

Newark Teachers Join Call to Reclaim Promise of Public Education

Campaign launches with weekly outreach and community rally

NEWARK, New Jersey – Calling for an end to school closures and budget cuts in New Jersey’s largest school system, Newark teachers are taking to the streets outside their schools Friday, Dec. 6 and supporting a community rally Monday, Dec. 9. Restoring local control is seen by many as the solution to a host of problems in the district, according to Newark Teachers Union (NTU) President Joseph Del Grosso, including a shift in resources to charter schools and an overemphasis on high-stakes testing.

The coordinated action initiated by the Newark Teachers Union, an American Federation of Teachers local of more than 4,500 teachers, aides and clerk starts Friday, Dec. 6 and is based on outreach before and after school to parents and community members. Del Grosso said that union members want to take the message that Superintendent Cami Anderson has failed the district to the public. “Parents and residents need to see our members in the neighborhood and talk about how the district’s policies are hurting Newark’s children,” he said.

For Monday, Dec. 9, NTU is joining a community coalition including the Newark Students Union, New Jersey Communities United and the Newark NAACP to participate in a national day of action after school. The groups will meet downtown and march to reiterate the call for community control and decry disparities in racial equity and funding.

The union cites charges that Newark Public Schools lost \$56 million in state aid under Anderson’s leadership and she proposes to close as many as 15 more community schools. Newark, the state’s most populous school district, has a higher percentage of students in charter schools than any city in the state. “After 18 years of state controlled failure, we are calling for a renewed focus on supporting teacher-led efforts to fix neighborhood schools instead of gimmicks and public giveaways,” said Del Grosso. “However, teachers cannot do it alone. We are calling on parents to get involved and join the parent-teachers organizations in Newark.”

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Del Grosso said the local is fully in support of the national day of action proposed by the American Federation of Teachers on Dec. 9 based on the premise that those closest to the education process—teachers, administrators, school staff, students and their parents and community members—must have a voice in education policy and practice. Top-down reforms, like those that have been instituted in Newark for the past 18 years, do not address the real needs of schools or students, he said. “Fightback Fridays and Monday’s National Day of Action to Reclaim the Promise of Public Education are vital elements of our union’s efforts to build a nurturing community to improve Newark schools,” said Del Grosso.

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