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Archdiocese, Teachers at Table

Negotiate in effort to avoid a strike

By Nick Chiles
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The union representing teachers at 10 Catholic high schools was locked in marathon negotiations last night with representatives from the Archdiocese of New York to avoid a strike.

The archdiocese's Lay Faculty Association represents about 450 teachers from the 10 schools, five of which are in New York City. Their contract expired Aug. 31.

Union representative Henry Kielkucki said the archdiocese's offer of an 8 percent raise over three years was "unacceptable for teachers who make $31,900 on average a year."

"We're looking to see an average teacher in 2004 make about $42,000 and the top about $55,000 a year," Kielkucki said.

The union is seeking an 18 percent raise over three years. The negotiations are taking place in Hawthorne, N.Y., with a federal mediator's assistance.

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for the archdiocese, said the archdiocese is committed to the collective bargaining process.

"We encourage the Lay Faculty Association to continue to negotiate in good faith, as that is the only way to reach a settlement that is just and fair for both sides," Zwilling said.

The five schools in New York City are Cardinal Hayes and Cardinal Spellman high schools in the Bronx, Cathedral High School in Manhattan, and Moore Catholic and Monsignor Farrell high schools on Staten Island. There are three in Westchester County, one in Orange County and one in Dutchess County.

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