

Talking Points
Cincinnati School Board Meeting
August 9, 2010

- I am pleased to be here tonight on behalf of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers. We are gratified that our urgency in trying to reach a new contract with the Cincinnati Public Schools is being embraced by so many in the community. We especially want to thank the STRIVE Board of directors for accepting our invitation to speak with them about our vision for public education in Cincinnati.
- Well, perhaps this is a surprise to some, but the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers has been pressing for months to return to the collaborative discussions about what is best for Cincinnati's children and how we can build on current practices. We have been "at the table" for over 400 hours.
- But, we cannot accept proposals that will take the Cincinnati Public Schools backwards or that actually jeopardize the education of our children and that have no evidence or track record on improving instruction for children.
- We remain open to any proposals that actually support teaching and improve the opportunity for our students to receive the highest quality education possible. We stand up for the kids in our classrooms by standing up for quality teaching and policies that foster the kind of collaborative environment that supports and improves instruction and serves the city's children.
- Like everyone else concerned with the future of the Cincinnati Public Schools—parents, administrators, our students, community groups, taxpayers and others—we are frustrated over the lack of progress toward a new contract. But I must point out that we were very near a settlement in May, when the board walked away from all the agreements that had been reached over six months of negotiations and insisted on re-starting the whole process from scratch.
- The basic outline of our Collective Bargaining Agreement has been shaped by decades of give and take between the school District and the CFT. It also

is subject to all relevant state and federal laws and regulations. Since May—with little notice and no precedent—the District has produced proposal after proposal that would simply throw over that framework and impose unilateral changes in working conditions, benefits; the very definition of the bargaining unit and many other aspects of the agreement.

- Cincinnati's teachers want an agreement—but agreements are reached through mutual discussion and compromise. They cannot simply be imposed by the command of one side. If they are, they most likely will fail.
- Cincinnati's teachers have a long history of working for reforms that have made our schools better. For years, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers and the Cincinnati Public Schools have joined hands to develop a working relationship that has been the foundation for all of the school District's successful innovative programs.
- This year, for reasons that remain unclear, CPS has abandoned this spirit of cooperation in contract talks.
- This abrupt change of approach is undermining what has been a collaborative and productive relationship between the District and its teachers. That shift does not bode well for the future of our public schools—and it certainly does nothing to help our students.
- Cincinnati's teachers are open to change in our school system. But neither teachers nor school administrators have a monopoly of the best vision for the future. The Board and its negotiating team cannot simply dictate the terms of an agreement. That is a recipe for impasse and ultimate failure.
- It is not too late to work together for a new contract. But the District must approach this process with some of the same flexibility that CFT has shown. When the Board and CPS negotiators put a proposal on the table that is not all take-backs—that builds on our collaborative and productive relationship, rather than tearing it down—we will move quickly to an agreement.