

City schools, union set deal

Contract

3% annual raises for administrators

JUSTIN MURPHY

@CITIZENMURPHY

The Rochester City School District and its administrators union have agreed on a four-year contract that provides a 3 percent annual raise to members while sharply curbing the amount of vacation time they can cash out.

The new contract comes 18 months after the last one technically expired. Union members — all the district's principals, assistant principals and supervisors, including some central office staff — had continued working under the old terms.

The 3 percent annual pay increase is retroactive to January 2015, meaning union members only get half the benefit in the 2014-15 school year. The contract runs through June 30, 2018.

In return for the raise, the district gets a number of long-sought measures it hopes will save money over the years.

The vacation cash-outs in particular long have been a sticking point. They now will be available only to building principals and some other top-level directors, and will be limited to 10 days. Other administrators will be switched to an 11-month schedule, with four weeks off in the summer and no paid time off the rest of the year.

Association of Supervisors and Administrators of Rochester employees also now will be required to report to work when schools are closed due to weather, without any additional pay.

See **CONTRACT, Page 14A**



Rochester School District building on Broad Street.

JAMIE GERMANO / STAFF FILE PHOTO 2011

Continued from Page 3A

“I believe this agreement fairly meets the needs of our district and I am pleased that we can move forward

collaboratively with our administrators to do the critical work of improving student achievement in our schools,” Interim Superintendent Linda Cimusz said in a statement.

It is no coincidence that momentum in negotiations increased in the last few months after former Superintendent Bolgen Vargas stepped down. He pinpointed an unyielding administrative structure as a key obstacle in his quest to reallocate district dollars into classrooms and often complained the union blocked him from the authority he required and deserved.

“Inflexible rules and contractual constraints prevent the kind of evidencebased educational reform we need to improve outcomes for Rochester students,” he told the state Legislature last February, asking it to weaken the state’s principal tenure rules. Two months later, the district alleged ASAR was not negotiating in good faith.

For its part, the union considered Vargas heavy-handed and uncommunicative. They voted no-confidence in him in January 2014 and played a supporting role in the feud with the school board that led to his departure.

Last May, ASAR members voted for a change in leadership, replacing Sandy Jordan with Tim Cliby. In November, Cliby said a new contract was not “the biggest item on our wish list,” instead citing issues with school discipline.

Since Cimusz took over in mid-January, however, a detente has developed, allowing progress between the two sides.

Cliby did not respond to a request for comment.

With the ASAR deal, the district has agreements in place with three of its four bargaining units. The Rochester Teachers Association’s contract lapsed in June and has not been renegotiated.

The RTA and administration met to negotiate Thursday. RTA President Adam Urbanski said while some issues remain, particularly on the issue of school climate, he has found Cimusz to be “consistently fair and open-minded.”

“I hope and expect we will have a tentative agreement within the next week or so,” he said.

JMURPHY7@Gannett.com