



ONE STRIKE AGAINST LOW WAGES

The 2018 Teachers' Strike effectively raised teachers' wages, shifting attention towards different problems within the district such as underfunding.

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Sophomore Sarah Harris feels like 2018's teachers' strike was not as big of a deal as it should have been. "The kids were just excited to be out of school- I know I was- and we didn't really take into effect of what the teachers were trying to say." Teachers did not have the liberty of being as disengaged in the whole event.

On April 27 of 2018, ten big school districts around the state including Cheyenne Mountain, District 11, Manitou Springs, and Canon City closed due to a teacher shortage. Teachers planned a strike during school hours to bring attention to a fundamental problem- low pay.

"Teachers' salaries did not grow during the recession, and then after the recession they were slowed to make up for what had happened during the recession," claimed a Cheyenne Mountain teacher who wishes to remain anonymous

in fear of reprisal. "There are a lot of districts that are severely underfunded and teachers didn't see raises after the economy got better."

After an ambitious two weeks of protest, the state of Colorado agreed to give all teachers a two percent wage increase. But not before they also attempted to implement a new bill that would prohibit future peaceful protests in schools.

For many schools in Colorado, it was a fight. Not at Cheyenne. "This is a district that is very supportive," the anonymous teacher said. "I think that, within the budget, this community does as much as it can to support us."

English teacher Mr. Schriener agrees. "[The community has] been incredibly supportive from a financial standpoint because they realize that good schools are part of their property values. People want

to move into a neighborhood with good schools."

Despite this community's appeal, District 12 is one of the lowest funded school districts in Colorado.

"Our money goes elsewhere. And that's fine... I think our district has tried to do the best it could with what the legislature gave us," Mr. Shriener said. "And it's only now I think that the legislature's beginning to understand that it's when we invest in public schools, it's when we invest in people."

Mr. Shriener has seen change since May 12, both in the support of Cheyenne's teachers from the community as well as in financial help from the state when the two percent increase was implemented.

Spanish teacher Sra. Cammararta agrees. "We had a significant raise this year which we have not seen since I have been here. In fact, many of my years here at Cheyenne

we were on a pay freeze, with no raise at all.”

At Cheyenne, most teachers are funded in the purchase of school supplies. But at districts where funding is low, teachers feel the significance of a wage increase significantly, as many teachers often pay for supplies for their kids out of their own pockets.

“We in this district are VERY lucky... We are very well funded and have every tool available to us,” Sra. Cammararta said. “When I marched, it was not for myself or this district, it was for the thousands of other teachers who are not as fortunate as we are in D12.”

Sophomore Hailey Judi understands why teachers need higher wages. “Teachers have a lot to do because of the amount of homework we have each night.”

But the strike affects more than school or budgets, it also affects students and students’ parents. A day of no school with little prior warning means a day that Cheyenne parents have to rearrange their schedule to shuttle their kids around.

“Families with young children might find that the teacher strike had a bigger effect on their families because ultimately parents NEED to have their younger children in schools,” Cheyenne Mountain parent Jennifer Hocrath said.

The strike also caused students to miss out on instructional time, which interferes with the learning process.

Some parents and teachers believe striking is not the best forum of protest for the community to hear teachers’ voices. Going forward, the best way to bring attention to low wages is to vote. “We can’t be afraid to go out and take on issues that are going to have more than one side to them,” Mr. Schriener said. “Conflict

is an opportunity to talk, and if you’re talking, good things are going to happen.”

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The teachers’ strike was a win for many statewide. Teachers across the state received a pay raise and for a brief moment, the funding of Colorado’s education system had the attention of communities, schools, and lawmakers. The teachers’ strike of 2018 was not just about a one time fix for Colorado teachers but a reminder that lawmakers need to look for long term funding solutions to prevent these drastic circumstances from reoccurring. Fortunately, on a more local level, it seems the strike allowed the community to come together and recognize the strength of the support our district and families have for our teachers and a quality education.

In the last 15 years, teacher salaries
17 percent
dropped by

\$47,000

The average colorado teachers’ wage

\$59,000

The average nationwide teachers’ wage

States that struck in the 2018
teachers’ strike include

**Arizona, Colorado,
North Carolina,
Oklahoma, Kentucky,
West Virginia**

Teachers striked in Colorado for

15 Days

6.6 Billion

dollars Colorado is underfunded in
education

63,000

Colorado teachers in K-12 went on
strike in 2018

377,000

Teachers in K-12 went on strike in
2018 nationwide