



Negotiations Trends in Collective Bargaining: Westchester and Putnam County School Districts

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Introduction

Recent Collective Bargaining Agreements, until now, have reflected the trend since the extraordinary inflation from 2022-2023 with many settlements centered at or below 2%+step.

While persistent health insurance cost increases are still a factor in negotiations, some settlements do not account for any increase in the employees' premium share of health insurance costs, while others raise the bar by fractions (e.g. .25% or .50% per year).

The Rockefeller Institute Report did not move the needle in terms of how foundation aid would be meted out for the 2025-26 school year and the Regionalization initiative has not taken hold to produce economic benefits among local school districts.

The uncertainty in the stock market has cast a dark cloud over pending negotiations.



TRS and NYSLRS Rates

The rates charged for Teachers Retirement System eligible employees is set to decline for the 2025-26 school year:

2024-25 rate: 10.11%
2025-26 rate: 9.59%

The NYSLRS rates a/k/a ERS rates are set to increase for the 2025-26 school year:

2024-25: 15.20%
2025-26: 16.50%

[Note: Stock Market performance of over 7% is necessary to meet the actuarial assumptions of TRS. A multi-year sharp decline in the markets may cost spikes in these rates. Years ago, the TRS rate increased by 4.41% in one year or the equivalent then of a 3.0% salary increase.]



Health Insurance Cost Increases

The expected Health Insurance Premium Rate increases area school district are as follows:

NYSHIP 2025	0.2-2.34%
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PNWHIC 2025-26	3.9%
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SWCHIP 2025-26	9.1%
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Trends

- Adding Steps to the Teachers Salary Schedule to reduce the cost of step increment
- The use of off-schedule monies both recurring and non-recurring
- The use of flat dollar applications to the steps of the salary schedule to reduce the cost attributable to step movement on teachers' salary schedules.
- Agreements for the use of tutors via remote instruction to provide services to medically fragile students and students suspended. Such services to be delivered during prep periods and/or after school hours.
- Continuing use of BOCES CoSer Agreement to provide instruction in areas where few students in a school district seek such course of studies.



Trends

- The issue of time comes up in negotiations from both the District and the Union:
 - District
 - Additional time for student help (during or after school)
 - Additional student contact time (i.e., increased instructional periods, increased number of instructional days).
 - Time in the day to provide students with social-emotional lessons.
 - Union
 - Mandatory Trainings – when are they to be done?
 - Reduction in instructional load for certain stipend positions.
 - Release time for Union Officers other than President.



Evaluation

There has been no aggressive movement towards changing APPR evaluation systems from Education Law §3012-d to Education Law §3012-e evaluation processes.

The mandate to move does not begin until the 2032-33 school year, but could be implemented earlier if the parties so desire.



The End

Questions?