



# Washington Teachers' Union

## WTU – DCPS Contract Talks Update

### **WTU Top 7 Priority Summaries for DCPS**

#### **Support for Students**

To address the widening achievement gap in DCPS, our members believe that the District of Columbia Public Schools must support all students by providing them the necessary curriculum, educational tools and materials needed to succeed in school. These tools will include textbooks, usual and customary school supplies such as notebooks, pencils and pens, as well as any other materials students need to advance their educational goals at the highest possible level for each grade. In high needs schools quarterly supply cards will be provided to every teacher to purchase consumables for economically disadvantaged students.

Additionally our members believe that teachers should be provided the necessary instructional materials including technical material (i.e., I-Ready, Lexia, ST Math, etc.) with current and complete programs and up-to-date licensing to ensure equity and facilitate achievement.

DCPS will equip all members with the necessary technology (e.g., computers laptops, individual-use and high-capacity copy machines and Smartboards) upon which teachers will generate the delivery of educational services and upon which assessments will be made.

Lastly, DCPS shall provide all members with quarterly educational supply cards.

#### **Student Discipline**

Student Discipline has become an increasingly critical issue, which affects teaching and learning. Members have expressed a need for a clear understanding of how to best deal with students whose behavior adversely affects the learning environment and the teacher's ability to do his or her job (Evaluations). Although chapter 25 provides guidance on student behavior, it is seldom adhered to in local schools.

We seek to provide language that supports the students by ensuring a safe learning environment that is not adversely affected by student behavior or discipline problems. We also seek to provide teachers the supports needed to deal with disruptive behaviors so they can effectively meet the academic needs of all the students they are charged with educating.



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## **Mutual Consent**

Since its inclusion in the WTU contract, mutual consent has proven ineffective and unnecessarily expensive. It increases instructional instability, promotes loss of program training and expertise, and expands overall teacher turnover. Mutual consent ensures effective, qualified and experienced teachers are separated from DCPS to protect vague concepts like 'best fit.' Mutual consent encourages building principals to ignore teachers' unique contributions to the school district and years of successful evaluations. Most importantly, mutual consent puts students 'education at risk' by allowing under qualified building level administrators to select the most important school factor in student achievement simply on the basis of personal preference.

The WTU proposes that the mutual consent provision of the WTU contract be removed and replaced with language that places displaced, successful and qualified teachers in open/vacant positions before opening the hiring process to untested external candidates. This will help improve the overall quality of the DCPS teaching force and save financial resources.

## **Partnerships**

The PERRA study conducted on DC schools under mayoral control revealed the need for better cross-sector collaboration between DCPS and labor. Mayor Bowser reactivation of the Labor Management Partnership Council (LMPC) reflects her commitment to improved labor management collaboration in the city.

Research indicates that successful school districts have created an organizational culture that values and supports collaboration. In this "culture of collaboration," school district administrators promote trust and value the leadership that unions bring to the entire district. Both union and management leaders speak of a culture of inclusion and involvement, as well as the importance of respect for teachers as professionals and for their union. Collaborative planning, problem solving, and shared decision-making are embedded in the way the district is managed. This is what our proposals seek to accomplish.

To date a number of structures have been memorialized in our contract language, which are intended to promote collaborative decision-making and partnerships between management and labor within the district. Sadly structures like, LSRT (Local School Restructuring Team), FEP (Full and Equal Partnership), SCAC (School Chapter Advisory Committee), to name a few, are in title only, serving as little more than a rubber stamp for the whims and wants of a decidedly top-down process that touts "managerial rights." Our members feel that we need an improved culture around collaboration that does not advantage one party over another, ensuring the voices of all are not only heard but also fully considered.



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## **Grievance**

The grievance process should be fair, binding, and timely with respect to due process and the rights afforded to all individuals by the US Constitution. The process should be simplified and timelines for both teachers and DCPS should be equitable. Justice delayed is justice denied.

## **Evaluation/IMPACT**

“The true test of a teacher evaluation process is one that teachers like.”

Our current evaluation system (IMPACT) is universally detested by teachers (and other school based staff) and is invariably identified by our members as their number one issue. It is a major source of stress, drives teacher churn, and inhibits creativity in the classroom. It fosters an unhealthy atmosphere of fear, distrust, and competitiveness in the local school.

It is inherently unfair that various groups of teachers are judged by unequal standards and different measures of performance. The IMPACT process does not take into account the vast differences in working conditions and characteristics of students across the district.

IMPACT fails to accurately identify the best or worst teachers. It suffers from problems of validity and reliability and is subject to abuse and manipulation. The evaluation tool frequently rates a teacher high one year, low the next. It is highly subjective and used as a punitive measure to get rid of effective teachers.

IMPACT is expensive to implement, and necessitates increased recruiting and on-boarding expenses.

There is no evidence that IMPACT has improved teaching and learning. The only application of the present evaluation system is to identify and separate low performing teachers rather than to develop teacher capacity. A low performing teacher may be identified early in the year, but the students will be left to suffer the consequences for the remainder of the year, because no effective, systematic program exists to help teachers improve their practice.

Our solution is first, to reorient the evaluation process for the purpose of forming and developing a high performing instructional team in each local school. Secondly, the responsibility of providing and maintaining teaching excellence, is recognized as a collective responsibility, including administration, rather than the sole responsibility of the isolated teacher. There are many time-tested, nationally recognized models of teacher evaluation for us to draw on, that go far beyond sorting the “bad” from the “good” teacher, and effectively support teacher growth within a realistic time frame.



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## **Compensation**

Provide annual salary increases retroactively and for future years covered in the CBA that are in line with DCPS central office salary increases and non-union DC government workers during the same period.

- Address very real concerns teachers have about their salary once their current CBA expires, given the issue of working under expired contracts for the last 10 years
- School-wide performance incentive system that is a full and equal partnership between DCPS and the WTU that fosters a collaborative approach at the local school to improve student achievement, and rewards and retains teachers whose students show strong academic progress.
- Career ladder that provides advancement for its most accomplished teachers who wish to remain in the classroom
- When teachers are asked and/or required to work beyond their tour of duty (i.e. overtime) they should not be paid less (at times substantially less) than their regular pay rate. Currently, most teachers are paid less than their regular hourly rate for working overtime. In situations where overtime is required and regularly scheduled, leave and other benefits should be adjusted to reflect this increased work hour demand.
- Update tuition reimbursement to reflect credit hour costs in the Washington DC area.