



NEWTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE NEWS



✉ schoolcommittee@newton.k12.ma.us

🌐 www.newton.k12.ma.us/schoolcommittee

School Committee News

Negotiations Update - December 19, 2023

Dear NPS Community,

On December 18, 2023, the School Committee conducted another mediation session with the Newton Teachers Association, organized by our state appointed mediator. A day prior to that session, the NTA presented its newest proposal, which dramatically increased their requested cost of living adjustment (COLA) proposal and also reinstated numerous proposals that they had withdrawn over the last several months. Typically, the parties to a negotiation normally strive to reach agreement rather than to get farther apart.

Nonetheless, in response to some very good news that after numerous discussions and collaboration with the Superintendent and School Committee, the Mayor made a commitment for additional funding to NPS utilizing the City's overlay surplus. This weekend, the Superintendent announced a plan to use the money in a number of important ways to respond to educator and

Those needs include additional social workers and mental health supports for students, reducing high school class sizes and improving coordinated prep time for elementary school teachers. In addition, the School Committee has increased the COLA proposals made to all NTA units using these new funds that are now available to us. **Our most recent offer is as follows:**

In the first year of the contract for Units A,B and E:

- 2.25% increase for people who are stepping. These employees already receive an average 4% annual increase. This would bring their yearly salary adjustments to an average 6.25% total increase.
- 2.75% increase for people who are on the top step

In the second year of the contract for Units A,B and E:

- 2.25% increase for people who are stepping
- 2.75% increase for people who are on the top step

In the third year of the contract for Units A,B and E:

- 2.75% increase for people who are stepping
- 3.25% increase for people who are on the top step

Our Unit C offer is structured a bit differently because we believe it is more important to offer a higher COLA to the people at the bottom levels of our Unit C salary schedule. This is also a position shared by the union for this category of employees. Our current top step Unit C salaries pay well above all of our surrounding districts and are competitive among statewide salary comparisons. Furthermore, during our last mediation session, the School Committee agreed to significantly raise the incoming wage for our unit C paraprofessionals by dropping the bottom two steps from our Unit C salary schedule. This tentative agreement demonstrates our mutual desire to continue to attract highly competent and skilled Unit C staff. **Our Unit C proposal is as follows:**

In the first year of the contract for Unit C:

- 2.5% increase for people who are stepping
- 2% increase for people who are on the top step (currently paid highest among surrounding districts)

In the second year of the contract for Unit C:

- 2.5% increase for people who are stepping

In the third year of the contract for Unit C:

- 3% increase for people who are stepping
- 3% increase for people who are on the top step

Our Unit D, ISS substitutes, offer has slight variations in the structure of the COLA because we have offered significant changes to the salary schedule in the first year of the contract as a separate tentative agreement in negotiations. **Our Unit D proposal is as follows:**

In the first year of the contract for Unit D:

- 2.25% increase for people who are stepping and who are on the top step

In the second year of the contract for Unit D:

- 2.25% increase for people who are stepping and who are on the top step

In the third year of the contract for Unit D:

- 3% increase for people who are stepping and who are on the top step

With this most recent COLA proposal, the School Committee's percentage increases are within the averages of surrounding districts that settle contracts within the past couple years. Notably, our proposed COLA percentages are sufficient to keep our district salaries competitive among our peers.

We are grateful to have additional funding from the City to address the many important priorities for our district. With these funds we should be able to both settle this contract *and* provide the resources necessary to improve our students' social and emotional health, reduce their class sizes to improve academic excellence and improve preparation time in a coordinated fashion for elementary school. These improvements represent the mutual objectives, shared equally, between the School Committee and the NTA.

We have deep respect and appreciation for the professionalism of our educators. We are confident that our continued good faith efforts will result in a mutually satisfactory contract with competitive salaries and benefits that is also financially responsible.

Lastly, we hope our students, faculty, staff, parents, guardians and community members all have an enjoyable school vacation, a Happy Holiday and a wonderful New Year!

Sincerely,

The Newton School Committee