

Statement on Teacher Contract Negotiations

The following statement was read by Stephanie Seguino, Chair of Negotiations Committee at the August 8, 2017 School Board meeting.

I would like to update the public here tonight on teacher contract negotiations.

As many of you know, the factfinder advisory report was issued on July 17. This is part of the process required by the statute governing teacher negotiations. The Board issued a press release on July 27 with comments on the report that can be found on the District's negotiations webpage. To briefly summarize, the report provided a helpful analysis, and some useful recommendations. While there are some deficiencies with the report, it provides a path forward that the Board has acted on in its negotiations with the BEA.

The Board has and will continue to ask for and make itself available for as many meetings in which parties are willing to make such meaningful proposals and concessions as it takes to reach a settlement.

Before the release of the factfinder's report, the Board's negotiation team reached out to the BEA multiple times to identify dates to continue negotiations after the release of the report. After indicating it was unable to meet on several of dates we proposed, the BEA agreed to a session with the Board on July 21. The BEA indicated at that meeting that they were not prepared to discuss salary or health care, two areas where significant differences remain.

The focus of the meeting was therefore on operational items. After the Board provided the BEA with a set of ideas for consideration, the BEA team then informed us that they were ending the session and would get back to us regarding a follow-up meeting date.

The follow-up session was scheduled for August 8 but the Board was subsequently informed yesterday that the only BEA team member in attendance would be their Vermont NEA representative. As a result, we shared additional proposals with the Vermont NEA representative today but no further progress could be made on reaching an agreement.

The next full team bargaining session is scheduled for August 24 and this session will be pivotal.

In negotiations, the Board remains committed to a contract that first and foremost meets the needs of our students, and that is also fair to teachers while respecting the ability of the community to fund our school budget. And we are committed to achieving this goal before August 31.

There is a good deal of misinformation circulating about negotiations. To address that, we will be posting regularly to the district's negotiations webpage, so please check there for updates. We know that this

—————**YAW OBENG - SUPERINTENDENT**—————

period of time is one of tension and anxiety and worry about school disruption. These tensions can and have led to personal attacks and rapid spread of rumors.

It does not need to be this way. While negotiations can be tough, the Board is committed to respectful, honest engagement and public comments, focused on the issues. These are legitimately difficult issues to solve, and our best selves are needed to work out an agreement. We hope all of the community will support all parties in taking the high road in the coming weeks.

YAW OBENG - SUPERINTENDENT
