

**TEACHER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**  
GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD TEACHER CONTRACT BARGAINING COMMITTEE  
AND GRAND FORKS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 6, 2025

The Grand Forks School Board Teacher Contract Bargaining Committee (Board Team) and the Grand Forks Education Association (Association Team) met on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at the Mark Sanford Education Center with Board Team Leader Amber Flynn as chairperson.

**Board Team Members Present:** Dave Berger, Amber Flynn, Joel Larson, and Jeff Manley.

**Board Team Members Absent:** None.

**Association Team Members Present:** Melissa Buchhop, Kala Christensen, and Joseph Drumm.

**Association Team Members Absent:** None.

**Resource Team Present:** Dr. Terry Brenner, Superintendent (per school board policy CBD); Brandon Baumbach, Business Manager; and Griffin Gillespie, Human Resources Director (per Ground Rules).

**Others Present:** Terry Bohan, Community High School Principal; Eric Ripley, Executive Director of CTE; Dr. Catherine Gillach, Associate Superintendent of Secondary Education; and Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

**Call to Order.**

The meeting was called to order at 5:07 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes.**

It was moved by Buchhop and seconded by Larson to approve the April 29, 2025, minutes as written. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals.**

A revised tentative agreement report was distributed and reviewed.

Dr. Gillach provided information about the middle school teachers' workday and contract time. By design, teachers have additional duties assigned at the start of the day, such as helping students transition into the building. The duties typically happen on a weekly rotation. Every teacher has designated prep time, and if the teacher is called away, there are mechanisms to compensate the teacher. Teachers are the most qualified for safety reasons, as they are perceived as an

authority. If an additional 20 minutes of designated prep time at the start of the workday were added, it would erode safety and impact daily operations.

Gillach left the meeting.

The Association Team reported that one of the main reasons for bringing forth their proposal was that middle school teachers said they do not have enough time to complete their work, and that, now, adjusting the schedule for flex time, they have even less time.

A discussion continued about what flex time is. Buchhop reported that flex time was like RTI Time. Christensen explained RTI stood for response to intervention, and that 26 minutes twice a week, teachers work with students on skills by doing guided practice, interventions, or an extension working on extra skills, which has changed the teachers' schedules and added to their workload.

Gillach returned to the meeting and affirmed Christensen's explanation of the RTI model. She reported RTI was similar to Rider Time at the high schools. Instructional minutes throughout the day are reapportioned by shaving off 2-3 minutes per period and incorporating them into one chunk of the day to do interventions with students. This is the model that is being instituted at the middle level.

Bohan provided information about Community High School's alternative school model. The school's design is that of a combination teaching classroom. It's a one-room schoolhouse philosophy, a one-room schoolhouse format, and the cornerstone of its instructional model.

He commented that the testimonials provided by the Association Team were accurate in what they described. He pointed out the typical instructional day of 330 minutes. The school day, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., is shorter than at Red River and Grand Forks Central high schools, and right on the line in compliance with state requirements. Teachers teach in a one-room, multi-age, multi-class format daily. He expressed concern about the 6/5ths language in the Association Team's proposal and how it traditionalized an alternative school. The word 'period' often refers to a unit of instruction and is a concern in the context of the school's instruction model, which more closely resembles a combination concept. Bohan pointed out another variable that he did not think had been thoroughly articulated, which was that the student population tends to be challenged.

Regarding costing the proposal, Bohan said he would use a count of 8.5 FTE staff. The school has other staff who do not teach in the instructional model.

The Association Team pointed out that they proposed the 6/5ths route because in previous negotiations, they proposed a combination classroom option, but it was rejected.

Bohan left the meeting.

Ripley provided information on the current model of career and technical education (CTE) and when the Career Impact Academy opens next year.

The current model, without the Career Impact Academy, includes online delivery of instruction in rural communities. Because those rural schools start before the GFPS academic calendar, those instructors have been asked to have a touchpoint with those students the week leading up to the start of GFPS's instructional year, i.e., the week of GFPS's combo PD/prep time that is provided to instructors. Guidance regarding when that is to occur during that week has not been directed or dictated. Ripley felt that the touchpoint prepares students to be ready for the first day of instruction and is a part of the teachers' preparation for their instructional course as part of their contract and compensation. The touchpoint is to provide access codes for Google Classroom or to deliver materials to students, in which case, the teacher's mileage is compensated. Three teachers instruct students in an online format this year.

Next year, with the Career Impact Academy, those students will receive instruction onsite rather than online. One course, Intro to Graphic Arts, may be the exception. Rural communities will follow the GFPS instructional calendar.

Berger clarified there is a difference between contract days, which include the combo PD/prep time, and when referring to the academic calendar, that is contact days.

