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For Immediate Release ★ May 12, 2010

Contact:

Janet Walsh, CPS Public Affairs, (513) 363-0023; 207-8181 (cell); walshja@cps-k12.org

CPS Teachers' Contract Talks Schedule Extended *Board, Superintendent Say More Time Needed to Reach Bold Reforms*

The Cincinnati Board of Education and Cincinnati Public Schools Superintendent Mary Ronan today called for an extension of the original mid-May goal of finalizing negotiations with the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers (CFT) in an effort to ensure a historic contract advancing educational reforms that will improve teaching and learning.

"The Board and Superintendent are clear in our understanding of what our community expects from these negotiations," said Board President Eileen Reed and Superintendent Mary Ronan in a joint statement.

"In regard to current negotiations, our community has spoken and we have listened. The community expects – and we expect to deliver – a bold, innovative agreement that will position CPS to change the way we do business and become a national leader in teacher effectiveness and educational reform," they said.

Ronan and Cooper Reed noted that community groups funded a study by the New Teacher Project leading to recommendations for the contract talks, and that just last month, leaders of parent and community groups wrote an open letter to the Board calling for district leadership to use the negotiating process to strengthen teacher effectiveness and address chronically low-performing schools.

Talks between representatives of the administration and the CFT have been conducted over almost six months using an interest-based, non-confrontational process with the assistance of James Zuehl, a partner in the Chicago-based firm of Franzek Radelet, whose practice includes expertise in educational reform bargaining.

However, after two recent executive session briefings to the Board by Zuehl and the administration, the Board advised Ronan to take a step back from the current path.

"Unfortunately after negotiating long hours, the results to date do not indicate that we are close yet to the transformational agreement that the Board directed and the community expects," Cooper Reed said.

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Mailing Address: Education Center, P.O. Box 5381, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201-5381
Location: 2651 Burnet Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219-2551

Ronan said the action is being taken in order for all parties to reconsider "a way to achieve the essential transformative contract that our staff needs, our community expects and our children deserve."

She added that the step is "not a change in course, but an extension of our original timeline that is necessary to achieve the historic bargaining results our community demands."

At the CFT's request, the Board agreed three weeks ago to sign a memorandum stating that no impasse would be declared over the summer in the event that negotiations could not be successfully concluded before then.

Ronan also congratulated the CFT for agreeing to participate in the State of Ohio's upcoming application for a federal Race to the Top Grant in the next phase of the highly competitive grant process.

"Our community's expectations for negotiations are very much in line with the national landscape of educational reform," she said. "President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who will be visiting Cincinnati May 27 for Clark Montessori High School graduation ceremonies, have expressed the same expectations as a condition for receiving Race to the Top funding and other federal grants."

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