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Detroit Teachers Vote to Approve Contract

By 7 Action News Team
 September 13, 2006

Detroit's teachers and students are headed back to school. The 9,500 members of the Detroit Federation of Teachers met Wednesday morning at Cobo Hall where they approved a contract proposal and ended their strike.

Teachers will head back to their classrooms Wednesday by 11:30 a.m. They will prepare for students who will return to classes Thursday for a delayed start of the school year.

Teachers union members OKed a 3-year deal that includes a pay freeze in the first year, a 1% raise the second year and a 2.5% pay raise in the third year.

As a result of their new contract with the district, all members of the union will pay 10% of their health care costs. 55% of teachers are already paying 10% of their medical insurance.

The contract deal put before a vote Wednesday was the product of all-night negotiations Monday night into early Tuesday morning.

Union president Janna Garrison spoke to teachers before the vote. She outlined details of the contract – some that she said were great and others she said, "We can live with."

One concession made by teachers in their negotiations was the elimination of one preparation period per week. These "prep" periods afford teachers the time to ready their rooms and lesson plans for their students. They will be reduced from 5 to 4 periods each week.

Garrison also addressed the school calendar and how it would be altered to make up for the days missed during the strike. Rather than adding school days at the end of the year, teachers and students will lose some of their Easter break vacation days and will see an altered schedule of staff meetings.

Not all teachers were pleased by the new contract. Some voiced concern during a question and answer period.

One impassioned teacher from Cass Tech urged teachers to continue to strike, "with their eyes on the prize."

Another teacher said only one thing had been gained by teachers in the new contract: 3 days of sick leave if teachers contract lice or ringworm from their students. She said she was disappointed by this.

Still, others said they were ready to go back to school. One elementary school special education teacher held up a clock and said, "It is time." She cited the words of a student she saw on 7 Action News who was eager to return to school.



Members of the Detroit Federation of Teachers gathered Wednesday morning at Cobo Hall.

WINDOWS MEDIA VIDEO

Watch the complete Detroit Federation of Teachers meeting at Cobo Hall. Video includes contract vote and teacher reaction.



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