Buchhop clarified that elementary teachers use their prep time to prep their classrooms and prepare for open house. If there are teachers who choose to send a Seesaw message early, it is not a requirement that they make contact before the open house.

Ripley left the meeting.

Drumm reported that the Association Team was

withdrawing its proposal to add certain positions to the extracurricular pay schedule. He then handed out a revised proposal for adding certain positions to the extracurricular pay schedule and proposed rate adjustments based on the extracurricular pay study MOU, none of which he said should be new information. He reported that the only notable change was the removal of positions that were struck through because the Association preferred they remain in the schedule in case the positions were offered in the future. Drumm also handed out additional written clarification related to the Association Team's proposal for a 3% increase per year for extracurricular pay.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Berger and seconded by Larson convene into executive session (caucus) to discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions regarding contracts that are currently being negotiated or for which negotiation is reasonably likely to occur in the immediate future as allowed by North Dakota Century Code §§ 15.1-16-22, 44-04-19.1(9), 44-04-19.2. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Minutes related to the Board Team's caucus (executive session) are drafted separately from the minutes of the negotiations meeting.

Following the caucus (executive session), the Board Team returned to the meeting room, and the contract negotiations meeting reconvened at 6:38 p.m.

#### **Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).**

Buchhop reported the number of weeks and salary for Robotics in the revised extracurricular salary schedule proposal, and that the Association Team wanted to double-check that before proceeding.

Flynn reported that the Board Team fundamentally agreed in spirit with the

extracurricular proposal but wanted to pause to check on some items. Additionally, Flynn said the Board Team was going to offer a counterproposal to clean up the language and layout.

Flynn reported that the Board Team did not have a response to anything related to salary, the family leave proposal, or special education compensation.

Referring to the proposal for Community High School teachers, Flynn discussed that teachers have different functions and differences in their workloads in a variety of areas, such as the elementary classroom, ML, and special education instruction. Buchhop responded that these areas were different than Community High School because at Community, teachers teach several different courses simultaneously, and that if the Board Team were concerned, other groups would be brought forward, they would not.

Flynn reported that the Board Team rejected the Association Team's Workday proposal that added Section 6: Work year definition because it is already District practice, and there are mechanisms in place for anything outside of the contract.

Flynn reported that the Board Team rejected the Association Team's proposal for an additional 20 minutes of prep time at the start of the day for middle school teachers because there is protected prep time for middle school teachers even though there may have been some changes to the schedule because eliminating teacher availability messes with the current rotation that could propose a safety risk that the building may not be prepared for and with relationship building with students.

Dr. Brenner left the meeting at 6:52 p.m.

Buchhop argued that the ask was similar to the additional prep time the elementary teacher received during the last negotiations, and that it was insulting to say that teachers are the most qualified for hall duty, but that it was okay to be

unprepared for teaching. Elementary found a way for it to happen, and teachers were telling the board that they don't have enough prep time.

Drumm asked whether the Board Team wanted to review financial information because he was prepared to hand out some employee compensation data. Flynn responded that the Board Team was not unwilling but suggested hearing an update about the legislative session from Baumbach first.

Baumbach reported that the legislative session wrapped up with a 2.5% increase in foundation in Year 1 and a 2.5% increase in Year 2. He was working with the Department of Public Instruction to learn the impact, which he could bring more information about at the next meeting. There was an adjustment for transportation miles. He was working through the state's 3% property tax cap and its impact and a gap tool that would help districts negatively affected by the cap.

Baumbach also reported that the Health Insurance Committee would meet later in May to discuss an estimated 8% increase in premiums.

Following the discussion, Drumm handed out an ECR and Salary analysis of employee compensation, including various insurances, employer taxes, dues/fees, and other benefits. He reported that health insurance took more dollars out of teachers' pockets than anything else. When asked why the Association Team had not brought forward a proposal if this was a concern, Buchhop responded that the Association Team could only change the contribution percentage and that the plan was up to the Health Insurance Committee. Drumm added that it was not open to discussion because the District would be taking on more liability. Buchhop clarified that it was a concern, but not everyone took health insurance, so that was why the Association Team pushes for salary.

Manley requested data on how many employees take the District's health insurance plan.

**Schedule.**

Future meeting dates, times, location, agenda, and chairperson are as follows:

- Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are the same as the April 29 meeting, minus the New Exchange of Proposals. Flynn will be the chairperson.
- Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are the same as the May 6 meeting. Buchhop will be the chairperson.
- Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are pending. Flynn will be the chairperson.
- Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are pending. Buchhop will be the chairperson.
- Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are pending. Flynn will be the chairperson.

**Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amber Flynn, Team Leader  
Board Team

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Melissa Buchhop, Team Leader  
Association Team