

MTA Response to John Schwan's memo of 12/10/09

If you are at the top of the RIF list (top 20%) or the bottom of the RIF list (bottom 20%), please don't read this email. Ignoring all altruistic motivations, I believe (with some caveats) that members of these two groups have strong economic incentives to vote for or against opening the contract and have made up their minds.

This email is directed at the group in the middle of the RIF list (I am a part of this group) who have not yet made up their minds. Unfortunately for the teachers in the middle, much of the discussions to-date have been on the legal issues of opening the contract. There has not been much discussion regarding the working condition ramifications of voting No or Yes for the teachers in the middle that plan on working in this district for the long term. In this regard, I have put together two scenarios that summarize many of the plus/minuses of voting No or Yes.

*While I can appreciate a desire to have a clear path to the complex decision we are all facing, I am troubled in many ways by this memo, and wish to address some assumptions.*

*I have deep concerns about the framing of this memo in such a divisive manner. We are all MTA, and any decision on the contract question will impact all of our membership. Assumptions about how individuals are thinking, based on their 'group' is disrespectful.*

*I also have a huge concern about the total non-recognition of Teaching Assistants, who are members of our bargaining unit. Their ranks have already been hit this semester, and we know they will lose at least 6 more colleagues in the spring.*

*\*\*My comments below are provided solely for clarity and correction, not for persuasion in any direction.*

Scenario 1 - Voting No - Don't Open

1. 75 teachers lose their jobs.

*MTA can influence 55 jobs; max...20 positions will be cut no matter what the membership decides. That is the BOE cost containment plan.*

2. No COLA adjustments.

*Cost of Living increases, in addition to step movement on the salary scale, are scheduled to be 3.2% and 3.5% in 2011 and 2012.*

3. Class sizes increase significantly.

*The BOE has adjusted their class size policy already, (during impact bargaining) to reflect an increase in class size for English and CWT. Currently, across the District, average class sizes are well*

below the maximum class size set by Board policy. We can certainly see an increase in class size, which will reduce the number of FTE's and TA's. Scheduling is a managerial right.

4. Working conditions changes are implemented - Increased class loads/supervisions for English, Science, AAT teachers etc.

5. With a lower number of teachers on staff, it becomes easier for District Administration to implement an eight period day in school year 2011-2012. Another round of RIFs becomes a real possibility.

While this is an assumption, the Administration has considered reverting to an 8 period day, as that format is less expensive to support than a 9 period day. About another round of Riffing...the Administration has never indicated any sort of timeline as to when reduction in force may stop. I suspect (based on discussion with the Admin over the past two months) they will be in a cost cutting mode for several years to come.

6. Teachers that are now "not" vulnerable to being terminated because of their current position on the RIF list, become vulnerable for the 2011-2012 school year because they will be closer to the bottom of the RIF list.

If the membership decides to open the contract to secure two more years of employment for X number of teachers/TA's, these people will have a high likelihood of being let go at the end of 2013 when the agreement and dollars from MTA run out. 1% savings or give back by MTA equals 8.5 teaching positions. In order to save all 55 teaching positions (and here I say positions as opposed to teachers, as we cannot name people), MTA members would have to commit to making a large financial sacrifice for the next two years, which will impact their earnings for the rest of their careers. And, yes, I know, an income is better than none.

#### Scenario 2 - Voting Yes - Open

1. 55 teaching jobs are potentially saved.
2. COLA reductions are implemented.

In reviewing the Admin's FAQ's for 12/09/09, I worry about point #7. The Administration is not talking about just COLA, but also a freeze on step, as a way to capture the maximum amount of revenue. Now, this would be an item for discussion, should the MTA vote to open the contract. But take a look at Vicky O'Malley's or Jack Marino's salary calculations on the NING. The potential wage losses are high. (Again, I realize that many of you choose to avoid the NING, as it has become a rather negative experience. But wade through that stuff and look at these calculations.)

3. Class sizes remain the same or marginally increase.

The Admin has made that statement in their FAQ of 12/09/09

4. Working condition changes - class loads/supervisions increase minimally for English, Science, AAT. teachers etc.

*I am uncomfortable with this assumption. Budget cuts in FTE's, TA's, Administrators, support staff will continue, and those cuts will impact how we carry on our business. When asked if FTE cuts would be done after 2012, Ken Wallace could not give such an assurance. In Special Ed, how will mainstream and inclusion students be supported without Teaching Assistants? Do the math. The District hopes to recoup \$15 million in one year, with \$5 million of that coming from MTA (actually, a little more, as TA's are under the non-certified category). Membership would have to agree to a complete salary freeze for two years, the impact of which would be felt for years to come.*

5. Administration/board gives up their right to RIF teachers for school years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012.

*This is untrue. The Illinois School Code gives the BOE the right to RIF and not renew contracts of nontenured teachers.*

6. With a higher number of teachers on staff who cannot legally be RIFed, it becomes very difficult to implement an eight period day in school year 2012-2013.

*Perhaps more difficult, but not necessarily undoable: The 8 period transition was considered, but could not be implemented so quickly for the 2010/2011 school year. Again, School Code gives the Board managerial rights, to hire, fire, and structure the school day.*

7. Teachers' current positions on RIF list marginally change. Teachers in the middle of the RIF list basically keep their middle position as opposed to moving closer to the bottom.

*Maybe...I believe there is a general trend of decreased enrollment...which means reductions. Perhaps these reductions can be countered by attrition. This is something difficult to predict. Excuse me getting historical, but, in the mid-1980's, we had multiple years of RIFing due to lower enrollment.*

*Now we have a decline in enrollment predicted, along with budget mishandling and a terrible economic climate.*

This obviously is not a comprehensive list of all the potential implications of voting yes or no. However, I do think these are important issues to consider for those teachers currently in the middle of the RIF list who plan on teaching in this district for the long term.

*And if you plan on teaching in the District for the long haul, then the District needs to be financially healthy in order to keep talented staff, and attract the next generation of District 207 educators.*