

Sunday
July 18

LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY FROM STRIVE PARTNERSHIP

CPS, teacher union contract has enormous implications

It's hard to imagine that a contract between schools and teachers could have such enormous implications for our city, but the contract being negotiated between Cincinnati Public Schools and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, or CFT, will determine more than just evaluation standards. This contract could determine whether we become a thriving city with low crime and poverty, or whether things will simply stay the same.

Too many of our kids are in schools that don't make the grade. CPS wants to fix this - and so do teachers. Whether they have the tools to do so, however, depends on what ends up in this contract.

We are a growing number of leaders and parents encouraging CPS and CFT to work together this summer to get this contract right. We believe they can do it. If CPS and the CFT cannot come to an agreement on the terms of a contract, the impasse will allow an arbitrator to make decisions about what is best for our children, and not our administration or our great teachers. We don't want that.

Here's what's at stake. When schools and kids fail, we know what happens. Poverty and crime are connected to a lack of educational achievement. It's no surprise, in fact, that the majority of homicide victims in Cincinnati never graduated from high school. When schools and kids succeed, however, we also know what happens. Graduation rates go up, crime diminishes and more people get well-paying jobs.

Providing a strong educational foundation for every child is perhaps the great moral, social and economic imperative of our time. Here's how we do it.

Upon entering negotiations, both sides publicly supported reforms offered by nationally renowned The New Teacher Project. After interviewing nearly 1,200 CPS teachers and administrators and examining CPS policies and performance, their report determined that the current contract continues many of the

failed policies of the past.

The existing agreement too often rewards teachers for seniority while ignoring the success or failure of their students. It unnecessarily restricts the superintendent's ability to create innovative alternative schools. And the teacher transfer and placement processes prevent schools from assembling the best possible instructional teams.

Study after study has clearly determined that teachers matter more than any other school factor in student success. We are blessed to have dedicated teachers in CPS. They want our children to succeed. So do we.

To get there, we need common-sense initiatives that require student achievement to be the predominant factor in teacher evaluations. We need a system that rewards and retains highly effective teachers while providing support to allow every teacher to improve. We need a process that allows for a dignified, efficient exit from the system for those teachers not able to help kids succeed. Student achievement growth, rather than seniority, should drive staffing decisions. Finally, we need greater flexibility to redesign failing schools and offer new alternatives to parents looking for different options.

We encourage you to join us by calling or writing Cincinnati School Board members, school officials and CFT leadership. Tell them we need them to get this contract right, and that we ought to pursue these common-sense initiatives on behalf of our kids.

— **O'dell M. Owen**
Hamilton County Coroner

— **Rolonda Smith**
Executive director, Parents for Public Schools of Greater Cincinnati

— **Robert C. Reifsnnyder**
President, United Way of Greater Cincinnati

— **Donna Jones Baker**
President/CEO, Urban League of Greater Cincinnati

— **Sean Rugless**
President/CEO, African American Chamber of Commerce

— **Jason Riveiro**

State director, League of United Latin American Citizens of Ohio

— **Sandy Berlin Walker**
President/CEO, YMCA of Greater Cincinnati

— **Gregory H. Williams**
President, University of Cincinnati

— **Jane Keller**
President/CEO, Cincinnati Youth Collaborative

— **Bob Mecum**
President/CEO, Lighthouse Youth Services

— **Kathryn E. Merchant**
President/CEO, Greater Cincinnati Foundation

— **Thomas L. Williams**
Chairman, Cincinnati Business Committee

— **Thomas J. Dugger**
Scout executive/CEO, Dan Beard Council, Boy Scouts of America

— **Jeff Edmondson**
Executive director, Strive Partnership

— **Ellen G. van der Horst**
President/CEO, Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber

— **Chad Wick**
President/CEO, KnowledgeWorks Foundation

— **Victoria Buyniski Giuckman**
Chairperson, Hamilton County Success By 6

— **Leslie Maloney**
Senior vice president, The Haile/U.S. Bank Foundation

— **Alfonso Cornejo**
President, Hispanic Chamber Cincinnati USA

— **Amber Burke Sprengard**
Co-Chair, Cincinnatians for Progress

— **Lynn Marmar**
Cincinnati Public Schools Board member, 1994-2001

— **Lisa J. FitzGibbon**
President/CEO, Easter Seals Work Resource Center

— **Jason Gloyd**
Chairman, COAST

— **Michael J. Graham, S.J.**
President, Xavier University

— **Cinnamon D. Pelly**
Vice president, JPMorgan Chase Foundation