



1274 NEWSLINE



NORTH SUBURBAN TEACHERS UNION – LOCAL 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

Local 1274 Delegates Attend IFT Convention

In October, almost 400 delegates and guests attended the triennial Illinois Federation of Teacher Convention in Rosemont. Sixteen Local 1274 NSTU members served as delegates: Steve Grossman, Aaron Melnick, Beth Polich, Caitlen Sweeney, Cathy Peach, Dave Kondela, Jill Paisley, Laurie Hall, Mary Richards, Michael Sibell, Nick Conner, Pankaj Sharma, Robyn Caplan, Sherry Jo Baehr, Tim Miller, and Gina Milanesio.

Convention delegates elect IFT officers (President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Vice Presidents), and set broad policies and goals by debating and voting on amendments and resolutions. Resolutions passed included advocating for passage of a fair tax, addressing the teacher shortage, caring and protecting immigrant students, and the "Grow Your Own Teachers" initiative.

Two strong themes ran throughout the convention: the importance of the fair tax vote in November, and the Chicago Teachers Union strike that was happening in real time. Keynote speaker Governor Pritzker advocated for the Fair Tax, noting that the alternatives are drastic education cuts or a 15 percent increase to the flat tax. "There's only one choice," said Pritzker, "and that is to say YES to a Fair Tax."

Convention speakers included CTU leaders Jesse Sharkey and Stacy Davis Gates, who took a break from negotiations to give passionate and inspiring speeches. Former CTU President and retiring IFT Executive Vice-President Karen Lewis gave a rousing speech that brought a standing ovation. "I'm not a militant, I'm just an advocate for everybody," she said. "And I want you to advocate for your students, your members, your communities, and for whichever candidates you like." Delegates also heard from Senator Dick Durbin and AFT President Randi Weingarten.



NSTU delegates attended the IFT Convention. Front row left: Robyn Caplan, Gina Milanesio, Caitlen Sweeney. Back row left: Michael Sibell, Nick Conner, IFT Field Rep Cameron Sweeney, Laurie Hall, Sherry Jo Baehr, IFT President Dan Montgomery, Steve Grossman, Mary Richards, Aaron Melnick, Dave Dondela, and Pankaj Sharma

Dan Montgomery was reelected for his fourth term as IFT President. Montgomery is a NSTU member, where he served as our president. Previously he was president of NTFT and taught English at Niles North for 19 years. Our own NSTU President Steve Grossman was reelected to his fourth term as IFT Vice President. He serves on the IFT Executive Committee and is chair of the IFT Legislative Committee. Forty IFT Vice Presidents were elected to represent locals from across the state. Stacy Davis-Gates (Local 1) was elected as Executive Vice President and Jane Russell (Local 571) was reelected to a second term as Secretary-Treasurer.



NSTU Vice President Pankaj Sharma and NSTU President Steve Grossman both spoke out in support of Resolution #1, "Advocate for Passage of a Fair Tax in Illinois".

From the President: CTU Fights and Wins - for Their Students

Imagine if the schools within our local had a nurse available for the students only one day a week. Same with social workers and psychologists. Or if our schools had no library or librarian. Now imagine having 35, 40, even 45 students in your class because your contract has no enforceable contractual limits on class size. How long would you and your colleagues tolerate those kind of working conditions? How long would the parents and community members put up with those kind of learning conditions for their children?

That nightmare has been the reality in the Chicago Public Schools for decades as administration after administration claimed poverty and instituted a punishing system of austerity on the school system. Funny how Chicago's mayors can always find the money to subsidize the projects of wealthy developers, using a tax increment financing (TIF) system that ironically deprives schools of property tax revenue for two generations of students. It certainly created an interesting juxtaposition when Mayor Lightfoot quickly approved the massive TIF deal negotiated by her predecessor with one of Chicago's wealthiest developers for the Lincoln Yards project, in an already overdeveloped northside neighborhood, while then playing hardball with the unions during contract negotiations.

But our brothers and sisters of the Chicago Teachers Union let it be known that they had had enough. They placed the learning conditions of their students front and center in their recent contract negotiations with the Board of Education and the city's new mayor. And they won. The newly ratified agreement guarantees a nurse in every school, along with additional counselors, social workers, special education case managers, homeless student advocates, and librarians. It also includes funding for class size relief and enforceable class size limits.

It is a shame that it took an 11-day strike to get the deal done but that shame belongs to the Board of Education and the new mayor, who refused to even discuss the issues above until after the strike began. In fact, the mayor and her board cynically believed that if they offered a reasonable salary increase, the teachers would take the money and run, turning their backs on their students by dropping their core demands. And it wasn't just the mayor and her board. The press and business community also tried to shame the CTU into settling for less for their students. The Chicago Sun-



NSTU President Steve Grossman, IFT President Dan Montgomery, and AFT President Randi Weingarten at the CTU picket line at Lane Tech College Prep High School on October 17.

Times - a newspaper owned in part by a union consortium - ran a headline prior to the strike saying "CTU - Take the Deal." Fortunately for the roughly 400,000 students attending CPS schools, the teachers held out for them. And they did so with overwhelming support from parents and the community.

