



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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Statement by Mayor Rahm Emanuel on the End of the Chicago Teachers Union Strike

Remarks As Prepared

I want to start by thanking all the people who volunteered – all the parents, grandparents and administrators -- at the 147 schools we kept open during this strike. I want to thank everyone at all the faith based and neighborhood sites who provided our children safe places during the strike. I want to thank everyone for showing who we are as a city: we take care of our children first.

This settlement is an honest compromise. It means returning our schools to their primary purpose: the education of our children. It means a new day and a new direction for Chicago Public Schools.

In this contract, we gave our children a true seat at the table. In past negotiations, taxpayers paid more but our kids got less – this time, our taxpayers are paying less and our kids are getting more. Because of past contracts, teachers and principals had to make false choices about where they spent their time, because there was so little of it. This contract is a break with past practices and brings a fundamental change that benefits our children.

We have been discussing the need for more time for over a decade, but lacked the ability to achieve our primary educational goal. We have been discussing the need for more reading and recess, for more science and sports, for more math and music, for as long as I can remember. Each time it was postponed or rejected because the changes were too difficult. Today, that era and those false choices come to an end.

Our elementary students will gain an extra hour and 15 minutes every day and two additional weeks every year. Our high school students will be in front of a great teacher for an extra thirty minutes each day and two additional weeks each year. For students entering Kindergarten this



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year, they will have an extra 2 ½ years in the classroom by the time they graduate high school. That 2 ½ years of additional education is a new day and a new direction for Chicago's children.

We have seen already how great principals and great teachers have designed the full school day to make the most of this additional time. At Spencer Academy, students have been getting 20 more minutes a day in reading, 15 more minutes a day in math, and a new 30-minute period that links technology with student learning. That is time for learning that students did not have just last year.

At Beidler Elementary, students have 60 minutes per week in a new writing lab and 45 minutes for specialized reading at the end of each day – that is learning they didn't have before this year. At Greene Elementary, students have 90 minutes of reading and 60 minutes of writing each day – additional time they did not have before. And those are just a few examples of how this additional time is transforming our classrooms and our children's lives.

This full day gives our kids more quality time for learning and teachers more opportunity to provide quality instruction. The agreement also provides our principals the freedom they need to lead their teams. Principals will have the responsibility they deserve and the accountability for results that we demand.

Third, for the first time, teachers will have a meaningful evaluation based on a system designed by their fellow teachers. Our evaluation system has not changed in 40 years – while our students, and the world, have. This is in the best interest of our students, who need the very best teachers. It is in the best interest of our teachers, who always strive to achieve the best results they can for their students and want to develop as professionals, as every professional does.

Fourth, since a child gets one chance at an education, parents deserve a choice. That's why we have added five new STEM high schools, five new IB high schools, neighborhood schools, magnet schools, schools of excellence, as well as 6,000 more kindergarten seats, and 2,000 more spots for early childhood education. This year, for the first time in a decade, our parents will have more school choices and our children will have more educational time. That is what it means to have a new day and a new direction for Chicago's children.

With this agreement, our teachers will receive higher pay and our students will have a higher standard of education. Chicago is a national leader in putting in place a Common Core Curriculum to raise standards in math and reading. We are making college attendance the expectation, not the exception, for all our students.



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We have taken a half-a-billion dollars out of the central office and put that money back into the classroom where it belongs. We will save where we can so that we can invest where we must: in the classroom and in the future of our children.

We are also providing parents more tools to be partners in their children's schools. For the first time, parents get the same report card the principal receives on a school's performance. Parents need to use that information to demand improvement and educational excellence. For the first time, they will see their school's budget online. Teachers need parents as partners – as much as they need principals who are willing to be held accountable. In short, parents must step up and do their part as a true partner.

We all know our teachers do remarkable work in our classrooms. We have seen our students achieve great things against difficult odds. If they can turn obstacles into opportunities, so can we. For every child to have a world-class education, each of us has a responsibility and no one gets a pass: the future of our children demands no less.

So I want to thank the negotiators on both sides, who worked hard to forge this agreement. I want to thank parents and taxpayers for their patience. I want to thank again all the parents, non-profits, principals, religious leaders, and concerned citizens who worked together to support our students during the strike. We showed that we are not just a city of big shoulders, we are a city of big hearts.

Now our students and teachers can return to classrooms across our City, where Chicago's future is being shaped. Now that the negotiations are over, our most important work begins: providing every child in every community of Chicago an education to match their potential.

There are moments, both as Mayor and on the campaign, that leave a lasting impression on you as a person. Too many times I have met kids, whether on the el or on the street walking to school, who have a look of emptiness in their eyes that no one would accept in their own child. Downtown, with all its opportunities and possibilities, may only be a few miles away, but for too many kids it seems like a world-apart. For them, downtown may as well be in a different city, not their own hometown. There is a gulf between what they see downtown and what they see in their own future. The classroom is the only way to bridge that gulf. The classroom is where they learn that not only do they have a place in the future of this city; they are the future of this city. We as adults have to live up to our responsibilities so that those kids can live up to their future. That is what this was about.

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