

Board of Education Negotiation Update

After over four hours with a federal mediator on 3/3/21, no agreement was reached and the BEA told the Board team they are going on strike Thursday - 3/4/21.

As a reminder, the Board addressed the last remaining issue that was preventing us from reaching an agreement by moving to a percent based increase for all teachers for three years at the 3/2/21 bargaining session. We were having productive conversations that we were hopeful would result in an agreement.

We left the table on 3/2/21 with a proposal from the BEA seeking **11.25% in salary increases** over three years (4% year 1; 3.75% year 2; and 3.5% year 3).

On 3/3/21, to avoid a strike, the Board increased its offer to **9.5% in salary increases for all teachers** over three years during a pandemic.

- **Year 1 - 3.5%**
- **Year 2 - 3%**
- **Year 3 - 3%**

In response, the BEA proposed a two year deal they acknowledged the Board would not accept because it would put the parties back at the bargaining table as early as this coming fall. This is not unwanted because it is “inconvenient” - it is unacceptable because it would detract from the District’s primary focus of addressing the impact of the pandemic on our students.

The BEA’s latest two year deal also has higher percentage increases than the proposal they presented on 3/2/21 - 4% in year 1 and 4% in year 2. This is clearly not “less” and was a step backward, not forward.

The BEA refused to accept the Board’s offer of 9.5% salary increases over three years and informed the Board team they are going on strike Thursday.

The Board’s 9.5% offer does not cut any benefits for our current teachers. They would continue to receive 18% retirement increases, up to \$15,000 toward health insurance, and their full pension paid by the District every year. The proposal also still includes individual and common plan time for **every teacher every day** - a benefit no other school district in our county provides to all teachers.

The Board's proposal to modify insurance benefits for teachers not yet employed by the District is a move toward aligning this benefit to be comparable to other school districts in our area. This move would control future costs while not impacting current employees.

Acknowledging that the Board's current offer that includes "percent" based increases puts less money in the pockets of our teachers in the next three years than the Board's 2/17/21 offer that included "cash" based increases and bonuses (that was rejected by the BEA), the Board is willing to put the 2/17/21 offer back on the table.

The District has only received \$200,000 in CARES Act money to date and that money cannot be used for employee raises. The only allowable uses of that money are for preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19. This includes addressing learning loss, preparing schools for reopening, and testing, repairing, and upgrading projects to improve air quality in school buildings.

The Board has attempted to meet every demand of the BEA with the sole exception of agreeing to unsustainable pay increases that would negatively harm the District in the future. The Board is the steward of taxpayer funds and cannot violate its oath by ignoring the future consequences of these decisions. Neither of the BEA's most recent offers are "competitive contracts" - they seek salary increases higher than those agreed to by other comparable school districts before the pandemic while maintaining superior benefits.

The Board is responsible for ensuring the financial stability of the District long beyond a single contract with the BEA.

We know that your children, our students, have already lost so much in the last two years. The thought of our students losing any more instructional time is extremely upsetting. We are anxious to get back to the bargaining table and resolve this as soon as the BEA is willing to meet. The most recent proposals can be accessed at besd53.org and click on [Negotiations Information](#).

The Board of Education

Bourbonnais Elementary School District #53