

# Teachers strike in New York suburb of Yonkers

A correspondent  
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More than 2,000 teachers went on strike in Yonkers, just north of New York City, on Friday, October 1. The Yonkers Federation of Teachers reported that the walkout was 99 percent effective.

The dispute centers around classroom schedules and working conditions, and does not involve wages or benefits. The teachers are fighting an attempt by the schools superintendent to unilaterally alter their work schedules in the city's middle schools and high schools. Under the previous contract, which expired last June, teachers taught in 45-minute periods for a total of three-and-a-half hours a day. Superintendent Andre Hornsby has imposed block scheduling, with 90 minute periods adding up to four hours and 18 minutes, sometimes without a break.

The teachers were not informed of the new schedules until just before the reopening of school in September. The school district has offered to return to last year's schedules, but only if the teachers agree that the new schedules take effect next September.

Teachers reported strong support among students and parents. At some schools, including Middle School 25 and Saunders Trades and Technical High School, parents or students joined the picket lines. The school district kept schools open with the aid of strikebreakers paid \$175 a day, but in most cases little teaching took place.

A car driven by an assistant principal hit two picketing teachers at Lincoln High School. The teachers were treated for minor injuries at a local hospital. Police claimed that the incident was an accident, and filed no charges.

The Yonkers strike is the first in New York State since a one-day strike in nearby Mount Vernon in 1994. Yonkers teachers have often gone on strike, including in 1972, 1977 and 1990. The school district is pursuing

contempt charges against the union, and teachers could lose two days' pay for each day on strike under a state law forbidding public employees from striking.



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