

TEACHER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS
GRAND FORKS SCHOOL BOARD TEACHER CONTRACT BARGAINING COMMITTEE
AND GRAND FORKS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
MEETING MINUTES
May 20, 2025

The Grand Forks School Board Teacher Contract Bargaining Committee (Board Team) and the Grand Forks Education Association (Association Team) met on Tuesday, May 20, 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: Cindy Johnson, Executive Secretary.

Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes.

It was moved by Buchhop and seconded by Berger to approve the May 13, 2025, minutes as written. Upon voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals.

Flynn reported that the Board Team rejected the Association Team's May 13, 2025, counterproposal to add \$1,979 to each cell in year one and to add \$2,573 to each cell in year two and that the Board Team's counteroffer remains the same as proposed on May 13, 2025, which was to add \$750 to each cell in year one and to add \$500 to each cell in year two. Flynn explained the Board Team determined this was what would impact the most teachers and leave room in the available funds for other employees.

Buchhop handed out the Association Team's counterproposals and rationale as follows:

- *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.

Buchhop reported that the counterproposal was reintroduced because the Association Team believed it could be made to work at the secondary level as was done at the elementary level.

- *Section 4: Miscellaneous Compensation*
I. Teaching at Community High School

Classroom TEACHERS assigned to Community High School will receive a combination classroom contract. Which is a payment of 1/8 of their current salary, in addition to the contracted salary amount as determined from the applicable Salary Schedule.

Buchhop reported that the Association Team was reintroducing the proposal and that, after their analysis, the FTE number was not as large as the Board Team thought. The Association Team determined the proposal would affect 5.6 FTEs.

- *Memorandum of Understanding for Special Education, OT/PT/SLP*, which is attached in its complete form.

Flynn asked if a bullet point should be added to provide leeway for problems discovered through the caseload analysis tool to be fixed as they are being discussed. Buchhop reported that the Associate Team assumed things would be fixed along the way and away from the negotiations table.

Drumm reported on additional fact-finding information. During this discussion Buchhop reported the Association Team was not asking the district to take over more of the health insurance premium payment because the district could not afford it, they did not want it to become a reason for not being able to provide a raise down the road, and not all members take the health insurance.

Berger clarified that the Board Team's salary proposal was \$750 to each cell in year one, \$500 to each cell in year two, plus all steps and lanes. At the request of the Board Team, Baumbach reported that the average percentage increase in steps and lanes was 1.5%.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Larson and seconded by Berger 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 6:21 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Drumm reported that the Association Team rejected the Board Team's \$750/\$500 salary offer and handed out a counterproposal to add \$1,200 to each cell and steps and lanes in year one and to add \$1,400 to each cell and steps and lanes in year two. He verbally corrected the total base salary numbers in the counterproposal.

It was pointed out that the \$1.3 million number found in the Association Team's rationale had not been corrected to the negative \$500,000 that was clarified during a previous meeting. Drumm indicated that he agreed with the corrected number and could change the document if needed for recordkeeping purposes. Flynn indicated that having the conversation was sufficient.

Flynn discussed the Board Team's desire to impact the most teachers with the available money. She reported the Board Team's responses as follows:

- Middle School Prep. The Board Team believes the issue is better solved through conversations with the principals and superintendents. The Board Team had rejected this proposal three times, and bringing back rejected proposals does not

constitute good faith. The Board team rejected this proposal again.

- Special Education MOU. The Board Team fundamentally agreed with the spirit of the special education MOU but rejected it because they would rather make it an administrative function similar to a curriculum committee rather than an MOU subject to the requirements and restrictions of open meetings.
- Salary. The Board Team rejected the Association Team's counterproposal for \$1200/\$1400 to each cell in year one and year two and reiterated its counteroffer to add \$750 to each cell, plus steps and lanes in year one and to add \$500 to each cell, plus steps and lanes in year two. Flynn reported that on average, this adds 2.6% in year one and 2.2% in year two.

Buchhop reported the Association Team did not like percentages because they differ for everyone on the schedule.

Both teams agreed to caucus.

