

# PITTSBURGH FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

AFT PA, AFT, AFL-CIO

## **PFT Statement Regarding Contract Negotiations**

**Saturday, January 12, 2008**

Negotiations between the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers and the Pittsburgh School District continue. Representatives of the union and district met at the PA Bureau of Mediation office on Wednesday, January 9, and Friday, January 11, 2008. A negotiations session is set for Monday, January 14, 2008.

"PFT negotiators continue to be available for bargaining seven days a week, twenty four hours a day," said PFT President John Tarka. "Our teacher, paraprofessional, and other members have been working through this school year without a contract and have continued their outstanding efforts to improve student achievement, as well as to assure a safe and secure learning environment in every school. The PFT leadership wants that hard work to continue without interruption, and we want to resolve these negotiations with a settlement that can be recommended to our membership for ratification.

"Without question, PFT members have been a key factor in the District's reform efforts, and our members continue to make extraordinary efforts, sometimes under the most difficult circumstances, to provide every opportunity for our students to learn and grow. At the same time, PFT members do want to be competitive with surrounding school districts in terms of compensation and working conditions. To that end, PFT negotiators will continue to seek an agreement that will both benefit our membership and improve learning in the school district," said John Tarka.

"I have been involved with the Pittsburgh schools for many, many years as a teacher, parent, and union representative, and I believe PFT members are working harder than ever before to help all students and schools improve – again, sometimes, in the most challenging situations. PFT members take on this work without hesitation, and, in virtually all cases, they work well beyond the "official" work day. All PFT members want what the Pittsburgh community wants – a viable and successful school district. It is important that the differences between the school district and the union are resolved, and our ongoing efforts will continue."

### VERIFIABLE AND IMPORTANT FACTS RELATED TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BETWEEN THE PFT AND THE PITTSBURGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Wages - Approximately one-half of the Pittsburgh teacher workforce; those teachers who are most experienced, received an average annual wage increase of 1.63% from 2000-2006, whereas average inflation has increased 2.76% over the same period.

The average annual wage increase for teachers for 2007-2008 in Western Pennsylvania is 5.1% (including increments).

Post-Retirement Health Care Costs – PFT-represented employees have contributed to health care costs, during employment and retirement, since 1988. The post-retirement health care benefit is applicable to administrators and others, in addition to PFT- represented professional employees.

Severance – This benefit existed prior to the PFT-obtaining bargaining rights in 1970. The District recently increased this benefit for principals in the latest compensation plan for principals adopted in March, 2007.

Learning Environment – The PFT believes that improvement of student conduct across the school district is crucial. The PFT believes that student achievement is improved best when every school is safe, orderly, and provides an environment where students can learn and teachers can teach without distraction and interruption.

School Leadership – The PFT believes that effective central and school administrative leadership is an integral factor in the success of the school system. It is important that a procedure exists which will enable teachers and other PFT members to identify where administrative practices contribute to improved student learning, and where they do not.

“In every communication to PFT members, PFT leaders have emphasized the desire that negotiations can be resolved without a disruption of the school year. Our determination and hope remain that bargaining will conclude soon, with a contract that is equitable - one that can be recommended for ratification by PFT members,” said Tarka. “We will continue to work toward that objective.”