



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 17, 2013

No. 27

www.nyc.gov

**MAYOR BLOOMBERG DISCUSSES THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
WALKING AWAY FROM NEGOTIATIONS ON A TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM**

The following are Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's remarks as delivered at City Hall today:

“Good afternoon, everyone. By now, I’m sure you’re all aware that United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew unilaterally walked away from our negotiations concerning a new teacher evaluation system.

“This is deeply regrettable, because after many days of around-the-clock negotiations, we had resolved nearly all the outstanding issues raised by the State teacher evaluation law.

“There was an agreement to be had here. We were actually very close. But unfortunately, every time we approached a deal in recent days, the UFT moved the finish line back.

“Instead of working with us to tie up the loose ends of this agreement, they continued to insert unrelated, extraneous issues into these negotiations. The effect was to set the talks back, time and time again.

“That’s exactly what happened last night. We made it clear then, as we had previously, that this was a non-starter.

“The UFT also threw the negotiations off track with demands that effectively undercut the intent of the law, which is to create an evaluation system that ensures we have the best possible teacher in every classroom in our schools.

“Everything our Administration has accomplished in turning our schools around these past 11 years has been based on setting standards and requiring accountability. A new teacher evaluation process is a crucial part of that. That’s why it was a condition of New York State receiving Federal ‘Race to the Top’ funding from the Obama Administration. That’s why I supported the State requirement on revising teacher evaluations that was passed into law back in 2010.

“I personally feel very strongly that teachers deserve to be treated as professionals – and also held to high professional standards. So in that light, I want to let you know what the two main areas of disagreement were in our talks with the UFT last night.

(more)

“First, the UFT wanted the entire agreement to sunset in June of 2015. That condition would essentially render the entire agreement meaningless. That’s because the process of removing an ineffective teacher requires two years’, that’s correct two years’, time to get an ineffective teacher out of the classroom, and if the agreement sunset in two years the whole thing would be a joke.

“Nobody would ever be able to be removed, the law would be gone before the process could finish. It would essentially sabotage the entire agreement. This popped up last night sometime between midnight and three in the morning when the negotiations ended.

“Second, our negotiations with the UFT demanded a doubling of the number of arbitration hearings available to teachers who file grievances as part of the evaluation process. There would be twice as many as they’re entitled to now.

“That would make it again harder to weed out ineffective teachers because more and more of these cases would go to arbitrators and it would bog our principals down in lengthy the arbitration hearings taking precious times away from their duties as school leaders.

“As it is now, we don’t have enough time to do it. Doubling the number would just make the whole thing die of its own weight.

“In addition, at the last minute and in the middle of the night, the UFT insisted on changing the method of scoring teacher evaluations, in a way that would have ensured that fewer teachers were rated ineffective.

“So the bottom line is, in failing to reach an agreement, those were the unfortunate reasons why. And the saddest part is that our students will pay the cost.

“They’ll pay the cost when they are denied the candid professional evaluations for teachers that would help them become better teachers. They’ll pay the cost when we can’t weed out the ineffective teachers who just aren’t up to the job, even after they’ve been given professional guidance and help.

“And kids will also pay the cost because the City will have to forfeit \$250 million in additional State education aid that was contingent on our creating a new and more effective teacher evaluation system. And we’ll also lose out on up to another \$200 million in education grant funds that we might have qualified for.

“I can’t tell you how much this pains me to see this happening. Nothing is more important to us than our schools, and making sure that they receive the financial resources they deserve. I think we’ve shown that over and over again in the last 11 years.

“We’ve shown that by increasing salaries and improving professional development for our teachers. And remember that in recent years, when the national recession reduced the revenues available to fund City services, we made hard choices about what services had to be cut, and where. But we made an exception when it came to our schools.

“Even when we faced shrinking revenues, we actually shifted funds from other agencies so that we could increase the share of funding for our schools coming from City tax dollars while the State cut back how much they were sending us.

“Our students benefitted from the extra City tax dollars, and so have our teachers. And they certainly would have also benefited from the additional State aid we regrettably would have to forego if there’s not an agreement with the UFT.

“On that note, let me turn things over to Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott.”

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