

Dear Families, Staff, and Supporters:

We hope that you and your families had a joyous and restful Thanksgiving and that you are enjoying the start of the holiday season.

Prior to the Thanksgiving break, we provided you with a detailed update regarding our ongoing negotiations with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). You can view that update [here](#) on the District's [labor updates page](#). We will continue to keep you updated throughout the negotiations process.

Beginning this Monday, December 2, our team is now engaged in daily negotiations with the CTU. We continue to make progress toward a fair contract that:

- Rewards our talented educators
- Aligns to the values in our [five-year strategic plan](#)
- Ensures the District's financial stability going forward, and
- Provides a rigorous, joyful, and equitable daily learning experience for our students.

Earlier this week on December 2nd, CTU presented us with a revised list of their major priorities. This effort was a positive step that allowed for productive conversations throughout the week. Though there is still more work to be done, CTU's revised priority list moves us in the right direction. It includes revisions to several proposals regarding salary increases and additional staffing.

Salary Increases

- **CTU proposal:** On Tuesday, CTU submitted a new proposal in writing: a cost of living adjustment of 6 percent for the first two years, and 5 percent for the following two years; these raises would be at least 6 - 8.5 percent in year one after factoring existing step increases. This is down from CTU's original proposal of a 9 percent increase every year for the next four years. CPS has calculated this proposed increase and updates to the step schedule with an estimated cost of \$233 million for the first year and \$2.1 billion over the course of the four-year contract. This is down from our original cost calculation of \$405 million in the first year, and \$3.7 billion over the course of the four-year agreement.
- **CPS proposal:** We have maintained our current proposal of 4 percent raises in the first year and 4 - 5 percent raises in the next three years depending on inflation; these raises would total 4 - 7.5 percent in the first year and 4 - 8.5 percent in the following three years after factoring in step increases. CPS' proposal would cost the District \$120 million in annual costs in the first year and \$1.3 billion over four years. We are proud of our record on teacher compensation, and this latest proposal would yield a pay increase of up to 32 percent over the course of the four year contract.

While we are still working towards a final agreement on salary increases, we appreciate the movement that CTU has shown in this area.

Additional Staffing

On Tuesday, CTU submitted revised staffing proposals prioritizing the hiring of 5,000 new employees. If this proposal includes ALL new staffing being recommended by the union, the annual cost to CPS would be roughly \$580 million, totaling \$1.3 billion over the life of the four-year contract.

We are encouraged that the CTU's staffing request has been scaled back, but will be seeking assurances from the union that this is their final staffing proposal. We remain committed to protecting the nearly 7,000 teacher, paraprofessional, nurse, social work, and counselor positions CPS has added since 2019, as these staff have contributed greatly to our academic recovery from the pandemic, and to the record-breaking gains our students continue to achieve.

Student Learning Experience

Within the CTU's revised proposals, there are additional non-financial priority areas that we would like to prioritize for further review and discussion. Specifically, four major areas are critically important to the quality of the daily student learning experience: teacher effectiveness, instructional time, high-quality curriculum, and principal autonomy and accountability.

These areas are closely tied to the academic vision within the District's [five-year strategic plan](#). While CPS has led the country in post-pandemic academic recovery gains, we know that we still have much work to do, and it is critical that we continue to prioritize our values as follows:

- **Protect student instructional time**

CTU has proposed increasing planning time for elementary school teachers from 60 to 90 minutes within each seven-hour work day. CPS proudly leads large-city school Districts when it comes to time provided to teachers for lesson prep, so we understand the value of planning time. But it cannot come at the expense of instructional time for students.

Simply put, more time in the classroom often leads to greater academic gains. We saw this during the pandemic, when investments in strong classroom instruction and supplemental academic interventions — led to CPS students outperforming their peers in other large-cities in terms of academic recovery. Maintaining instructional time is also an important equity issue. More time in the classroom is essential for students who need assistance getting up to grade level. Therefore, CPS will remain committed to protecting student instructional time while maintaining robust teacher preparation time.

- **Maintain strong teacher evaluations and accountability measures**

Some proposals submitted by CTU would lower evaluation standards, thereby reducing accountability measures for our educators. Every student deserves high-quality instruction delivered by an effective teacher, which is why CPS will continue to support maintaining strong and fair teacher evaluations and accountability measures. Over the past decade-plus, CPS has worked productively with both teachers and school leaders to improve our District's evaluation system and we remain committed to this process.

- **Maintain principal autonomy and accountability**

Some proposals submitted by CTU could limit the authority our principals have to set the schoolwide instructional vision and maintain the day-to-day operations of their schools. But if we are going to hold our principals accountable for the performance of their schools, we need to empower them to ensure consistent quality across all classrooms and grade levels. Strong schools are only possible with strong leaders, and CPS will work to continue ensuring principals have the autonomy they need to support the students they serve.

- **Provide all students with a high-quality curriculum**

We know that if we want every student to succeed, every school must maintain a consistent, high-quality curriculum that is culturally-relevant and aligned to rigorous grade-level learning standards. When teachers collaborate to ensure that student learning is supported from one classroom to the next and one grade level to the next, students are more likely to retain concepts and knowledge as they progress from pre-k to graduation. This is why, in keeping with the goals outlined in our new strategic plan, CPS will continue advocating for 100% of schools to adopt evidenced-based, high-quality, and culturally-responsive curriculum.

These non-financial priority areas will require more in depth discussion as we build on the positive momentum we achieved this week. Our primary goal remains ensuring that the new contract meets the needs of our students and staff and aligns with the tenets of rigor, joy and equity outlined in the District's [five-year strategic plan](#).

Impact on Other Labor Partners

As always, our work with any group in our system impacts others, including our other labor partners. We value our labor partners tremendously and will continue to work collaboratively with every group to arrive at agreements that work for staff, families, and, most importantly, students.

Student and Family Protections

We also want to acknowledge the concern of many in the District about how the new presidential administration will impact CPS. I want to remind families that CPS has strong protections — outside of any labor agreement — for groups that the new administration may target. We have summarized these policies [here](#) for families to review. We also want to express our appreciation to the Board of Education for passing [this resolution](#) in November, reaffirming our commitment to protect students and their families. We will communicate additional information to families on this front in the coming weeks.

Make Your Voice Heard on December 12, 2024

Throughout this process, through public negotiation sessions and regular updates to families, CPS has continued engaging school communities to ensure that the views of parents, students, and staff across the District are represented in any future agreement.

At 5 p.m. on December 12, 2024, the Chicago Board of Education will convene for their regularly-scheduled monthly meeting at the District's Colman Office at 4655 S Dearborn St., where contract negotiations with the CTU will be discussed. We encourage parents, staff, school leaders, students, and supporters to make their voices heard by signing up to speak either in person or virtually. Individuals are also welcome to register to attend the meeting in person; no advanced registration is required to watch the meeting on our [YouTube page](#). Advanced registration for speakers and observers opens December 10 and closes on December 11, after which speakers will be selected via lottery. Please find details of the meeting [here](#).

Thank you for your attention and engagement as we work to reach a fair contract for our educators. We will continue to provide families and staff with regular updates throughout these negotiations.

Sincerely,

Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Bogdana Chkoumbova
Chief Education Officer
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