

TEACHER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS
GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD TEACHER CONTRACT BARGAINING COMMITTEE
AND GRAND FORKS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES
May 13, 2025

The Grand Forks School Board Teacher Contract Bargaining Committee (Board Team) and the Grand Forks Education Association (Association Team) met on Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at the Mark Sanford Education Center with Board Team Leader Amber Flynn as chairperson.

Board Team Members Present: Dave Berger, Amber Flynn (via phone), 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: Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes.

It was moved by Berger and seconded by Christensen to approve the May 6, 2025, minutes as written. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals.

Buchhop outlined the structure for this meeting in order to accelerate progress.

The Association Team re-introduced their proposal for *Section 3: Teacher Preparation Time (Revised 2023), B. Secondary Teachers (Revised 2018). Full-time middle and senior high school TEACHERS shall be provided a minimum of one class period of preparation time per day within the student contact schedule. Additionally, the first 20 minutes of the workday are intended as preparation time for middle school TEACHERS. If the TEACHERS must perform duties other than preparation during this time, TEACHERS will be compensated at an*

hourly rate of pay determined by computing the TEACHER'S current salary divided by 188 contract days divided by 8 hours.

They reported that the proposal language did not change, but based on comments they received from teachers, the rationale was updated. Buchhop also clarified that the proposal still allowed for teachers to perform other duties as assigned from 8:20 a.m. to 8:40 a.m.

The Association Team introduced a revised proposal for adding certain positions to the extracurricular pay schedule. Drumm reported that the only change was to the *Robotics-Vex line with a .20 percent of base, 22 weeks, a weekly base of \$84.12, and a season total of \$1,850.64.*

A discussion was held about the differences in pay for coaches when they have a different number of students and who attend more competitions. Drumm reported this was common practice and that the number of games is preset by the activities/athletic departments before the season begins.

The Board Team introduced a counteroffer regarding the 3% extracurricular pay as follows:

The extracurricular weekly base pay is .85% (.0085) of the amount found in the BA/BS Step 1 cell of the Salary Schedule. The experience increment is provided in addition to the base season total for each extracurricular activity found in the Extracurricular Salary Schedule. The experience increment will be provided for up to a maximum of ten (10) years and is based on the chart below ~~\$6.00 per week for each year of experience in a specific area not to exceed a maximum of fifteen (15) years of experience. The weekly experience increment may not exceed the weekly base pay. Out of district experience must have been earned while a certified employee of another school district in order to be recognized for experience increment. Relevant experience from outside of the district will be taken into consideration.~~

<i>Years of Experience Pay</i>	
<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>Experience Increment Pay</i>
<i>0</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>3% of Season Total</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>6% of Season Total</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>9% of Season Total</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>12% of Season Total</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>15% of Season Total</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>18% of Season Total</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>21% of Season Total</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>24% of Season Total</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>27% of Season Total</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>30% of Season Total</i>

Changes in weekly base pay or the experience increment shall be mutually agreed to by the BOARD and the ASSOCIATION. The number of weeks for each activity will be established by the DISTRICT.

The Extracurricular Salary Schedules are found in Appendices A-3 and A-4.

The Board Team introduced a discussion from Baumbach regarding the At-A-Glance ECR and Salary Analysis, which the Association Team provided at the last meeting. Baumbach reported that after his initial analysis of the data, he discovered the district's health insurance contribution was listed as \$0 in the state's records. He will investigate the omission further.

Baumbach provided a copy of the State Aid to Schools Payment Worksheets that the Department of Public Instruction provided following the legislative session. He explained the state aid funding and variables applied for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and the next biennium.

When asked if the missing health insurance contribution could be quantified for the next meeting, Baumbach responded that the district's contribution is \$10M as a whole and that he would have to determine how much of it is for teachers.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Manley to 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 6:13 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Buchhop reported that the Association Team accepted the Board Team's counteroffer regarding the 3% extracurricular pay.

Larson reported the Board Team's objective to put as much in the teachers' salary boxes as possible. He reviewed the anticipated amount of new money the district will receive and the amount remaining after steps across all staff are honored. That leaves the district with \$2,430,107 to work with for all staff.

Larson reported the Board Team accepted the Association Team's revised proposal for adding certain positions to the extracurricular pay schedule.

Larson reported the Board Team rejected the Association Team's proposal for compensation/salary and counteroffered the following:

- 1) *In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$750 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned.*
- 2) *In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$500 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned.*

Larson reported the Board Team's counteroffer regarding family illness leave as follows:

D. Family Illness (Revised 2021)

In case of illness of a member of the TEACHER'S immediate family, a maximum of ~~six (6)~~ seven (7) days of leave of absence with full pay may be granted per school year. The immediate family shall be defined to include spouse/partner, parents/step-parents and grandparents of both, children/stepchildren, foster children, grandchildren, brother/step-brother, sister/step-sister.

