

# **Alton Board of Education president confident union, district, will come to an agreement soon**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
March 15 2018 3:28 PM



ALTON – The Alton School District Board of Education President Ed Gray shared today he is both hopeful and optimistic a new contract agreement will be forthcoming soon for the district and the Alton Education Association.

“As a former teacher myself, I have the utmost respect for our teachers and staff,” Gray said. “I think as a board, we have to do everything we can to try and increase salaries for staff which is what we are attempting to do. The tough part is also trying to limit the impact on taxpayers and keeping the district tax rate at a manageable level for home and property owners, but we will get this accomplished.”

One of the points the AEA/union has shared in multiple forums is rising administrative costs compared to lower instructional salary costs overall. One such communication to

AEA members stated that the 2017-2018 administrative costs rose to \$3.9 million, a sharp increase over the prior year. However, Alton School District Director of Finance Mary Schell, was quick to explain that cost is not accurate and includes far more than just administrator salaries.

“I think it is important to note that the administrative line item in the budget doesn’t just include administrator salaries and benefits," Schell said. "There are many other costs in that line item attached to the budget including the salaries and benefits of some bargaining unit members and overall operational costs of the district. It is incorrect to assume that administrators’ salaries are the lone cost in that line item because they are not. For example, some salaries for secretaries and clerks are included as well. We have also shifted some additional costs into that line item out of other portions of the budget for better alignment.”

Another misperception being shared is that the district has the lowest paid teachers and staff in Madison County on average but some of the highest paid administrators on average. The Illinois State Board of Education reports the “average administrator salary” on school district report cards (isbe.net). According to area district school report cards, the Alton administrative average is actually one of the lowest.

**School District Average Salary for District Administrators**

Alton	\$89,179
Bethalto	\$97,699
Collinsville	\$99,279
Edwardsville	\$84,539
Granite City	\$105,207
Roxana	\$110,395

State of Illinois \$106,273

**Source: 2017 Illinois School Report Card – Illinois State Board of Education**

Some regional districts also pay for administrators' retirement benefits adding to those above averages. However, Alton does not pay the employee portion of retirement benefits for administrators or teachers.

Schell said the district also has not received all of the state payments due to Alton schools which compound the issues at hand.

“As the vast majority of districts around Illinois can tell you, the state is still not making timely payments and even missing payments. We are currently still awaiting general state aid, grant and categorical payments. That is money owed to the district because we are still providing those services and programs and spending at a deficit as a result.”

Schell also said that student transportation is especially concerning because the state does not fully underwrite this growing cost. Over the past decade, the state has slowly prorated even the mandated percentages they are required to provide in funding student transportation leaving busing drastically underfunded.

As talks continue over the next few weeks, Gray said the board's priority is to reach an equitable settlement.

“We will be returning to the negotiating table next week and I am hopeful we can arrive at an agreement that is fair to all of our employees,” Gray said. “They are valued and critical to student success and I think they just want to see that level of support indicated through a salary increase. The board is very committed to reaching an agreement and soon.”