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## Updated 9/16: Wilmette teachers defend pact rejection

(<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/wilmette/news/1167383.wi-union-091608-s1.article>)

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Wilmette teachers say that "no way" are they paid on a par with other teachers in New Trier township feeder schools, and they're claiming that the District 39 School Board is waging a "misinformation campaign" to mislead the public.

"It appears the board wants the schools closed and the teachers on picket lines," said union representative Debby Atwater Tuesday. The union is planning to hold informational coffees to get its story out to the public.

Negotiators for the School Board reportedly walked away from a mediation session at 3:30 a.m. Monday after extending their "final and best" offer.

Board President Alan Dolinko expressed disappointment Tuesday that the union did not respond to the board's offer but instead filed a 10-day notice of a possible strike. The notice starts a 10-day cooling off period during which no strike can be called.

A fact sheet put out by the union Tuesday says that surrounding school districts require, on average, between 20 and 30 semester course hours beyond a master's degree to reach the highest track on the pay scale. In Wilmette District 39, teachers need 60 additional course credits beyond a master's degree -- the equivalent of two master's degrees.

The fact sheet notes that the district has a multimillion-dollar surplus in the education fund and can "offer the teachers a fair and affordable contract and still maintain a substantial surplus."

Teachers have offered to extend the school day by 20 minutes -- the equivalent of two work weeks -- to increase instructional time and achieve parity with surrounding districts.

"Great schools are the reason families move to Wilmette and great schools require great teachers," said union representative Kelly Jackson. "Wilmette must be able to compete for the best teachers by offering compensation packages comparable to those in other nearby districts."

As of today, no negotiating sessions have been scheduled.