



TEACHERS CONTRACT MUST DO MORE TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Parents and students share the primary responsibility for ensuring that each child successfully completes high school. But there is no dispute that schools play a critical role in a child’s development. For this reason every adult in a school building has a significant role to play in fostering the growth of healthy, well educated children.

The upcoming School District of Philadelphia negotiations with the teachers and principals unions present a critical opportunity to adopt reforms that will improve the capacity of the district’s teachers and principals to make a more significant contribution to student success and achievement.

The reforms fall into two major categories. First are those that require contract changes. Second are reforms that the district can implement immediately and do not require changes to existing contracts.

Reforms to the Teachers and Principals Union Contracts

The district should not have to ask its employees to reduce their pay to balance the district budget. We believe that more funds must be made available to the district to enable it to attract and retain high achieving staff. However, a contract that reaches agreement on pay and benefits that does not address the conditions necessary to support instructional excellence should be viewed as an unacceptable outcome. The contract must include core reforms that support and expect instructional excellence from the professionals who teach our children. We recommend that the contract be revised to meet this goal by:

- Maintaining existing contract language that limits the upper bounds of class size while adding language permitting management to adjust class sizes to promote blended learning models that employ technology or other tools to increase student access to high quality courses and instruction.
- Extending the site selection process to all teaching positions in all schools, thus permitting all teachers to be hired and transferred in accordance with site selection. This will ensure that in all cases the teacher is a good fit on the school’s instructional team.
- Terminating all transfers and rehiring policies that supersede the decisions of site selection committees. Currently, the contract requires seniority as the basis for staff reductions, which could result in site-selected teachers being removed from schools.
- Adopting the practice of only increasing a teacher’s pay for additional degrees or certifications in cases where research demonstrates that the degree correlates to gains in

student achievement, while creating new pay grade options that reward teachers who accept roles as “teacher leaders” to promote professional development within schools or support other leadership roles to advance their careers.

Reforms Requiring No Contract or Legal Changes

Effective Principals - Teachers, both those who are new and those who have years of experience, do their best job when supported by a great principal. The district’s contract with the principals union has explicit expectations for evaluating principals, providing bonuses to principals in buildings where student achievement is highest, and removing principals who are not effective. Therefore the district should:

- Implement an effective principal evaluation program that identifies effective principals.
- Find the necessary resources to pay principals in ways that reward those who meet high and clearly defined standards for student performance based on multiple measures and on school safety.
- Implement professional development strategies that require principals who show promise to participate so that they can become highly effective building leaders.
- Remove ineffective principals from positions of academic leadership.

Effective Teachers – New state law requires that teachers be evaluated in a number of ways, including in part on the basis of their students’ academic growth. As the district implements more comprehensive teacher evaluations, it should:

- Ensure that all principals receive coaching and support to improve their observation and evaluation skills, so that they in turn can provide constructive development, coaching and feedback to their teachers.
- Create the expectation that all teachers be evaluated fairly and honestly, so that they clearly understand their strengths and areas in which they must improve.
- Insist that teachers who are unsuccessful in contributing to students’ academic growth based on multiple measures do not receive “satisfactory” ratings.

Teachers and Students Must be Safe - Every teacher and every student should be safe in school. We believe that principals can and should be held accountable for keeping students in school while creating and maintaining a safe school environment. The principals union contract gives the district some latitude to determine the criteria for evaluating principals and distributing merit-based bonuses. Therefore the district should:

- Establish standards for building safety and school climate that in addition to the academic achievement of students will be considered as core elements of evaluating principal effectiveness.

- In the district's most unsafe buildings require principals to adopt proven practices to reduce conflict and violence and to participate in training on effective management practices that promote a positive school climate.
- Remove principals from any building leadership role in which they have been unable to demonstrate progress in making their school safer.

The Teacher Pipeline - To recruit and retain the best teachers and principals, the district must make significant changes to how it hires, orients and supports new academic staff, as well as to its systems for professional evaluation. The district has tweaked and tinkered with these systems for at least a decade, yet the improvements are not substantial enough to ensure that Philadelphia can successfully hire and keep the best teachers or principals. For this reason, we recommend the district create a plan to rebuild its teacher pipeline from the ground up using expert organizations that have a proven track record of designing and implementing:

- Effective teacher recruitment practices that result in promising teachers of diverse backgrounds accepting jobs with the district.
- Practical and scalable models for supporting new teachers that include a year of coaching and a clear orientation to district standards, building-level instructional practices and school climate expectations.
- Professional development systems that link teacher training to the instructional needs of the district and ensure that research-proven training models are available to teachers to build their instruction, content, and classroom-management skills.
- An effective and scalable peer assistance and review model that helps new and/or struggling teachers to improve by adopting best practices for instruction.

To ensure that these reforms aimed at promoting instructional excellence are put in place, the SRC must adopt a balanced approach that is as focused on the union negotiations as it is the management reforms described above. All of these reforms must be adopted in tandem in order to create the conditions that promote great teaching. To further boost public confidence in the impact of these reforms, the SRC must adopt a transparent meaningful process for tracking progress on these reforms that provides for regular public reports on key metrics of change.