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Don't Settle Teachers' Contract Without Bold Reform

BPS and BTU still far apart despite 15 months of talks

Bold reform measures that will improve teacher quality and student achievement should be demanded in the next teachers' contract as a matter of urgency for the 56,000 students attending the Boston Public Schools (BPS). The City cannot afford another teachers' contract that provides only incremental change. The cost of these reforms must be fiscally responsible and sustainable. Negotiations between the School Committee and Boston Teachers Union (BTU) are still ongoing after 15 months. While some progress has been made, the parties are still far apart on several key issues.

On August 22, 2016, the Research Bureau issued a [Special Report](#) recommending the reforms below that are necessary to help the BPS be a higher quality option for Boston students and be more competitive with Commonwealth charter schools in improving student achievement.

Needed Teacher Contract Reforms

- Determine teacher compensation based on performance
- Reinforce early hiring and mutual consent
- Establish excess procedure to protect quality teachers
- Improve teacher evaluation process
- Better evaluation and professional development for [SPC teachers](#)
- SPC teachers can be dismissed if not hired in a year or do not apply for a position

The list also included increasing extended learning time (ELT) in traditional schools, but at a lower cost to make it more sustainable. The BPS

proposed FY18 budget will provide ELT to 39 additional schools, with each teacher receiving \$4,464 per year as originally negotiated, rather than a lesser amount, for a total cost of \$14.1M. That represents 58% of the total \$24.4M in new spending recommended for schools in FY18.

Financial Considerations

The importance of strong reform in the teachers' contract is tied to making the BPS a quality choice for Boston students and protecting the finances of the City. Making the BPS more competitive will retain more students and reduce the loss of Chapter 70 funds to charter schools.

Urgency for Improvement

The importance of bold reform now is exemplified by the current state [ratings](#) of 103 BPS schools based on student performance. The new ratings show some improvement, but this year 57 BPS rated schools (55%) are classified as low or under-performing (Level 3 or below). Attending these schools are approximately 27,000 students who deserve a better educational experience assisted by a reform contract.

The Importance of Teacher Quality

Improving teacher quality is the single most important strategy to increasing student achievement. That means implementing a performance compensation system, protecting each school's ability to select its own teachers from inside or outside the BPS, protecting quality teachers from excessing procedures, facilitating the dismissal of SPC teachers after a year, and extending learning time.