



Remarks by Chicago Teachers Union President Karen GJ Lewis at July 18, 2012 News Conference

Thank you. I'd like to introduce Chicago Teachers Union Vice President Jesse Sharkey, Recording Secretary Michael Brunson, Financial Secretary Kristine Mayle, and CTU Attorney Robert Bloch.

Today the Chicago Teachers Union House of Delegates reviewed the details of a contract negotiations fact finding report issued by Independent Fact Finder Edwin Benn. After consideration of the merits of his report the House of Delegates voted unanimously to reject it.

We wish to thank Fact-Finder Benn for his efforts to pay close attention to the issues in dispute. I wish to especially note that he not only proposed a fair salary increase for Chicago public school educators but also recognized what nearly every Chicagoan who follows this dispute recognizes, and I quote his words:

"Breaking this dispute down to its simplest terms, the Board has exercised its authority to impose a sea change driven by the substantial lengthening of the school day and year, with the expectation that the employees will work those additional hours (approximately 20% more) for free or without fair compensation for the additional work. The employees will not do that and should not be expected to do that."

There are many other issues related to improving the education of Chicago's children that have yet to be resolved. The school board's failure to offer us fair compensation or to even consider measures to retain qualified and experienced teachers, paraprofessionals, and clinicians in our schools are very serious issues. However, those do not trump our concerns about:

- Reducing class size so that we can adequately address the varying educational needs of each child before them, or
- The need for not merely a longer school day, BUT a **BETTER DAY** which offers students a world class education. We must make it a priority to deliver to every student in every classroom a rich curriculum that includes art, music, foreign language, and physical education.

In taking today's vote our delegates – who represent teachers, clinicians, and PSRP's that work in over 600 school sites – gave their full support to our Union's negotiating team which even this morning maintained a "good faith bargaining attitude" during a long negotiating session with the Chicago Board of Education.

As for our next steps, we are committed to continuing to talk with and inform the school board negotiators about our work in Chicago's classrooms. We are committed to working to achieve a labor contract that truly serves the needs of all Chicago public school students. Thank you.