

Dist. 15 teachers make it official

Union ratifies contract, ending long year of talks

By Chad Brooks

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Teachers in Palatine Township Elementary District 15 Monday officially approved the tentative contract they agreed to last week, putting an end to over a year of negotiations.

"We are happy to see this come to a conclusion," said Lisa Nuss, chief negotiator for the Classroom Teacher's Council, which represents District 15's 772 teachers, after Monday's ratification vote by the teachers.

While specifics were not released Monday, Nuss said the new three-year deal includes base salary increases of 2.12 percent the first year and 2.13 percent the following two years. The information provided Monday does not include step, or lane, increases, which give teachers credit for years of service.

The base salary increases, Nuss said, are below what teachers in surrounding district's are receiving.

When studying teacher contracts in neighboring districts, Nuss said all except one had base salary increases of at least 3 percent.

"We felt it was a huge compromise to have three years of a base salary increase of 2.12 and 2.13 percent," Nuss said.

School board President Nancy Lee Carlson said she was pleased the teachers ratified the contract and did not anticipate any ill will between the two sides as they move forward.

"I am very pleased with it," Carlson said of the contract. "There was a lot of give and take on both sides."

Without giving specifics, Carlson said both retirement and health benefits in the new contract have been brought more in line with what other area districts are providing.

"It is financially sound for going forward for the district," Carlson said.

The additional planning time for teachers the new contract calls for also pleases Carlson.

"This will benefit our students," Carlson said.

Last Friday, the school board ratified the contract by a 4-3 vote, with members Tim Millar, Wendy Rowden and Kelly Keenan voting against the deal.

While saying he felt the new contract was better than the previous one, Millar said the new contract does not solve the district's problem of spending more than it is taking in.

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

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

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