



City of Cambridge

37.

IN CITY COUNCIL

December 7, 1998

COUNCILLOR DAVIS
MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIC
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: That City Manager is an official member of the collective bargaining team for the Teachers' contract; now therefore be it

ORDERED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to transmit to him the attached letter from Cambridge United for Education (CUE), an independent citywide organization which relays some contract recommendations.

In City Council December 7, 1998.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

#37

Cambridge United for Education

c/o 39 R.C. Kelley Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-491-7390

Co-chairs:
Richard Freierman
Mary Tittmann

Cambridge United for Education (CUE) is an independent, citywide organization dedicated to promoting excellence in education in the Cambridge Public Schools.

November 18, 1998

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council:

Enclosed please find a copy of Cambridge United for Education's (CUE) Recommendations for Changes in the Cambridge Teacher's Contract. CUE members in a series of meetings we held this October have developed these recommendations, which are based on the concerns raised by the audience at a forum we held earlier this fall.

The document we have enclosed is self-explanatory. We recognize that the contract alone cannot help improve our schools. As we state in our cover sheet, elements such as budget, school restructuring, curriculum development, staff support and the vision of our school leaders are also vital to meaningful school improvement.

Please let us know of your thoughts and concerns regarding our recommendations. None of the concerns that we raise are new; they have been emphasized as issues of importance to parents for many, many years. Because parents are not a party to the contract talks, we trust that our elected officials both on the City Council and on the School Committee will take our concerns seriously to heart.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Richard Freierman
491-7390
richardf@mediaone.net



Mary Tittmann
868-9479
maryt@world.std.com

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Cambridge United for Education

Recommendations for Changes in the Cambridge Teachers' Contract

We trust that as contract negotiations begin this fall the needs of our students will be foremost on everyone's mind. We believe that for our students to get the best education our city can offer, teachers cannot be treated as assembly line workers who adhere to strict work rules. Rather, the new contract must treat teachers as professionals who are given the power and knowledge to shape excellent classrooms and help improve their schools. We believe that as professionals, all teachers are responsible for spending the time necessary to make their classrooms excellent learning environments. It is the responsibility of Cambridge's Superintendent and School Committee to support teachers by committing to good salaries and benefits, staff support, adequate classroom supplies and top-notch professional development programs. While parents are not a party to this contract, we believe that we can help improve schools by preparing our children well for school, volunteering in classrooms, and supporting education initiatives in Cambridge. Only by working together can teachers, administrators and parents build strong schools citywide.

In presenting this document, we want to recognize that the teachers' contract is only one of a number of key factors affecting the performance of our schools. Issues such as the budget, restructuring of the high school, curriculum development, statewide standards, and the vision and leadership of principals and other key school department administrators are equally important to the smooth functioning of our city's schools. While these proposals relate primarily to the teachers' contract, they cannot be effective unless Cambridge strives to improve all aspects of its school system.

We base our contract recommendations on the following principles:

- ◆ Teachers are professionals who should be given the responsibility and power to create excellent classrooms for their students.
- ◆ Cambridge provides high salaries and benefits to its teachers; such compensation must be supported in this contract to attract and retain excellent teachers.
- ◆ The contract must support the Cambridge Public Schools' goals and objectives to educate students at a high level.
- ◆ The contract should support site-based management as a way to empower teachers to participate in school improvement.
- ◆ The leadership and staff in every school must support the innovations and reforms necessary to build stronger schools.
- ◆ The contract should support and facilitate minority hiring.
- ◆ Collaborative bargaining will help the negotiating parties embrace these principles.

To achieve these principles, both the union and administration negotiation teams must make important changes to the contract and reaffirm their commitment to excellent schools.

I. Changes which can help teachers reaffirm their commitment to educational excellence:

- A. Teachers have little time for the planning and coordination needed for school reform; the current contract only requires teachers to be in school 25 minutes longer than the students' day with one extra planning hour per week. Many teachers do spend extra hours in school, but this time is voluntary, making staff coordination difficult. The high school, in addition, needs time to create a schedule that allows for weekly consistency in learning. Currently the schedule is far too complex and leaves little extra time for students and teachers who need assistance.

