

Dist. 15, teachers union headed to mediation

By Chad Brooks

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Acknowledging an agreement likely won't come before the start of school in two weeks, Palatine Township Elementary District 15 Superintendent Robert McKanna said he is glad the district and union can finally start negotiating with the help of a federal mediator.

McKanna said the first order of business for the mediator will be to determine a meeting time. There are no new negotiation sessions scheduled.

"The negotiations are a high priority for us, so it is good that we are getting this done," McKanna said.

After rebuffing the district's request for a mediator for the past two months, the union on Friday agreed that the mediation was needed.

Saying they wanted to avoid any further delays in negotiations, Lisa Nuss, chief negotiator for the Classroom Teachers' Council, the union that represents the 772 District 15 teachers and certified staff members, said they asked for the mediation after it became clear that the district was not going to continue bargaining until a mediator was present.

The union's request for mediation came just three days before the two sides would have been forced into doing so by the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

According to labor board statute, federal mediation is invoked if the two sides have not reached an agreement within 15 days of the start of school. That day was Monday.

McKanna said it is unlikely that the two sides will come to an agreement before students return to the classroom.

"I don't think it is very practical to think that will happen," McKanna said.

Some issues remaining on the drawing board include salary and health benefits.

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

The district is encouraging all parents and community members to follow the negotiation process through updates that will be posted at www.ccsd15.net.