

**GUEST COLUMN:
CINCINNATI PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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CPS needs to move forward

Last October, prior to the start of contract talks for Cincinnati Public Schools' 2,500 teachers, Cincinnati Federation of Teachers' president, Julie Sellers, authored a guest opinion column in the Forum section of the Enquirer suggesting that these talks had potential to "write history" and lead to "radical" improvements in teaching and learning.

Now, eight months later – and after six months of negotiations – Ms. Sellers has written another Enquirer column professing confusion over the "transformative" contract sought by Superintendent Mary Ronan and the Cincinnati Board of Education that we believed also was the CFT's goal. Further, in her guest opinion article and in recent CFT advertising, Ms. Sellers accuses the Board of "walking away" from collaboration.

Contrary to the CFT's suggestion, our district has made every effort to be collaborative to lay the groundwork for productive negotiations. The New Teachers Project study, which surveyed teachers and administrators about current practices impacting teaching and learning, was a collaborative project. All members of the bargaining teams received training in Interest-based Bargaining. With the support of foundations and the business community, an attorney with national experience in collaboratively negotiating contract reforms even was hired to assist with the contract talks.

It is important to set the record straight for many reasons – not the least of which is that the stakes in these negotiations are so high for our children and the future of our district. The Board's team has been negotiating so children can learn and CPS can lead.

If we are to dramatically improve academic achievement, if we are to ensure that every student is taught by an outstanding teacher, if we are to help our children and our community meet the demands of a rapidly changing global economy, we need a contract for the future, not the past.

Specifically, the Board seeks an agreement that:

- Identifies, recruits, retains and rewards excellent teachers for every student.

- Allows more flexibility to redefine the traditional school day and year so that students have more time to learn and teachers have more time to grow as professionals.

- Allows the Board to demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

Indeed, these are areas clearly identified in the report issued last December by the New Teacher Project following a collaborative survey of CPS teachers and administrators. These reforms also closely mirror the assurances to which states and school districts must commit to be eligible for the current highly competitive federal grants, such as Race to the Top.

As Ms. Sellers noted, the CFT earned well-deserved recognition two decades ago for innovations that, at the time, were bold and progressive. But, times change, and the needs of our children change with them.

It is precisely because of Cincinnati Public Schools and CFT's history of innovation that we have set our sights so high for the current bargaining process. Our children demand far-reaching change, not just tinkering around the edges.

As the elected representatives of the community, we encourage the CFT to live up to its history of innovation in the current negotiations. If we focus on our shared interest – dramatically accelerating student achievement – meaningful change that will improve teaching and learning for our children is still within our collective reach.

- Eileen Cooper Reed, president
- Eve Bolton, vice president
- Melanie Bates, member
- Catherine Ingram, member
- A. Chris Nelms, member
- Sean T. Parker, member
- Vanessa White, member