Dear D92 Staff,

I want to take a moment to provide an update on our ongoing teacher contract negotiations and, most importantly, make sure you have accurate information about where things currently stand.

The District and the Union continue to negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement. We remain committed to the process and to reaching an agreement that is fair to our teachers while also being responsible to our students, families, and community.

The District's primary focus has been maintaining the ability to make thoughtful staffing decisions based on the needs of our students. Specifically, we have proposed changes to the current involuntary transfer language so that seniority would not be the sole determining factor when student needs require an involuntary transfer.

I want to be very clear that this request is not about diminishing the value of any teacher or moving people simply for the sake of making changes. We deeply value the experience, expertise, and relationships our teachers bring to our schools.

Our goal is simple. When staffing needs change, we want the ability to consider student needs, qualifications, experience and the overall needs of the position when determining the best staffing placement. This is consistent with language found in the Illinois School Code.

I understand there has been some discussion that the Illinois School Code language applies only to new hires. I would simply encourage you to read the language for yourself and draw your own conclusions. I believe you deserve the opportunity to review the information firsthand.

I also encourage you to consider another important point. One of the stated goals of the Union bargaining team is to attract and retain great teachers. If the contract requires the least senior qualified teachers to be transferred first whenever staffing changes occur, will we be able to recruit and retain great new teachers?

Please take a look at the contract language included in the attached presentation and see how neighboring elementary, high school, and consolidated districts approach involuntary transfers. You may be surprised by what you find.

We are not seeking to move teachers simply for the sake of moving them. Staffing needs can change because of student enrollment, programs, grade level needs, or changes in student needs. Fortunately, it is rare that we need to resort to an involuntary transfer. When it is necessary, however, we believe we should have the ability to thoughtfully place the right teacher in the right position based on the needs of our students.

We have attached a presentation that explains involuntary transfers, the purpose they serve, and why this flexibility matters. Our goal is simply to have the same ability many districts have, to consider what our students need and who is best qualified and prepared to meet those needs.

I also want to acknowledge the conversations and information circulating on social media and within our community regarding a potential strike. We understand that this may create uncertainty or concern, and we want our staff to have factual information rather than rely on rumors.

At this time, the District has not received formal notice from the Union of an intent to strike. There is a formal process that must be followed during negotiations, and we will continue to share factual information as it becomes available through that process. Updates will also continue to be posted on our Teacher Negotiations page.

I know negotiations can be difficult and, at times, uncomfortable. I also understand that there may be questions, concerns, or different perspectives. That is okay. What matters is that we continue to communicate respectfully, listen to one another, and remain focused on what we all share, a deep commitment to our students and our schools.

When we started this school year, I shared the story of the two villages, the wise man and the traveler. The lesson was that we often find what we are looking for, and what we carry in our hearts shapes how we experience the people and places around us. Since then, I have had the opportunity to walk our halls, visit classrooms, and see the amazing things you are doing for students this year. I see the smiles, I hear the laughter, and I see the positive relationships you are building with our students every day. I want you to know that I am, and will always be, here to support you in the best way I can.

I respect negotiations and the process that comes with them. While there may be difficult moments, I believe negotiations should ultimately be an opportunity to improve conditions for both our teachers and our students, not a fight between two sides.

By the time you read this, I understand the Union may have asked its membership to vote on whether to authorize a strike. Whatever happens, I remain hopeful that we can continue working together and come to an agreement on transfer language that puts the needs of the students first while ensuring that teachers experience an involuntary transfer as infrequently as possible.

At the end of the day, I truly believe we share the same goal: doing what is best for our students and ensuring they have the very best experiences in D92. That is why, even during challenging moments, I believe it is always great to #BeaBulldog.

Thank you for everything you do each day for our students, our families, and one another. We truly value your dedication, your expertise, and the relationships you build with our children. I appreciate the care and professionalism you continue to bring to District 92.

With appreciation,
Frankie