It was moved by Manley and seconded by Berger 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 7:03 p.m.

Discussion of Proposals and Counterproposals (continued).

Buchhop reported that the Association Team had no counterproposals and needed more time.

Drumm reported a difference in the number of dollars available and that he would work with Baumbach on this.

Buchhop asked what guarantees it would happen if the special education MOU were moved to an administrative function. Dr. Brenner said he would start it in August or September and had already entered it on his calendar. Buchhop stated the Association Team's desire to see all data and information from the caseload analysis tool that the district would see so that they could help find solutions.

Flynn reminded the Associate Team that they have a seat at the Board table where they could ask questions.

Buchhop discussed the Association Team's and teachers' frustration and lack of trust in some buildings, and the rejection of proposals and counteroffers with lower amounts.

Flynn responded that the Board Team hears the teachers, but the Board Team has to look at the big picture. They were also frustrated with the State and hoped they could support teachers better.

Schedule.

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

- Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mark Sanford Education Center (MSEC). Agenda topics are relatively the same as those of this meeting. 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 7:14 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
(Date)

Signed: _____
Amber Flynn, Team Leader
Board Team

Signed: _____
Melissa Buchhop, Team Leader
Association Team



GFEA suggests the following for the language relating to a memorandum of understanding between the school board and GFEA

Memorandum of Understanding for Special Education, OT/PT/SLP

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Grand Forks Public School District 1

and

Grand Forks Education Association

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets forth the terms and understanding between the Grand Forks Public School District 1 School Board and the Grand Forks Education Association to continue the work of the MOU committee to analyze the workload for our Special Education teachers and how caseloads for those Special Educators are calculated. The committee will consist of 3 or 4 members chosen by the Grand Forks Public School District 1 School Board and 4 members (a member from each elementary, middle school, high school, and level C setting) chosen by the Grand Forks Education Association. The purpose of this MOU is described below.

Background

During the 2023 negotiation session, several key points were brought to the attention of both negotiating bodies relating to the general ask of special educators. Some key issues addressed were weighted caseload, para supervision, mentor teacher workload, and other items that GFEA believed were leading to burnout.

During the 2025 negotiation session, it was clear that the committee still had work to do, and the issues discussed in 2023 were still being addressed.

Purpose

This MOU will establish an understanding of our special educators' workload and work-related asks. The established MOU committee will continue to work in the interim between negotiations. The goal is to find and develop a recommendation that can be returned to the negotiation table by the end of February 2027.

The committee will meet at least five times in the 2025-26 school year and at least four times in the 2026-27 school year. The first meeting of each year will be held by the end of September.



The listed goals will be accomplished by undertaking the following activities:

- Look at, analyze, and discuss the data from the Caseload Analysis Tool.
- Address how the weighting of a caseload is determined within our district, emphasizing equity and transparency.
- Clarifying what the appropriate caseload weight is and what the compensation is when it goes over.
- Deciding how special education teachers will be compensated for being assigned/taking on a special education resident teacher.
- During the 2025 negotiations, it was noted at the table that paras' training would be taken off the plates of the special education teachers within the schools. This must be monitored to ensure that the heavy training load has been removed from teachers' plates.
- It was also noted during the 2025 negotiations that several special education classroom specialists were hired to help cover the lunches and preps of our special education teachers. This also needs to be monitored to ensure that the special education classroom specialists are being used as intended.
- Establish an understanding and recommendation for eventualities relating to an uptick in IEPs each year, specifically new individuals receiving an IEP, and considerations for buildings with a high probability of projected growth of those on IEPs during the year.

Reporting

The board, district, and GFEA representatives will report their findings in writing during the next negotiation session (during the 2026-2027 school year).

Duration

This MOU may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from the School Board Negotiations Team and the Grand Forks Education Association. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the authorized officials from the School Board Negotiations Team and the Grand Forks Education Association and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any of the partners by mutual consent.

Amber Flynn, School Board Lead Negotiator

Date:

Melissa Buchhop, Grand Forks Education Association Lead Negotiator

Date: