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DPS teachers voting on changes to hiring, transfers

By Jeremy P. Meyer

The Denver Post

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A plan reworking how teachers are hired and move from job to job in Denver Public Schools is being voted on by union members.

Most teachers would no longer be able to vacate their positions for another job in the district, and principals would not be able to remove teachers based on personal issues.

Also, a change in the hiring process would make it easier to hire teachers from outside of the district — removing a three-step cycle for internal candidates before outside teachers can be considered.

The union and district have come under fire recently for how certain teachers are directly placed in schools. Critics say the process protects poor teachers by allowing them to be

shuffled from school to school with no accountability.

"It allows someone who is a good teacher to find a better job," said Sara Howell, union representative at Hamilton Middle School after a meeting with other representatives Tuesday night.

"But it makes me nervous, because I no longer have the right to vacate my position and be guaranteed a job," she said.

Howell said she vacated her position at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School because she had conflicts with the administration.

She ended up being placed at Hamilton, but under the new system only teachers displaced by school closure, redesign, restructure or program change can vacate their positions.

Last year, 264 teachers were direct placements, according to DPS records.

"What we would like is to clearly have this placement system be a voluntary system, so teachers teach where they want and principals have teachers who they want in their buildings," said Tom Boasberg, DPS' chief operating officer.

The tentative agreement between the union and district must be approved by the union membership and the school board. Union votes will be counted Friday.

Boasberg also hopes a "rolling posting system" will improve the teaching stock in the district. Now, the district gives internal candidates three chances before posting the job for external candidates. By that time, many outside teachers have found jobs elsewhere.

"That puts us a couple of months behind competing districts who have an open-posting system," Boasberg said. "The new system, they can post the job, if there is a good teacher in the district, they can hire (him). If there is a good teacher outside, they can hire (him). That makes us more competitive."

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Rocky Mountain News

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

DPS hopes new plan will lessen

turnover

By **Nancy Mitchell** <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , **Rocky Mountain News (Contact** <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

Denver Public Schools teachers begin voting today on contract changes aimed at reducing the hundreds of classroom teachers who switch schools every year.

That includes struggling teachers moved by principals unwilling to follow the tedious rules necessary to either help them improve - or remove them from DPS.

"What the whole agreement does is it tremendously simplifies the process," said Lawrence Garcia, a math teacher at Martin Luther King Jr. Early College who worked on the proposed changes. "It really is removing a lot of red tape."

Garcia and Kim Ursetta, president of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, said the changes begin to address concerns raised in recent weeks by principals seeking more freedom in hiring teachers.

But the biggest boon to those principals would come in fall 2009, when school leaders would be able to post vacancies when they want and to recruit inside and outside the district as they choose.

The proposed changes were crafted in the past month by a group of DPS staff and union members.

"Both sides knew there needed to be improvement," Garcia said. "Hopefully we've done that."

In the 2006-07 school year, more than 1,100 teachers in DPS looked for other jobs within the district. Nearly 200 others left their schools for other reasons, including retirements and resignations. That's about a third of DPS' 4,100 teachers turning over in a single year.

Proposed changes include eliminating transfers initiated by principals, a practice that union leaders say should force them to work with teachers with performance problems instead of passing them on to other schools. The number of teachers whose contracts were not renewed for poor performance dropped from 86 in 2004- 05 to 30 in 2006-07.

Another change would limit the use of annual assignments, which require the jobs be posted every year even if the school and teacher don't want to make a change.

Teachers' ballots are due by 5 p.m. Friday. DPS board members also must approve the changes.

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