



## USD 497 News Release

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### **Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Contract Agreement Approved for 25-26**

During Wednesday evening's Board of Education meeting, representatives from the Lawrence Education Association (LEA), LEA ESP negotiations team, and Lawrence Public Schools Human Resources Department briefed the board on a new contract agreement for the 25-26 school year. The LEA ESP negotiations team reported that the agreement was successfully ratified on September 23, 2025, with a 97.76% approval vote.

An increase of \$1.00/per hour will be applied to ESP hourly wages, in addition to horizontal movement in acknowledgement of continued service for returning staff members. The increase amounts to a 5.97% increase to the Lawrence Public Schools salary pool for a total of approximately \$1,132,000.

The agreement also includes:

- the reinstatement of an illness leave pool, including a newly added catastrophic leave pool for ESP staff members; and
- continuation of fully-paid single medical, dental, and vision insurance coverage for full-time employees for the entire year, in addition to summer months if/when staff are off-duty; and
- clarity for union leave for an LEA president.

"These updates to the negotiated agreement will bring so much to our ESP staff members. It is great to have the illness leave pool back with the addition of the catastrophic leave pool. The added support of staff being able to take care of themselves is vital to ensure that our students are cared for," said Andrea Albright, LEA ESP Negotiations Lead.

"I'm grateful to the ESP Bargaining Unit Negotiations team and everyone who worked hard to reach this agreement quickly, so staff can start receiving their raises and retroactive pay. While the work is ongoing, I want to reaffirm the board's commitment to working collaboratively with the union to find a sustainable path toward providing our ESPs with a living wage. We truly appreciate their dedication, talents, and energy every day in our classrooms," said Board President, GR Gordon-Ross.

"I want to thank everyone who served on the negotiations team, and all who supported this effort and worked hard to bring this agreement forward this evening, said Superintendent, Dr. Jeanice Kerr Swift.

We all recognize that we have significant work ahead of us to continue to innovate, streamline the district, and advocate to achieve our shared goal of competitive compensation for ESP, and for all our employees. We value the work of the Educational Support Professionals team, and the special roles ESP fulfill each day in achieving our mission to serve our students well; we are most grateful for our partnership and look forward to our next steps to move forward together."

The 25-26 agreement reflects a continued commitment to supporting staff, fostering collaboration, and ensuring best possible outcomes for students and the school community. Both parties recognize a shared goal of competitive compensation.