

## Memorandum

To: School Committee  
From: Collective Bargaining Committee  
Date: June 12, 2023  
Subject: Collective Bargaining Update

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As we discussed previously with the School Committee, the Collective Bargaining Team took very seriously the Newton Teachers Association's (NTA) recent statements that they would like to finalize a contract soon. The School Committee shares that desire.

The School Committee asked to start the bargaining process with the NTA early in the school year with the goal of finalizing a contract prior to the expiration of the current contract on August 31, 2023. After several months of productive discussions we have reached tentative agreements on a number of proposals put forward by the NTA such as paying NPS teachers to provide substitute coverage in the middle and high schools. This will reduce the number of cancelled classes at the high school level. The School Committee recently shared a comprehensive package with the NTA that includes these tentative agreements, and presents a financial compensation offer that the NPS budget can accommodate in a sustainable way. The proposals contained in the package also seek to improve the flexibility needed to better meet students' needs.

When the School Committee's budget grows at a rate of more than 3.5% per year, we are forced to seek additional sources of funding such as the recent operating override, which voters rejected, or to make cuts in staff, programs and services. One of the School Committee's guiding principles in these contract negotiations, therefore, is to make sure that the rate of growth of the salaries and benefits specified in the contracts does not exceed 3.5% each year.

The proposals we have discussed with the NTA also include changes in years 2 and 3 of the contract that affect the health care benefits provided by NPS. In each of the last several contracts, the parties have bargained on, and made, incremental changes to health insurance benefits. This year is no different. Like many other employers, NPS and its employees share health care costs. For most employees, NPS pays 75% of an employee's health insurance premium costs and the employees pay 25%. Faced with the tremendous pressure of rising health care costs, NPS has made some proposals that would affect the out-of-pocket portion of employees' health care expenses. For example, NPS has proposed decreasing the district's contributions for the highest-cost plans (which a very small percentage of our employees elect) and making \$5 increases to copays for certain services.

### **Financial Compensation Details**

NPS is one of the highest-paying school districts in our state, as shown in the data collected by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Our teachers' salaries (Unit A)

are in the top third when compared to other nearby and comparable public school districts. Our paraprofessionals' salaries (Unit C), especially our employees at the top step, are paid far higher than all of our nearby and comparable districts. Other districts are trying to reach Newton's salary schedules. Charts showing these comparisons to other districts' salaries are linked [here](#).

The following summaries describe the impact of the School Committee's current salary proposals for two sample NTA employees, taking into account both step increases for years of experience and the proposed COLA (Cost of Living) increases:

Example 1 – Classroom Teacher (Unit A) with 5 years of experience and a Master's Degree

Current Salary	Proposed 2023-24	Proposed 2024-25	Proposed 2025-26
\$72,556	\$76,243	\$81,383	\$85,857
	5.1% annual increase	6.7% annual increase	5.5% annual increase
	\$3,687 increase	\$5,140 increase	\$4,474 increase

The cumulative increase in salary over the three-year period is \$13,301.

Example 2 – Teaching Assistant (Unit C) at Step 3 working 35 hours/week

Unit C employees are paid on an hourly basis, not an annual salary. Unit C employees receive health care and other benefits available to NTA members.

Current Salary	Proposed 2023-24	Proposed 2024-25	Proposed 2025-26
\$30,855	\$33,187	\$35,736	\$38,521
	7.6% annual increase	7.7% annual increase	7.8% annual increase
	\$2,332 increase	\$2,549 increase	\$2,785 increase

The cumulative increase in salary over the three-year period is \$7,666.

### **School Year - Use of Days**

The current contract (and many prior contracts) with the NTA give NPS the right to schedule teachers to work 182 days with students and to work 3 additional days, for a total work year of 185 days. This 185 day work year is integral to how teachers' salaries are set.

For many years, NPS has not scheduled all 182 days for students that it has contractually entitled to schedule. The state requires that students be scheduled for a minimum of 180 school days with their teachers. As part of its current proposals, the School Committee has proposed that the contract be changed so that 2 of the 182 days that teachers are contractually obligated to spend with students be available to be used for professional development and training or family conference time. The School Committee believes that this additional flexibility will benefit all students and families. This does not pose an additional burden on our employees because they are already being paid to work these days.

We look forward to continued productive discussions with the NTA and to finalizing a contract before the current contract expires in August.