

Jeff Edmundson  
Strive, LLC □  
One West Fourth Street, Suite 200 □  
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Dear Jeff:

As a STRIVE Executive Committee member, I am happy to see the organization vigorously advocate on behalf of all our students. The editorial letter that appeared in the July 17<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Enquirer* was right on target when it stated: "Providing a strong educational foundation for every child is perhaps the great moral, social and economical imperative of our time."

I agree that we have an opportunity through the collective bargaining process to develop and institute programs that will enable our schools and our community to continue to build a better future. However, I am concerned that some of the points in the letter were made without a complete understanding of what is happening at the negotiating table. I hope to shed light on this developing situation here, but would also like the opportunity to have a broader discussion with interested STRIVE member organizations.

The *2010 Striving Together: Report Card* shows all of us what is possible when we work together to improve education for all students. As partners in this work, we have valuable contributions to make as we develop a first-class school system in Cincinnati. The issues of school governance; teacher quality; development and evaluation; hiring and placement strategies; collaboration; measuring success; and fiscal responsibility rightly command our serious attention.

The Cincinnati Federation of Teachers (CFT) entered this year's contract negotiations with a fundamental question: What can we do as professional educators to build on the progress we have made and to continue to improve teaching and learning in CPS so that every child receives a first-class education? We have a history of instituting visionary programs within our labor agreements and I am confident that the transformational changes we are seeking in this contract will further that progressive trend.

We are seeing reflections of the reforms and programs we have negotiated previously being heralded in new agreements around the country as "groundbreaking." Just last week, *Business Week* magazine made reference to the "nationally acclaimed [teacher evaluation] program in Cincinnati." But we are not resting on our laurels, far from it.

The CFT is committed to keeping our schools in the vanguard and finding new solutions to the challenges our students and teachers face each day in the classroom.

We spent more than six months at the bargaining table working collaboratively with CPS on a series of substantive changes. Together, we consulted outside experts, researched

best practices from other successful districts and worked toward consensus with a highly regarded consultant and facilitator that CPS hand picked to guide our discussions.

We were making significant progress until the rug was pulled out from under all of us. CPS dismissed their facilitator and abandoned all the work that had been done to date. They returned with an entirely new set of proposals that we see as overtly hostile to teachers and which tear down the collaborative structures we have all built and which have led to steady gains in student achievement. This radical change of direction has made the path forward much harder to navigate, but we remain hopeful that progress can be made.

Central to STRIVE's mission is the nurturing of collaborative relationships among all the stakeholders in the community. The CFT shares this vision and we consider ourselves to be full partners in the pursuit of educational excellence for all. We are grateful that you have begun to engage so many civic leaders in this discussion, but believe those leaders deserve to hear from us exactly where CFT stands on the reform agenda that your letter advocates.

I am excited that you have responded to my request and have arranged a meeting with the STRIVE Executive Committee and the signatories of editorial letter on **August 3<sup>rd</sup> at 12pm** at KnowledgeWorks. We are anxious to discuss these broader issues and explore how to build a consensus about the direction of educational transformation in our community.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to our continuing partnership with STRIVE.

Sincerely,

Julie Sellers, President  
Cincinnati Federation of Teachers

Cc: STRIVE Executive Committee  
STRIVE community letter signatories