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Contact: Sarah Arnold (203) 977-4095

## **STATE ARBITRATION PANEL AWARDS NEW CONTRACT FOR STAMFORD TEACHERS**

*Decision holds down costs and increases flexibility in the work day to benefit students and families*

(December 15, 2009) A state-appointed arbitration panel has issued an award to the Stamford Board of Education (SBoE) and the Stamford Education Association (SEA) regarding a three year labor contract for the city's 1,380 public school teachers. The contract runs from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2013.

The award, issued yesterday afternoon, resolves 19 contract issues that arose during collective bargaining between the two parties. The award puts a freeze on teacher salaries in the first year of the contract and provides a general wage increase (GWI) of 2.8% over three years, compared to previous typical GWI of 9% over three years. This will result in an anticipated savings of more than \$7 million in GWI over the life of the contract. The award also contains a groundbreaking provision that enables the school district to shift employee work hours to better meet the needs of students and families.

In issuing the award, Arbitration Panel Chair J. Larry Foy wrote extensively about the impact of the recession, calling the economic forecast at the federal and state levels "bleak" and citing the need to acknowledge the effect on Stamford's budget. Currently, the statewide average settlement for teacher contracts is 6.78% over three years, which the arbitrator called "an appropriate guidepost" in ultimately awarding Stamford teachers an increase of 6.79% over three years.

A provision entitled 'Assignment of Work Day', which was requested by the Board of Education and granted by the arbitration panel, is believed to be the first of its kind in the state. This provision enables the SBoE to modify employee work hours so that they are more available to meet with parents or provide extended day services to students, for example. (next page)

On this issue, the arbitrator wrote, “Arbitrators found this to be a reasonable balancing of interests and the end result of meeting student needs is clearly in the public interest.”

Another new provision regarding the length of the work year allows the SBoE to require teachers who are assigned to a different school or who move from primary to intermediate grades (or vice versa) within a school to participate in two days of training, with compensation at the curriculum revision rate.

In addition to wage, length of work year, and work day assignment issues, the arbitration award also covers special ed class size, changes in work rules, elementary assigned time, promotions, retirement benefits, and promotions, to name some examples. Of the 19 disputed issues, the arbitrator ruled in favor of the SBoE in 13 instances and ruled in favor of the SEA in six.

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