

SPFE Mediation Update from Tuesday, February 15, 2022:

SPFE and SPPS met in our ninth mediation session Tuesday, February 15, the first time we've met together in person instead of Zoom.

Class size limits and student mental health supports dominated today's discussion. The district had proposed removing this language from the contract. Your bargaining team told them we won't settle a contract unless it includes caps on class sizes and guaranteed mental health support in our schools.

We reached a tentative agreement on simultaneous teaching parameters for online courses that will be implemented next school year. And we offered counter proposals on missed shifts for EAs on caucus nights, classroom budget, technology for non-licensed personnel, SCSP vacation, adult basic education, and severance.

Discussions continue on caseloads for special education teachers, but SPPS is not interested in our proposal for weighted caseloads for teachers serving Federal Setting 1 and 2 students. SPPS is also stuck on requiring paperwork days having to be done on site, something we think is not necessary.

Tuesday night the district sent a bargaining update with incomplete information about a verbal response regarding class size language. The district presented a "what-if" offer to keep the current class size language for one more school year. This was not a proposal presented in writing and only included a few details. Keeping class size language for one more year isn't good enough and puts us in the same position in the next round of bargaining.

Class size limits are just one of several key issues we are bargaining about to give students the supports they need and raise compensation so our district can recruit and retain great educators. There is much more work to be done, and the district isn't presenting the whole picture in an attempt to divide us before Thursday's strike vote.

There has been a shift in our discussions with SPPS and we are starting to see a little movement. That means the actions you have taken with us – wearing red every Thursday, the rally in January, wearing blue in solidarity with MFT, our Saturday march and the upcoming strike vote – are making the district bargaining team take us more seriously.

That's why showing up and casting your YES vote on Thursday is so critical. We've made some progress but still have a long way to go on our core demands. SPPS needs to see we are serious about settling a contract that invests in the supports students need and honors the work of educators.

Your bargaining team will continue to work diligently to reach a settlement that gives St. Paul students the schools they deserve and honors the work of educators, particularly our education assistants and support staff. Our next mediation date is February 22, 2022.