

September 7, 2005

Letters to the editor

*The Republican*

P. O. Box 2350

Springfield, MA 01102-2350

Dear Editor:

This is in response to two articles in *The Republican*—one on August 25, 2005, “Teacher vacancy figures down” and another on September 7, 2005, “Schools open smoothly despite glitches.” In both articles, Superintendent Burke downplayed the significance of the largest exodus of licensed, highly qualified teachers from the Springfield Public Schools in one year. The day school opened for students, Burke was quoted as saying there were only 14 vacancies. That same day I called the School Department and was told there were 50 vacancies. The very next day the local radio news reported 39 vacancies. Superintendent Burke, what is the real story?

What is real is that with over 15 percent of the teaching staff in Springfield new to the Springfield Public Schools and no mentor program in place as required by the Massachusetts Department of Education, the lack of a state mandate mentor program places an unprecedented strain on our veteran teachers.

Contrary to Burke’s statement, new teachers have not received a “very, very, cold reception” from veteran teachers. I am so proud to represent these teachers. Through years of mistreatment, disrespect, and economic injustice inflicted on them by the city and subsequently the Ryan/Romney Finance Control Board, they continue to act responsibly and put the children first. Now is the time for our mayor to do the same. Mayor Ryan, honor your word and these dedicated educators by signing the home rule petition for binding arbitration before it’s too late.

Sincerely,

Timothy T. Collins

President