

## Dist. 15 parents fed up with talks

### Hundreds mob meeting, call for quick settlement

By Chad Brooks

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For the second time in two weeks, hundreds of parents mobbed the Palatine Township Elementary District 15 school board meeting to express their animosity over the current teacher contract negotiations.

With teachers able to strike at any point, parents Wednesday night pleaded their case to school board members to reach an agreement soon, before something drastic happens.

The teachers have been working without a contract since the previous one expired Aug. 31.

Many of those who spoke Wednesday expressed their desire for the school board to hold firm on its recent salary offer, which the district said was 9.5 percent over the next three years. The union has said it will not comment publicly on the specifics of its demands.

Sally Kim, a parent and member of the community-based group District 15 Concerned Parents, said if the teachers are given too high of a salary increase, the district will be forced to revert to deficit spending.

"The quality of education District 15 is accustomed to will suffer," Kim said. "Do not give in to unreasonable demands."

Brita Higgins, also a member of District 15 Concerned Parents, agreed the district needs to be fiscally prudent when negotiating the contract.

"We believe our district quality image can be maintained, and even strengthened, with fiscal responsibility," Higgins said.

But Steve Abram, representing the Northwest Coalition for Quality Education, said not paying competitive wages will lead to many veteran teachers leaving, forcing the district to hire teachers with little experience.

"Teachers right out of college bring new ideas and vitality to our schools," Abram said. "However, we believe that education quality suffers when inexperienced teachers make up 30 percent or more of the classroom teaching staff."

While some parents supported the district and others showed support for the teachers, almost everyone agreed students will be the real losers if the teachers walk off the job.

"What a great example for the children of District 15," said parent Bob Hanson. "If you don't get what you want, strike."

Last month, the union filed the necessary paperwork with the Illinois Educational Labor

Relations Board which now gives the teachers the option of striking at any time.

Lisa Nuss, chief negotiator for the Classroom Teacher's Council, the union that represents the nearly 800 District 15 teachers and certified staff, has said that as of now, no strike date has been set.

The most recent negotiating session came last week, but at the request of the federal mediator, both sides declined to comment on any possible progress that was made.

The two sides are scheduled to continue negotiations Friday.

The last reported progress between the two came late last month, when the two sides came to tentative terms on teacher and union rights and responsibilities, working conditions, disability and liability insurance, leave of absence, tuition reimbursement and grievance settlements.

Major issues still needing to be agreed upon include salaries, health insurance and retirement benefits.

District 15 serves nearly 13,000 children from Arlington Heights, Hoffman Estates, Inverness, Palatine, Rolling Meadows, Schaumburg and South Barrington.

For updates on the negotiations, parents and residents can visit both the district's Web site at [www.ccsd15.net](http://www.ccsd15.net) and the teachers union Web site at [www.ctteachers.com](http://www.ctteachers.com).