

Newark Teachers Approve Tentative Agreement

Newark, N.J.—Members of the Newark Teachers Union, in a 1,767 to 1,088 vote Wednesday night, approved a groundbreaking agreement with the Newark Public Schools that focuses on improved teaching and learning, recruiting and retaining talented teachers, and rewarding educators based on performance and experience.

“This agreement puts us on the road to making teaching a respected profession in which teachers have a say in their own destiny and are rewarded for good performance and experience,” said NTU President Joseph Del Grosso.

The Newark teachers’ current contract expired on July 1, 2010; the new contract will be in effect until June 30, 2015.

“This wasn’t an easy process but change never is. Through collective bargaining and collaboration, we have a contract that makes sure teachers get the feedback and support they need to be great teachers and compensation that encourages teachers to do well and stay in Newark classrooms,” Del Grosso said.

“The contract provides the roadmap to attract and keep talented teachers, provide support to improve teacher performance, and, most importantly, help boost student achievement. The key, now, is to implement the changes well and continue to be collaborative and focused on the task ahead of us,” he said.

Highlights of the agreement:

Salary changes:

- A new universal salary scale that provides more money earlier in teachers’ careers and recognizes experience and performance.
- Teachers can earn up to \$12,000 in annual bonuses: Up to \$5,000 for teachers rated “highly effective,” up to \$5,000 for teachers working in low-performing schools who are rated highly effective, and up to \$2,500 for teachers teaching a hard-to-staff subject and who are rated highly effective.
- An educator can earn \$20,000 for completing an approved advanced degree program.
- Teachers will receive retroactive pay totaling \$31 million.

Evaluations and Continuous Improvement:

- The new evaluation system (built upon the recently passed TEACH NJ legislation) will provide ongoing feedback and assistance as well as a due process system and recourse through a new oversight committee that includes teachers and management.
- A peer review and assistance program will be developed in which teachers will coach and mentor each other.

School Empowerment and Flexibility:

- Teachers will have more voice and autonomy in decisions at their schools about programs that best meet the needs of their students.