Recommendations:

1. *Add three hours per week of non-instructional time that elementary teachers can spend after school.* In support of school based management, each school must have the discretion to use this time as it sees fit in agreement with Central Office. This time could be used for: grade cluster meetings both within schools and systemwide; parent conferences or phone calls; tutoring; classroom prep time; extra assistance for new teachers; and, professional development.
 2. *Add three hours per week to the CRLS schedule. The CRLS leadership should determine the allocation of this time between instructional and non-instructional activities.* This will not only help the school reduce the complexities in the schedule, but allows time for tutorials, teachers' meetings with students, assistance for new teachers, and professional development.
- B. The evaluation and professional development process is not working consistently in identifying and assisting teachers who need remediation nor in acknowledging teachers who are doing exemplary work.
1. The implementation of the evaluation plan negotiated in the current contract has been haphazard. **Recommendation:** *Create an Evaluation Oversight Committee to advance efforts to implement the current plan.* This Committee will work with principals to monitor staff evaluations, examine professional development plans, and track evaluations of any teacher needing remediation. The Committee will produce an annual data report that charts the effectiveness and outcomes of evaluations system-wide. Identification of individual teachers will not be public.
 2. Parents and high school students have a unique view of how their schools and classrooms are working. Surveys can give teachers and principals the information they need to improve their classrooms and the school climate. **Recommendations:**
 - a. *Conduct annual surveys of families regarding all aspects of their children's school, including principal and teacher performance.*
 - b. *High school students should be asked to fill out teacher surveys for CRLS.*
 - c. *Teachers should be asked to evaluate their principals and the school climate.*
 - d. *The results of these surveys should be considered in specific evaluations of teachers and principals. Also, a school-by-school summary of results should be part of public reporting carried out by the Evaluation Oversight Committee.*
 3. The current evaluation plan makes no clear link between a teacher's administrative evaluation and the three years of professional development he or she pursues. Moreover, the document does not tie a teacher's professional development to school improvement plans or to systemwide goals and objectives. **Recommendation:**
 - a. *The Peer Review Committees that oversee teachers' professional development plans should ensure that these plans are linked directly to the strengths and weaknesses identified in each teacher's evaluation.*
 - b. *Teachers' professional development plans should be aligned with school improvement plans and systemwide goals and objectives.*

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4. With over 1,000 empty seats, Cambridge schools may face layoffs. In order to promote excellence, teachers retained in the system must be fully qualified for their jobs.

Recommendation: *In considering layoffs, the contract must not only consider teachers' seniority but also the quality of their teaching based on their evaluations.*

- C. The School Calendar is far too disruptive to the teachers' weekly curriculum and the children's learning. In the current calendar of 40.5 non-vacation weeks of school, only 20 weeks are uninterrupted by holidays, professional development or early release days. Moreover, this year students may be in school in July because of the late Labor Day holiday. Recommendations:
 1. *Eliminate early release days.* This time can be shifted to the extra hours proposed in Section I-A above.
 2. *Eliminate minor holidays* such as Evacuation Day and other non-national holidays and move professional development days to the summer.
 3. *Grant the Superintendent full flexibility in establishing the start of the school year so that school does not extend into summer.*

II. Changes which will reaffirm the School Committee's support for teachers:

- A. There are many non-inclusion classrooms in the city that still have a high proportion of special needs or mainstreamed bilingual students. Recommendation: *Teachers with a high number of special needs or mainstreamed bilingual students should receive extra assistance such as more aides, if requested by the teacher and deemed necessary by the school and Central Administration.*
- B. Despite a clause in the current contract calling for adequate learning materials and supplies, classrooms and libraries are often poorly stocked. In some schools teachers and parents spend their own money to supply their classrooms. Other schools do not have enough materials and libraries have few books. Recommendation: *The School Committee must commit to budgeting adequate funds for every classroom and library in the city.*
- C. Many new teachers struggle or leave during their first several years because they are given inadequate support. Recommendation: *The Administration and School Committee must support these teachers by assigning them qualified mentor teachers and/or extra aides for their first year or two of teaching.*
- D. Professional and staff development are critical linchpins of school reform. Yet these resources are often allocated haphazardly, leaving many teachers paying for the education they need to learn a new curriculum or teaching method. Moreover, teachers can often be isolated in their own classrooms because they have neither the chance nor the place to meet with their colleagues.
Recommendations:
 - a. *Allocate a specific budget to each school to be used for professional development that supports School Improvement Plans and teachers' professional development plans.*
 - b. *Establish a Teacher Center to facilitate professional development and citywide teacher communication. Included in the center will be a library that allows teachers to learn about curriculum units that have been successfully implemented by excellent teachers in the system.*

III. Changes which will help establish a collaborative relationship between teachers and the Cambridge School Department:

The collaboration between the teachers and the administration can be greatly enhanced through a clear contract document. The existing document, which includes many attachments, appendices, and outdated requirements, is often confusing and unnecessarily complex. Recommendation: *The negotiating parties should begin talks with a contract document from which all expired clauses, appendices, or attachments have been removed. The outcome of this negotiating process should be a new contract that is clear and accessible, and that includes all agreements within the body of the document. The new contract should above all reflect the shared goals of teachers, administrators, and parents for achieving excellence in Cambridge schools.*

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Consent Order #37 6900M

Councillor Davis re: transmit letter to
the City Manager from Cambridge United
for Education (CUE) regardin some
Teachers' contract recommendations.

In City Council December 7, 1998

ORDER ADOPTED

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