

March 20th, 2019

Hello ChiArts Family,

We want to keep you updated on our ongoing good faith negotiations with the Chicago Teachers Union who represents our 40 academic teachers. We held our 21st bargaining session with them tonight. We have been working on this first contract with them since May of last year and unfortunately, remain far apart in terms of what we can afford and what they expect.

So, we have recommended that the union join us in a request to bring in an independent third-party mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service to help both parties come to a fair and appropriate resolution that supports our teachers and allows our school to remain financially solvent and provide the highest quality education for our students.

We have made a very fair offer, proposed a strong salary schedule and upped the retirement match. It appears from social posts and other materials that the union continues to compare us to Chicago Public Schools when in fact, we are significantly different. As a contract school, ChiArts is not funded the same way as CPS:

- We do not qualify for most federal Title 1 funding, which many district schools use to supplement the per pupil funding received from CPS.
- Contrary to CTU's assertions, we do not receive the same Student Based Budgeting (SBB) Funding that District-run schools receive.
- ChiArts teachers are not eligible to participate in the CPS pension plan (although there is legislation pending in Springfield this session that aims to change this.) Instead, we provide up to a 5% of salary match on our teachers' contributions to their 403(b) plans, and have proposed raising that to 7%.
- And, we don't have CPS' economies of scale – CPS can spread expenses out across a vast district – 499 traditional public schools; we are one school covering facility, engineering, maintenance, utilities, networking, copiers, technology and all operational and administrative costs.

Some of these differences are nice benefits for our academic teachers, including:

- At ChiArts, contributions to the 403(b) are fully vested after three years of service, unlike the CPS pension plan which requires ten years of service for vesting.
- ChiArts teachers pay into Social Security and will have that benefit at retirement.
- ChiArts offers generous health and welfare benefits at little to no cost to our teachers.
- Unlike CPS teachers, ChiArts teachers are not required to be Chicago residents.
- Our teachers have the shortest teaching day -- 8:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. and have very limited additional duties outside of their classroom teaching—no bus, recess or any after-school coaching responsibilities.

Our goal is to continue putting forth the best offer we can afford to support our academic teachers while continuing to serve our students at the highest level. We hope that we can reach agreement soon. We are working diligently to negotiate a fair contract that protects both the academic and the arts programs while making sure we can remain open for many years to come.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at jochoa@chiarts.org or 773-534-9724.

Sincerely,



José Ochoa
Executive and Artistic Director