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# In Case You Missed It: Freeze N.J. Teacher Pay: Jobs They Save May Be Their Own

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## Freeze N.J. Teacher Pay: Jobs They Save May Be Their Own

**Star-Ledger Editorial Board**  
**March 25, 2010, 5:51AM**

All around the state, school districts are planning painful, unprecedented amputations of staff and programs. Local officials are cursing Gov. Chris Christie's proposed cuts in state aid, but they should be pointing fingers at themselves, too.

When they should have been holding the line on salaries for the past several years, many boards of education instead hugged teachers at the bargaining table and slipped tens of millions of dollars into their pockets with a wink. Now, we're paying a price.

Average pay raises for New Jersey teachers last year were nearly 5 percent.

How has the teachers union said thank you? By telling school districts to eat chalk when asked to reopen contracts and renegotiate temporary relief for taxpayers.

This week, the governor called for a one-year pay freeze for teachers, and the New Jersey School Boards Association immediately announced its support. The Star-Ledger has called for a pay freeze for teachers and all public employees to help drowning taxpayers catch their breath.

But the teachers union doesn't believe its members should share the pain.

In Roxbury, union and nonunion administrators have agreed to salary freezes. Bus drivers and food service employees, too. Everyone is pitching in. Except the teachers.

If the NJEA has its way, teachers will watch friends and colleagues get laid off, class sizes increased and extracurricular programs eliminated — rather than reopen sacrosanct contracts and accept a pay freeze. Remember, these are the same teachers who chanted, "Think of the kids!" during their protest of the governor's proposed funding cuts. Local union chapters should think of the kids (and the suffering taxpayers), defy their militant state leadership and agree to a pay freeze. It's the right thing to do.

During Monday's picketing, Keshishian wondered how Christie would be able to look kindergartners in the eye and explain why there were no crayons or construction paper for them. But the answer is easy: He could tell them Mommy and Daddy are broke and the money went for teachers' salaries and benefits.

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