

SL: Update on CPS / CTU Negotiations: Progress and Outstanding Issues

Dear CPS Families, Staff, and Supporters:

As we head into the Thanksgiving holiday, we want to give you an update regarding a new contract with our partners at the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). We know this message is long, but we encourage you to read it in full to get the clearest possible picture of where things stand.

Since April, CPS has been negotiating in good faith with the CTU, committed to reaching an agreement that is fair to our educators, true to our values, and right for our students. We have remained consistent that any agreement must be student-centered, equitable, aligned to our five-year strategic plan, and financially sustainable.

While CPS and CTU have made some important progress in many key areas, we have not yet reached agreement on the most costly proposals, namely CTU's proposals of 10–12.5 percent annual raises for CTU staff and adding over 13,900 new staff positions — a 41.5 percent increase over the 33,491 CTU staff currently employed by CPS. These two proposals alone would cost the District \$9.2 billion over the course of the four-year agreement. For context, CPS' entire budget for the current school year is \$9.9 billion.

In the aftermath of this year's federal election, there have been concerns raised about the impact that the new administration will have on our District. We want to remind families that CPS has strong policies in place — separate from any union contract — to protect immigrant students and their families, LGBTQ students and staff, and other groups that may be targeted by the new administration. These policies were reaffirmed by the Board of Education in a [resolution](#) last week.

However, we do share the concern that the outcome of the recent election could impact federal funding for CPS. This is all the more reason to ensure that our next contract with the CTU does not overextend the District financially — especially as we confront structural deficits in the coming years that will make it challenging to sustain our investments.

This proposed contract is incredibly important and incredibly complex — and we owe it to our families and staff to get it right. CPS will continue to follow the process and negotiate in good faith so we can arrive at a contract that rewards our talented educators, ensures the long-term financial health of the District, and delivers the high-quality, rigorous, and joyful education that each of our students deserves.

Working Towards an Agreement

CPS and CTU have already made major progress in many key areas, despite a shorter-than-usual negotiation period (this year's negotiations began just three months before the expiration of the previous contract, rather than the customary 10–12 months).

Over the past several months, CPS has responded to all 748 initial proposals from CTU, and dozens of counter-proposals in the last several weeks. We have conducted more than 47 bargaining sessions, and have devoted dozens of staff members and hundreds of hours to contract negotiations. In October, the CTU requested a process called “fact-finding” to get a clearer picture of the District’s ability to fund any future agreement. In December, CPS and CTU will participate in fact finding hearings, and the fact finding report will be released in January. CPS will continue to negotiate in good faith throughout the fact finding process and afterwards to arrive at the best possible agreement.

For more information on the negotiation timeline and process, [click here](#).

Progress Made Across Key Areas

CPS and CTU have either reached agreement or are close to agreement in several key areas, including:

- Expanded medical and dental insurance benefits at no additional cost for employees making under \$90,000 annual salary
- Expanded flex time and prep time
- In every elementary and middle school, a minimum of three centrally-funded elective/holistic teachers (for example: art, dance, music, foreign language, drama, physical education, and more)
- At least one centrally-funded counselor in every school with additional counselors allocated by school size and school needs
- Protecting special education teachers from being asked to cover unrelated classes
- Additional support for teachers to earn new certifications (Bilingual, ESL, NBCT)
- More funding for athletic programming
- Three religious holiday benefit days per year

Position-Specific Proposals

In addition to proposing universal benefits and protections that will apply to all CTU members, CPS is also offering additional commitments for specific categories of CTU positions, including:

- Classroom Teachers & Other Teacher Categories
- Special Education Teachers
- Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRPs)
- Athletics and Physical Education Positions
- Nurses and Clinicians
- Counselors

[Click here](#) to view the current proposals for each category of CTU staff.

Major Outstanding Issues

There are still major areas where CTU and CPS have yet to reach agreement, mainly around the size of yearly raises for CTU staff and adding over 13,900 additional CTU positions. These measures alone would cost more than \$1.8 billion in annualized costs at the start of the contract, and more than \$9.2 billion over the full agreement. For more information on these major proposals, [click here](#).

Yearly Salary Increases

CTU teachers currently receive salary increases in two ways: through annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) and step increases that are based on a teacher’s level of experience. In the previous contract, COLAs were between 3–3.5 percent per year, and after factoring in step increases, the average teacher has been receiving annual raises of between 6 and 7 percent.