To understand the challenge that CTU faced in these negotiations, one needs to be familiar with Section 4.5 of the Illinois school code. It is an insidious amendment, passed by the General Assembly in 1995 at the behest of then mayor Richard M. Daley, as part of a package deal giving him greater control over the public schools, including the sole right to appoint all members of the Board of Education. Section 4.5, aimed directly at the Chicago Teachers Union by targeting the "exclusive representative" of employees in a "city having a population in excess of 500,000," strips bargaining rights from CTU that are guaranteed for all other teacher unions in the state, including our own.

Specifically, Section 4.5 classifies "class size, class staffing and assignment, class schedules, academic calendar, length of the work and school



Teachers and staff at Niles North High School (District 219) wore their NTFSS unions shirts in support of CTU on October 17.

day..., length of the work and school year...hours and places of instruction, and pupil assessment policies" as permissive subjects of bargaining. That means that though CTU has a right to raise those issues at the bargaining table, the Board of Education need NOT negotiate, and the workers cannot strike, over them. For the rest of unionized teachers in the state, those issues are mandatory subjects of bargaining - ones that must be negotiated in good faith. And if an impasse is reached, workers have a right to strike. With that in mind, the Mayor's strategy becomes clear: entice the union to agree on salary - a mandatory subject of bargaining, even for CTU - and then dismiss the other issues without fear of a strike.

So how was the CTU able to score such a big win for their students? They insisted all along on bundling the core issues for their students - class size and social services - with bread-and-butter issues like wages. That strategy was backed by massive support from the community and overwhelming solidarity among their members. And of course it helps that they were on the right side all along - fighting for fairness, justice, and essential services for their students.

But the fight is not over. To attain real justice, fairness, and equity we call on the General Assembly to restore full bargaining rights to CTU by repealing Section 4.5, and to bring democracy to Chicago by passing legislation for an elected school board.

In solidarity,



Bargaining Updates

Golf 67

Golf 67 has a tentative four-year agreement in the first full negotiations where the support staff were part of the bargaining unit. The team included President Jenni Orsello, Hope Nelson, Kevin Atwood, Sara Molnar, and Noel Sucherman. Elise Gould also assisted. They met eight times, beginning in May, and had a federal mediator for three of the meetings. IFT Field Rep Lenny Nieves provided help as well.

- Teacher increases per year: 3%, 3%, 3%, and 2.75%.
- Support staff increases: \$1.25 per hour for the first year, 3% each year after. The first year increase amounts to 7 to 9% for the majority of support staff. Data showed that support staff hourly rates were in the bottom half of the township and surrounding area. This was a major sticking point. The bargaining team stuck together to get the first year bump.
- Longevity increase of \$0.25 per hour for support staff with 15+ years in the district.
- The curriculum writing rate increases \$1.50 each year of the agreement and will be \$31.50 by the end of agreement.
- All extra duties increase by 3% each year. This was also a sticking point, especially for homework assistance after school and lunchroom supervision.
- Tuition reimbursement is re-instituted for the first time in 10-12 years (previously frozen due to budget issues), with a total pool of up to \$15,000 a year, with \$2000 maximum a year per member.
- Support staff no longer has to sign in and out, and have a break time during the day (this last part was especially important to classroom paras).
- No changes were made to insurance.
- Support staff are incorporated into significant amounts of language that had been only teacher prior, most significantly the protections and rights when faced with possible disciplinary actions.

Bargaining Updates cont'd...

District 219 NTFSS Extension

NTFTSS reached an agreement for a one year extension on their existing three year contract. The negotiating team included Teacher President Tim Miller, Teacher Vice President Ankur Joshi, and Support Staff President Caitlen Sweeney, with assistance from building reps Laurie Hall and Katie Weston.

Negotiations began this summer. The biggest issue was the way the Board originally interpreted the construction of salary schedules for the last two years of the contract. In the 2017 negotiations, NTFSS rejected the district's proposed two-tier salary system but did agree to have Steps A, B, and C inserted in front of Step 1. The Board interpreted future salary schedules as beginning at Step A instead of Step 1, resulting in two-tiered salary schedules. Earlier this year, NTFSS filed a grievance and entered into mediation, where the concept of a two tiered salary system was put to rest for good. As a result, the negotiation team was able to negotiate an extension salary schedule that has the same percentage applied to each

Save the Date!

Local 1274 General Membership Meeting

Niles North High School, February 6 at 4:00

The tentative agenda includes constitutional amendments, fair tax presentation, union scholarship information, union PD classes, and upcoming primary elections.

Council Report

District 39

The Wilmette Support Staff Council has formed their negotiation team, with members representing each building and job category. In anticipation of negotiations, they sent out a survey to members. The Council has been holding membership meetings during professional development days and has seen an increase in attendance.

District 69 PSRP Council

The executive board has worked hard with district administration to develop more leadership roles for their PSRP members. Because of this work, they now have PSRP representation on school and district leadership teams, and are developing mentor roles for paraprofessionals.



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NSTU Vice President Pankaj Sharma and NSTU Treasurer Robyn Caplan show their support for the reelection of IFT President (and former NSTU President) Dan Montgomery at the IFT Convention on October 19.