9 billion to common education, which is a \$480 million increase over the current school year common education budget. The 19 percent increase will fund the state's largest ever teacher pay raise. Teachers will receive an average \$6,100 raise, and some of the state's most experienced teachers will receive an \$8,800 raise. The increase raises teacher pay above the regional average and reduces the education investment gap that exists between Oklahoma and states in our region. Oklahoma has been at the bottom of our region and state far too long, and our children deserve better. Making education our highest priority will provide our children with multiple opportunities to achieve academic success, will encourage more people to seek an education degree, and will attract teachers from other states. Research proves that teachers are the greatest indicator of student success and we must have effective teachers in every classroom. The extreme teacher shortage in Oklahoma has been devastating to Oklahoma school children.

Students of PCPS will NOT have to make up any instructional time due to the walkout and the 2017-2018 SY Calendar will remain the same. By law, Oklahoma students are to receive a minimum of 1,080 hours of instruction. Students of Ponca City Public Schools attend more than the minimum number of hours. Our district has 8 days built into the calendar in which school can be closed without having to make up instructional time for students. School will be in session April 30, a scheduled Professional Development Day, and May 14, a built in Snow Day. With the 8 days built into the calendar and the 2 days that are changed to student instruction days, this time will cover the 10 days missed by students during the walkout.

Employees are contracted by school days. The number of contracted days are 175, 185, and 203 depending on the position of the employee. The employees will be required to make up missed contract days, and we are negotiating with teachers and developing schedules as to how the walkout days will be completed.

We are all looking forward to having our students back in the building on Monday, April 16. Teachers have missed their students. It is evident they love and care for them because they would not have gone to such extremes to fight for their future.

Without doubt, their advocacy has not ended. Educators have realized their power, learned more about civics than they have ever known, increased their knowledge of school funding and finance, and they will continue to fight for our students, our most precious resource.

For PCPS, specifically, I think this entire movement has broken down barriers and we are more of a "team" than we have ever been! I am incredibly proud of each one of my staff members, and I am incredibly proud to serve as their leader.

From everyone at PCPS, please know that we love our students, parents, community, and school. We are so grateful to live and work in Ponca City, Oklahoma.

Warm regards,

*Shelley Arrott
Superintendent, Ponca City Public Schools*

Mary Ladd
Public Information Coordinator
Ponca City Public Schools
580-352-4188
laddm@pcps.us