

FCT Wins Contract with NY Archdiocese

It took a full year of rigorous negotiations and determined union effort, but we are happy to say that the Federation of Catholic Teachers (FCT) has won a new contract.

The FCT, which is affiliated with Local 153, represents more than 2,600 Catholic school teachers throughout the Archdiocese of New York. The teachers had been working without a contract since September, 2014, and they were not shy in expressing their firm resolve to obtain a fair agreement.



And they did just that. The teachers have won a contract that addresses not only wages but other important issues.

"There's something in this contract for everyone; part-timers, full-time teachers, veteran teachers and newer members of our union," said FCT President Julia Pignataro. "We are happy to say that we were also able to hold the line on healthcare."

Under the agreement the teachers will receive a wage increase of one percent retroactive to 2014, one percent for the second year, and two percent for each of the last two years of the four-year contract.

There are improvements in pay for preparation periods, and the union was able to hold the line on the cost of medical. There were also improvements in the terms of the accumulation of sick leave, with a buy-back for each unused current

school year allotment of sick days. Furthermore, there will now be improved classroom evaluations, professional performance appraisals and employment contracts.

And as FCT President Julia Pignataro made clear, there is something for everyone in the contract. The agreement calls for retirement bonuses of between \$3,000 and \$10,000 for teachers with at least 30 years of service who retire during the term of the contract. Tenured teachers will also enjoy improvements regarding the hiring list.

Obtaining a fair agreement was no easy task for the leadership team of the FCT. Demonstrations outside of schools and the headquarters of the Archdiocese of New York were necessary to get the attention of the employer, as were a series of one-day strikes and a good amount of media

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The FCT's battle for a fair contract included demonstrations outside the headquarters of the Archdiocese of New York, upper left, and rallies and one-day strikes at schools including St. Jean Baptiste, Sacred Heart, Our Lady Queen of Peace and Notre Dame Academy.

coverage. Columnists in the New York Times and the New York Daily News brought attention to the situation faced by the teachers and helped win public support. One columnist highlighted the superlative job Catholic school teachers do in educating their students. A full 98 percent of Catholic school students in the Archdiocese of New York graduate high school and 96 percent of them go on to

college. While changing demographics have severely impacted the parish system throughout the Archdiocese of New York, the Federation of Catholic Teachers and its members have done outstanding work upholding the tradition of Catholic education and the scholastic excellence that has always been its imprint. In return for this exceptional collective job performance, it was only fair for the FCT members to receive a good contract. That

goal has been achieved.

"There are some new members of the FCT administration and they were clearly up to the task," Local 153 Secretary-Treasurer Richard Lanigan said. "They never once wavered in the face of a stone wall they faced in negotiations, and they kept working and working until a fair agreement was reached. They deserve to be congratulated for this!"