

**AN OPEN LETTER FROM BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION PRESIDENT
PHILIP RUMORE**

Setting the record straight after *The Buffalo News* misrepresents the facts in contract negotiations with the Buffalo School District

THE BUFFALO NEWS REFUSED TO PRINT THIS ARTICLE

“Again, *The Buffalo News* misrepresents the facts.

Under the current Board (Contract) proposal, some teachers would actually *earn less* salary *after* they pay for their health care benefits.

The average base-salary increase for 2015-2018 is 3.5% *minus* the 20% teachers **must pay** for their benefits.

The Board’s salary offer is an average of *only nine-tenths of a percent (.9%)* per year when you include the 11 years that Buffalo teachers have been *without* a new contract. They will now have to **pay 20% of their health care benefits, amounting to approximately \$3,600 per year for some.**

If that *isn’t bad enough*, the Board *further decreases* its salary proposal by **increasing the school year by 2.2%, plus the school day by 12.2% (a 14.4% total increase) — putting the Board’s proposal *below* a 0% increase.**

Also *not mentioned* by *The Buffalo News*:

- the 17% reduction of sick days (usually at least one of your 30 or 150 students has a cold);
- mandating seeing a doctor on the day you are ill;
- increasing prescription co-pays from \$5/\$10 to \$10/\$25/\$40;
- increasing teaching periods from five to six periods (a 20% increase); and
- the withdrawal of arbitrations and other BTF legal victories that would cost the district *more than* \$20 million.

As a *further insult* to Buffalo teachers, this Board’s offer is \$16 million *less* than the Board’s *last offer*.

A subsequent offer was withdrawn as a result of an improper practice charge filed by the BTF.

Yes, this — plus other detrimental proposals — is what the Board is *demanding* from Buffalo teachers, who work under some of the most difficult conditions and who are already \$20,000 — *yes, \$20,000* — *behind* their colleagues in surrounding and other city school districts.

Yet, *The Buffalo News* characterizes the district's offer "as the starting point for serious negotiations."

In an incredible statement, *The Buffalo News* first refers to "work rules that have prevented significant progress in improving educational outcomes."

Then, in the next sentence — *The Buffalo News* states, "some of those antiquated requirements are almost laughable, including a smoking room in each school, a vending machine for each school's staff use only, access to outside telephones and a requirement that notices be posted on a bulletin board!"

Besides the fact that, with our agreement, there have not been pay phones or smoking rooms in schools for years, that *The Buffalo News* makes a statement linking these obsolete items to educational outcomes is bizarre.

While Buffalo teachers have come to expect these distortions, we hope the public will also see through them."

Philip Rumore
President
Buffalo Teachers Federation