

Statement from the Brookline School Committee – December 17, 2021

Last month, the School Committee [requested the assistance of a state mediator](#) from the Department of Labor Relations (DLR) to help us reach agreement with the Brookline Educators Union (BEU) on three-year contracts for teachers and administrators. We made this request after ten bargaining sessions, including several sessions in which there was no movement on multiple key issues. We are hopeful that mediation will help to break our deadlock, with good reason: the School Committee and the BEU used state mediation to resolve our last multi-year contracts.

Before assigning a mediator, the DLR directed the BEU and the School Committee to meet again next month to try to narrow the outstanding issues. We will do so, in good faith. However, we believe that the issues before us are hard to resolve, for two main reasons.

The first is financial. The Town sets our budget, and the School Committee cannot exceed it. We do not have the funds in our budget to agree to the BEU's demands on salary or to make the new hires required by their other demands, such as the extra staff that would be needed to provide more planning time for educators during the school day. We also cannot make a strong case to voters for a tax increase to pay for these demands, given the 15% drop in enrollment since Fall 2019. As of 2019-2020, the most recent school year with a settled contract, Brookline's teacher compensation is the highest among our suburban peer districts. The School Committee has offered a 6% salary increase over 3 years, on top of the 3.7% average annual raise that 63% of our teachers automatically receive. (See more about our salary offer [here](#).)

The second is that some of the BEU's demands don't belong in an employment contract. For example, the BEU has asked us to include contractual language on retaining more teachers of color. We share the goal of a diverse workforce, but believe it should be our newly restaffed Office of Educational Equity under the supervision of Superintendent Guillory, not an employment contract, that sets and executes equity policy.

Unfortunately, in response to the School Committee's request for mediation, the BEU declared a "Work to Rule" action last week, meaning that they will work within the letter of their contract and no more. This action is intended to pressure the School Committee. **We are saddened that the BEU has rejected mediation, has pressured the community to pressure us to abandon mediation, and has taken actions that will harm Brookline students – both through reduced teacher-student interactions and by provoking stress and anxiety in students and caregivers.**

We understand that many educators may see Work to Rule as their only way to be heard. We also understand that what the School Committee sees as disagreement, educators may see as disrespect. We regret this perception and wish to change it. Even before this work action, the School Committee committed to hold listening sessions to further understand the experiences of our educators. Above all, we look forward to coming to an agreement with the BEU on these contracts, so that we can return our full focus as a community toward our shared goal of providing an extraordinary education for every child.