

# Questions and Answers on the District Contract Campaign

## **HOW HAS OUR SITUATION CHANGED AS WE GO INTO THESE CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS?**

Through our unity, we've been able to fight off cuts in the past and protect our schools from some of the most aggressive schemes cooked up by City Hall and their clouted billionaire friends. Ten years ago, the austerity/privatization education agenda had public support. Today, the people of Chicago have embraced our analysis. Parents and the public at large overwhelmingly support us on the need to invest in our schools, reduce class size and school closures, and reduce over-testing. Thanks to advocacy by our members and allies, CPS finances are more stable and we don't face the same level of financial crisis as in our last round of contract negotiations. We have a chance to move from *merely defending* what we can into *pushing our agenda forward* to make our schools better. We need to focus on our priority list of demands that can transform our schools and convince people that we can win them.

## **HOW CAN CTU WIN WHAT CHICAGO'S EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS DESERVE?**

We have to be **ready to strike in September**. We have come a long way, but there are still powerful forces lined up against us, our schools and our communities. There will be huge pressures to cut budgets, weaken our schools and attack our union. If we want to win, we *may not* have to strike, but we *must be ready* in the fall.

## **WHAT ARE OUR KEY DEMANDS FOR THE NEXT CONTRACT?**

### **PAY AND BENEFITS (INCLUDING HEALTH CARE)**

Educators in our district have been frozen, furloughed, fee-hiked and forced to work with staff shortages in every area. Today, CPS has stronger economic support, due in part to the work that CTU members and staff have done in advocating for fair funding. CPS needs to stop short-changing the people who make our schools work. CTU will not accept excuses for continued neglect of teacher, clinician and PSRP pay and benefits.

### **STAFF OUR SCHOOLS**

Counselors, nurses, librarians, social workers, teacher assistants, student and family paraprofessional support—you name it, CPS has been ripping off our students by not hiring or retaining the licensed, certified and unionized staff they need. We will not tolerate the continued elimination of essential positions like school librarians, certified school nurses or special education teachers. We will fight for staffing commitments and good working conditions in all the areas that impact children's learning.

### **SMALLER CLASS SIZES**

Our students need individual attention from their teachers. We cannot provide that level of attention when we have over 40 students in a kindergarten or any other class. Since 1995, state law has given the district the upper hand in class size negotiations. Now, with solid, enforceable class size language emerging in our newly won charter school contracts, we are stronger than ever in fighting for this key demand.

## **JUSTICE FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES**

Student learning doesn't just depend on what happens inside the classroom. CTU will fight for social justice for our students and their families with demands in the following areas.

### **Affordable housing**

Upscale development plans keep pushing rents sky high. Lack of affordable housing is leading to pushout from the city. That has led to declining student enrollment—especially among Black families.

### **Sanctuary Schools**

In Chicago and throughout the country, students have been criminalized more and more each year. From the threat of ICE raids on students and families to the disproportionate calls to police for Black students, to a gang database that unfairly labels our students without due process or recourse, all our students need sanctuary. We'll fight for our schools to protect our communities and to be places where kids can be kids—safely and without biased stigmatization.

### **Sustainable Community Schools**

In the 2015 contract, we bargained for and won a Sustainable Community Schools pilot program. The program paired twenty schools with community partners to provide the kind of wrap-around supports that students in high-risk communities need for success. We will fight to broaden this program to at least 75 schools, so that our students have their social and health needs met and can focus on learning.

### **Restorative Justice**

Although CPS claims to support restorative practices to resolve student issues, the truth is that this has become an excuse to ignore problems kids face and sometimes cause. In order to truly practice restorative justice, schools need staff to coordinate that work and provide the time and energy for more than just band-aid “solutions” to their problems.

## **WHAT DO MEMBERS NEED TO DO TO BUILD OUR POWER?**

*All of our work* from now to September should help us lead a **strong contract campaign**. Along with our ongoing efforts to enforce our existing contract, our school level fights, and our work to elect candidates who reflect the needs of our schools and communities, we need to highlight our ideas for how to win the schools Chicago's students deserve. We need strong union structures in our buildings (PPC, PPLC, Contract Action Team) which can reach out to parents, students and community about what we want to win. By **winning fights to enforce the contract** we can make these needs visible and gain school-level improvements now. This will help get the public on our side while building our own morale, confidence, and strength.

## **HOW WILL THIS BARGAINING PROCESS GO?**

The CTU's members weighed in on our demands, our House of Delegates ratified the specific language to bring to the bargaining table (available to all members in our MemberLink Portal), and formal negotiations have begun. Although the negotiation calendar can't be predicted down to the day, this is the general timeline.

<b>January 15, 2019</b>	CTU presented our contract demand language to the Board to make our position clear. Members can read our exact proposed language by logging into our <a href="#">MemberLink Portal</a> .
<b>February–May 2019</b>	Our members form <i>Contract Action Teams</i> (CATs) and engage in activities to rally support for our demands among members, parents, and students.
<b>May 2019</b>	With no agreement yet reached, CTU pushed successfully for the <i>fact-finding segment</i> of bargaining to begin.
<b>September 2019</b>	CTU members will be <i>ready to take action</i> if there is no agreement.

**WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT FROM THE NEW MAYOR?**

We sincerely hope that Lori Lightfoot will be committed to improving our public schools and will see implementation of CTU’s contract demands as a step in that direction. We are also prepared to do what it takes to win improvements for our schools. That includes the possibility of a strike this fall.

**WILL THERE BE A STRIKE THIS FALL?**

Across the country, teachers and other educators have gone on strike to stand up to cuts, privatization and inadequate pay. The #RedForEd movement was both inspired by CTU members who struck in 2012 and has inspired us to fight even harder for students and educators in our district. If CPS does not offer us a just contract, a strike is a strong possibility.

**HOW REALISTIC IS IT THAT WE’LL WIN THESE EXPENSIVE DEMANDS?**

No doubt, the schools our students deserve and the compensation our members deserve add up to a significant increase in district spending. The price tag on our demands may be in excess of \$1 billion. That is truly a large sum, but consider that this city continually comes up with funding for every corporate giveaway imaginable. Remember that Rahm offered more than **\$2 billion** to Amazon. Now he and the city council have moved ahead on plans to subsidize Lincoln Yards with \$1.3 billion in tax dollars. Given all that largesse, *why shouldn’t our students—our future—get a similar investment?*