

## ***What do the proposed work rule changes mean?***

*On Monday, March 24th, the School District of Philadelphia announced that it was suing the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers in an effort to impose changes to several work rules.*

*Here are the three main points of the SDP proposal and lawsuit, along with talking points to help working educators make sense of the proposals with each other and their communities.*

**IMPOSITION #1: “Assigning and transferring teachers in a way that best meets student and school needs,”** specifically full site selection for incoming teachers, and principal control of removal.

- This proposal implies that the current contract does not share these goals. This is not true. The current contract actually states that its first objective regarding Assignment and Transfer is *“To distribute equitably professional staff qualifications and experience among all schools in the School District”* (Article XVIII, Item C).
- This proposal assumes that the principal is a constant, trusted presence in their school. Unfortunately, in September 2013, a full 25% of schools had a brand new principal for the coming school year, and that number has increased as turnover continues (The Notebook). Principals alone do not represent the institutional knowledge that keeps schools stable and functioning. Veteran teachers provide continuity and are what make families confident in the education of their children.
- According to the PFT contract, there is already a process in place for site selection. *“The Principal and the Staff Selection Committee will reach consensus on the most qualified candidate for each available position. In the event that the Committee fails to reach consensus, the Principal shall make the selection from among the three (3) most qualified applicants as ranked by the Committee.”* (Article XVIII, Item C). Most schools already choose to be full site select, but administrative turnover can make the process inconsistent. For site selection to be a universally trusted practice, educators need an actual say hiring decisions, and administrations need to be held accountable for implementing the process fairly.

**IMPOSITION #2: “Focusing teacher preparation time on improving instruction and professional development.”** In the lawsuit, this is described as “giving the school principal the ability to direct the uses that teachers make of preparation time.”

- Again, the proposal implies that the current contract does not share these goals. This is not true. In its first point regarding Teaching Assignments and Preparation Periods, the contract states that, *“teachers will exercise professional judgment in their use of preparation time in order to further professional work and to promote greater classroom effectiveness”* (Article XVIII, Item B1a). For the district to take away this autonomy says that they do not consider teachers to be professionals.

- High school and elementary teachers are guaranteed only 45 minutes of prep time a day. Middle school teachers are guaranteed 54 (non-advisors) or 72 minutes (advisors) a day. In addition, few schools have regular staff meeting or common planning time built into their schedules. True reform would revise schedules to make time for authentic staff collaboration without cannibalizing prep time.
- The contract already requires that, *“as part of their regular workday and work year... teachers shall annually be required to participate in at least twenty-eight (28) hours of scheduled mandated professional development”* (Article X, Item B1). This includes induction and new teacher coaching. Instead of taking away precious prep time from educators, how could these already-existing programs be made more effective?

**IMPOSITION #3: “Providing additional flexibility so that resources can be allocated to best meet student needs.”** According to the lawsuit, SDP is seeking to outsource substitute teachers, relax “minimum staffing requirements” for counselors, librarians, and teachers, and do away with a June 30 deadline for layoffs.

- Again: the PFT contract already seeks to “distribute equitably” the resources of the School District of Philadelphia. This is the way to best meet student needs.
- Several points in the PFT work rules seek to ensure that schools have the basic staff that they need in order to function. In addition, the most recent contract proposals by the PFT have sought to *guarantee* the presence of a full-time school nurse and librarian in all schools. What has the district done to secure these necessities? How will “relaxing the minimum” solve these shortages across the district?
- This request is being made with the accompanying claim that the District cannot afford adequate staff and resources, so drastic measures must be taken. This claim wrongly targets working educators as the solution to the District’s financial woes. **If there are not enough resources for all students, then the District’s first order of business should be securing adequate funding for all schools, not exploiting its workforce in a shortsighted attempt close the gap.**

### ***What can PFT members do?***

Distribute this document widely. Use these talking points as the basis for your discussions with each other and with the larger community. Inform the public about how the PFT work rules ensure stable, equitable, quality education for all public students.

**Remember: our working conditions are our students’ learning conditions!**



*For additional information and more resources like these, including the full PFT contract and SDP lawsuit, connect with the Caucus of Working Educators at [workingeducators.org](http://workingeducators.org).*