This illness provision may include a spouse/partner's leave for the birth of a child and the leave of parents immediately following the

adoption of a child. The TEACHER must discuss this leave with the building principal as soon as the need for the leave becomes apparent to the TEACHER.

In catastrophic situations, involving immediate family as defined in paragraph 1 of the leave, the Superintendent of Schools may grant additional days provided the TEACHER has first utilized their Personal Leave.

Larson reported that the Board Team rejected all of the other Association Team's proposals.

Berger clarified that both the Board Team and Association Team proposed changes to the career increment and that the Board Team wanted to clean up the language on this proposal. The Association Team thought their proposal language was clearer than the Board Team's proposal.

The Association Team asked about the status of the special education proposals. Buchhop discussed how the special education teachers have said that something had to be done, so they went through the MOU work, but now the Association Team's proposal was being rejected.

At the request of the Association Team, Dr. Brenner reported that his understanding of the MOU recommendation was to allow Dr. Diederich to work with the committee and continue to refine the pieces being explored.

Flynn reported that because of the MOU, movement was made to understand and hear changes already being made outside of negotiations, and that the Board Team desired to allow the MOU recommendation to work. She reiterated the Board Team's goal to impact the greatest number of teachers in its salary proposals and that she had confidence in what was heard from Dr. Diederich at the negotiations table.

Buchhop reported that the Association Team was not confident that anything would be done and

that special education teachers could not wait another two years. They are getting burned out, and more and more are leaving the district.

Brenner reported that several classroom specialists have been hired to help with the burden.

Larson reported that the Board Team hears the frustrations and wants that to improve, and hopes that it does, but after crunching the numbers and considering the cost of all proposals, the Board Team thought the best way to impact the most teachers was not to single out any one teacher group.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Manley to 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 6:54 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Larson reported the Board Team's counterproposal regarding the career increment as follows:

Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, a Career Increment will be added to each TEACHER'S salary for teaching in the district beyond the 25th step of the salary schedule. The Career Increment will be \$1,000 for teachers who are on step 25 for

~~2-9 years experience years between 26 and 34 and a career increment of \$2,000 for teachers who are on step 25 for 10 or more years. Experience years 35 and beyond.~~

Buchhop reported the Association Team accepted the Board Team's counteroffer for seven (7) days of family illness leave.

Buchhop reported the Association Team's counterproposal regarding compensation/salary as follows:

All salary proposals are made assuming that steps for experience and lane changes for credits earned will be honored.

1) In the 2025-2026 school year, the district will add \$1,979 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2025-2026 would be \$51,456.)

2) In the 2026-2027 school year, the district will add \$2,573 to each cell and advance teachers' steps for their experience and lane changes for credits earned. (The base salary in 2026-2027 would be \$54,029.)

Buchhop informed the Board Team that they did not have any other counterproposals at this time because the Association Team needed more time.

Drumm discussed the Association Team's counterproposal regarding compensation/salary. He said there was a discrepancy in the cost estimate and spoke about the difficulty in predicting two years out. He referred to a holdover from last year of \$1.3M. He acknowledged improvement, but they had to ensure the district was trying to stay as competitive as possible.

When asked to define 'holdover', Drumm referred to revenues exceeding expenditures from the audit report and general fund reports at the board meetings.

Baumbach discussed that the net loss to the general fund from the audit report was \$500,000

and that it would be difficult to reach the board’s goal of a fund balance of 15% of expenditures by the end of 2027.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Manley to 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 7:27 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Buchhop reported the Association Team accepted the Board Team’s counteroffer regarding the career increment.

Berger reported that the Board Team was interested in looking at numbers for the remainder of the meeting and called upon Baumbach to report on the audit report for the year ended June 30, 2024, that Drumm had referred to. The \$1.3M number included four other funds that have restricted use. The general fund total revenues were \$127,026,174 and total expenditures were \$127,159,381 for a net loss balance of expenditures over revenues of \$133,207. Adding other financing sources and (uses), the net change in the general fund balance was a loss of \$516,982.

A brief discussion was held about the efficiencies the district hopes to see with the new Valley Middle School.

Larson reiterated the Board Team’s efforts to put as much money into the salary schedule and that they were still working with \$2.4M for all staff.

Schedule.

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

- Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics will be the same as those for this meeting. 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.

A discussion was held about whether to add another meeting on June 17. It was determined to discuss this again, or to plan to meet longer, at the next meeting.

Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

Signed: _____
Melissa Buchhop, Team Leader
Association Team

Signed: _____
Amber Flynn, Team Leader
Board Team