

Alton Board of Education and Union Agree to New Contract Three-Year Agreement Ratified on Friday

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ALTON - The Alton School District Board of Education voted Friday morning to ratify a proposed three-year collective bargaining agreement with the Alton Education Association (the District's employee union).

Teachers and staff previously voted and agreed to the new contract on Thursday afternoon. Now approved by both parties, the new contract will go into effect on July 1, 2022, and run through June 30, 2025.

Negotiating team members for the Alton Education Association (AEA) and board of education began meeting in late January and arrived at a tentative agreement on March 23. Proposals for the new agreement, bringing changes to contract language and proposing salary increases, were exchanged during the joint sessions. Regarding language, the new contract will provide increased sick leave days, stipends for increased certifications, insurance provisions, and other additions and changes.

The new contract language also strengthens or clarifies existing contract language relative to employee benefits and flexibilities. The financial agreement will provide salary increases to both certified staff and educational support professionals (ESPs).

For each of the three years, ESPs will receive a \$1.75 per hour increase plus a salary “step” movement. Certified staff members will receive salary “step” movement plus a 1% increase each of the three years.

Additionally, certified staff members will receive a 3% board-paid retirement contribution in Year 1, a 6% board-paid retirement contribution in Year 2 and a 9% board-paid retirement contribution in Year 3 of the contract. Currently, certified staff members pay 9% of their annual salary into the Illinois Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS). Page 2 of 2

Over the course of the three-year contract, 9% of those TRS costs will shift from being paid by the employee to being paid by the school district. Additional financial proposals agreed to include the addition of salary lanes for paraprofessionals with continuing educational/college coursework credit, salary lane adjustments for middle school clerks, increases in longevity payments, and new stipends for ESPs and certified staff serving in substitute roles among other items.

The new contract marks the first time the school district and union ratified a new collective bargaining agreement in just two short months.

Dr. Kristie Baumgartner, Alton Superintendent, said that both parties came to the table at each bargaining session ready to put in the required work.

“I was both impressed by and thankful to both of our negotiating teams. Each side approached bargaining with an open mind and was very willing to listen to one another,” she added.

“There was a mutual mission to arrive at an outcome or compromise that was fair and supportive for our teachers and staff that work so tirelessly in serving students.” Bobby Rickman, Alton Education Association President, echoed Baumgartner’s statements.

“These negotiations were how they should take place. Both sides had a good understanding of what was needed to get the job done in a fair and respectful way,” he said. Rickman also believes the process and overall contract will serve schools and the overall community well. “Dr. Baumgartner and their negotiations team listened and asked great questions. We were able to have a great dialogue to know what the focus should be for these discussions and this agreement will serve our community better.”

Dr. Baumgartner also shared that members of the Alton School District Board of Education remain committed to future efforts in showing a continued commitment to district employees through future negotiations.

“We are limited in what we can do in just one contract, especially because of Illinois TRS and other retirement restrictions in many cases, but both our board of education and AEA team arrived at what we believe is a fair and value-added agreement for staff. We just have to make sure that the same process is applied every time we come to the bargaining table for future contracts.”