CPS is proud to offer some of the most competitive salaries and benefits in the country. Among the largest districts in the U.S., CPS teacher salaries are the highest at almost all levels of the salary schedule; only New York City Public Schools have a comparable salary schedule for teachers. Regionally, the median CPS teacher earned approximately \$95,000 in 2023, while the median teacher in suburban Cook County earned \$78,000 and the median teacher in other Chicago suburbs earned \$76,000.

CPS proposal:

CPS has proposed a 4 percent COLA for CTU members in the 2024–25 school year, and a 4–5% COLA for the following three years. After factoring in step increases, most teachers will see a raise of 4–7.5 percent this current school year, and raises of 4–8.5 percent for the next three years. This means that the *average* CPS teacher would earn over \$110,000 by the 2027–2028 school year.

School Year 2024–25 (Current School Year)	Next Three School Years
<p>4–7.5 percent total annual raise (4 percent Cost of Living Adjustment + step increases)</p>	<p>4–8.5 percent total annual raise (4–5 percent Cost of Living Adjustment + step increases)</p>
<p align="center">Annualized Cost for School Year 2024–25: \$120M Total Cost for the Full Four-Year Agreement: \$1.3B</p>	

[Click here](#) to see examples of how these substantial pay increases would benefit teachers based on length of service.

Right now, CPS is working with our partners at all levels of government to identify \$120 million to pay for the first year of our proposed salary increase for CTU staff. This is the amount of funding often cited in news stories about CPS-CTU negotiations.

CTU Proposal:

10–12.5 percent total annual raise for four years
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(9 percent Cost of Living Increase + step increases and changes to the step increase schedule)
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Annualized Cost for School Year 2024–25: \$405 Million

Total Cost for the Full Four-Year Agreement: \$3.7 Billion

By contrast, CTU has proposed a 9 percent raise for all CTU members for all four years of the agreement. For most teachers, these annual raises would grow to 10–12.5 percent per year after factoring in step increases and a CTU proposal to make step increases more frequent. The CTU's proposal would ultimately cost the District \$405 million in the first year, and \$3.7 billion over the total length of the agreement.

Additional CTU Staff

Over the past five years, CPS has invested an additional \$1 billion directly in our schools, supporting historic increases in school-based staff. There are now more licensed educators in front of our students than ever before, with nearly 7,000 more staff in CPS schools than in 2019. This includes 2,500 more teachers, over 4,000 more special education classroom assistants (SECAs) to support our students with disabilities, and hundreds of additional nurses, counselors, social workers, case managers, restorative justice coordinators, coordinators to assist students in temporary living situations, and more. Please visit cps.edu/schoolstaffing for a school-by-school breakdown of CPS' recent staffing investments.

Furthermore, under CPS' new and more equitable [school funding model](#), the District provides a baseline of resources and staff to each school regardless of size, and then additional resources and staff to schools with the greatest needs, especially in communities that have been historically underserved. We also maintain flexible discretionary funding for schools so principals can hire additional positions based on each school's unique needs.

This school year, CPS was able to sustain these staffing levels and incorporate our new, more equitable school funding model into our District's currently-balanced budget for the 2024–25 school year. In the coming years, however, CPS is projecting structural deficits, and it will be a challenge to sustain our current level of staffing in future years without additional revenue.

As part of their contract proposals, our partners at CTU have proposed that the District hire more than 13,900 additional staff members across several categories of positions, a 41.5 percent increase over the 33,491 staff currently employed by CPS. These additional positions would cost an annualized \$1.4 billion at the onset of the contract, and \$5.5 billion over the total length of the four-year agreement. For a full breakdown of these additional positions, [click here](#).

Furthermore, these additional CTU-proposed positions would be based on a school's enrollment or staff-to-teacher ratio, not based on each school's unique needs.

Given that the District faces annual structural deficits for the near future, CPS has proposed sustaining recent staffing gains, and directing additional staff and resources to schools where they are most needed. This will ensure long-term financial stability for the District while ensuring that students who are farthest from opportunity are prioritized in the budget.

Next Steps

Thank you for staying engaged throughout this process. CPS will continue to negotiate in good faith with the CTU so we can have an agreement that rewards our educators, ensures the ongoing fiscal health of the District, and most importantly, delivers on our mission to provide a high-quality education for every student that prepares them for college, career, and civic life.

Sincerely,

Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Bogdana Chkoumbova
Chief Education Officer
Chicago Public Schools