District 76 Teachers’ Association Settles Five-Year Deal with District 76 Board of Education

by Matt Beverly,
IFT Field Service Director

The D76TA overwhelmingly voted to ratify a new contract on September 10, with the Board of Education set to approve the deal October 22. The negotiations, which began last fall, concluded near the end of the summer with an all-day bargaining session. The final settlement entailed substantive changes and some clean-up to existing language. New changes will enhance working conditions, the teaching and learning environment and members’ pay and benefits.

Some highlights include:
+ A 5-year deal with no reopener language
+ Enhanced union security language, including revised dues deduction language
+ FOIA notification language, access to new employees and the requirement of the board to send a complete bargaining unit list to the council president, in addition to the LCFT union hall
+ Enhanced PDP-Mentor language
+ Tightened prep time language
+ New special education case manager release time language
+ Change from 1 hour to ½ day increment sick leave usage
+ Increase of good attendance bonus from $200 to $500
+ Addition of doctoral degree annual stipend

+ Increase of single insurance stipend of 6.5% in the first year, and 8% in years 2-5
+ $250 annual increases to single-plus insurance stipend ($2,000 in 2018-19 base year, $2,225 in 2019-20, $2,500 in 2020-21, $2,750 in 2021-22, $3,000 in 2022-23 and $3,250 in 2023-24
+ $500 annual increases to family insurance stipend ($4,000 in 2018-19 base year, $4,500 in 2019-20, $5,000 in 2020-21, $5,500 in 2021-22, $6,000 in 2022-23 and $6,500 in 2023-24)
+ Doubling (progressive) of district annual depend insurance stipend cap from $45,000 in 2018-19 to $90,000 by 2023-24
+ Preservation of current retirement incentive program (four 6% increases)

“Our biggest battle was preserving the retirement incentive benefit, and I think prevailing there, and the other changes we fought hard to attain in this new contract, will allow the district to retain teachers and hire more good talent going forward,” Union president and middle school history teacher Christine Berrong said.

In addition to other changes to the contract, another notable win for the Union was settling a competitive 5-year wage package. Teachers will realize, with step, a 3.25% raise in 2019-20, a 3.25% raise in 2020-21, a 4.75% raise in 2021-22, and 4.0% raise in 2022-23 and a 4.0% raise in 2022-23. Longevity increases will be 91.5% of those numbers.
From the Desk of

Michael T. McGue

Maybe you’ve heard the expression: “Politics is like making sausage - it’s better off viewed from a distance.” The most common complaint I hear from members and non-members alike is that our Union is too involved in politics. As distasteful as it may be to some, our profession is overseen by and directly affected by our legislature. Thus, our involvement in politics is a necessary evil.

Similar to sausage, all legislation is not created equally; even good sausage can include contaminants that can cause potential harm.

A piece of such “contaminated” legislation began taking shape in the spring of 2018 after Illinois had gone longer than any other state in modern times without an adopted budget. It was in this dire fiscal condition that a Democratic Legislature passed it’s overdue budget and sent it to then Governor Bruce Rauner, a Republican, who would not sign it without some concessions to his desires. One of those concessions, buried deep inside this budget proposal, was hastily overlooked by many of our Union’s own legislative friends (and even some of our Union lobbyists). In their haste to actually “accomplish something” the legislature passed a three percent salary cap on end of career creditable service for Illinois teachers’ pensions.

Years ago, under pressure from the media, the legislature reduced salary increases for teacher pensioners from a 20% salary increase limitation to six percent. This was an attempt to limit “golden parachutes” granted by boards of education mostly for superintendents. Unions had demanded to mimic these increases contractually and several pensioners had attained high profile on the front page of Chicago newspapers who annually had begun publishing a list of the “highest state pension earners.” Some of these “eye-popping” golden parachutes had created quite a stir among the public and an outcry from anti-tax zealots.

After passage of this earlier legislative change, limiting end-of-career creditable earning to six percent, our Union and others restructured contract language to reflect the allowable increases. As is often the case, Governor Rauner and his colleagues could not leave “well enough” alone and used the same tactic to whack his arch-enemy “teachers and their Unions.” By stealthily including the three percent cap in last year’s budget, Rauner created a scenario that caused end of career salary enhancements to actually be less than some year-to-year salary increases for teachers.

Current Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker, a Democrat, vowed during his election campaign to undo this “wrong” and restore the six percent cap. During this same time, your Union began working to ensure that anyone endorsed by our Local pledged to reverse this onerous legislative action. In 2018, most of the candidates endorsed by our Local 504 Political Action Committee won election, including Pritzker.

One of those legislators, State Representative Sam Yingling, spoke to the LCFT Executive Board at our August meeting. The Grayslake Democrat spoke enthusiastically about being able to “accomplish so much” after being stymied by Governor Rauner for

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Emmons Settles Contract Extension

by Sydney Ryan,
LCFT Business Agent

The Emmons council of teachers and paraprofessionals settled a two year extension to their contract in August. The extension cleaned up required changes to the fair share clause a small housekeeping change to health insurance language. Teachers and paras will see an increase in the district reimbursement for flex benefits for members not taking the individual insurance from $3,500 to $4,000 annually.

The two year extension provides for 3.8% and 4.1% for teachers over the life of the extension. Paraprofessionals received a .50 increase to the hourly rate at all lanes and steps as well as a new provision that allows paras who use the flex benefits instead of the individual insurance to also receive an additional $1.50 per hour above their lane and step wage. This benefit will be utilized by the majority of the paraprofessional staff. Due to last minute changes by the legislature, Emmons was able to retain the final 4 years 6% language for teachers planning to retire from the district.

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four years. Yingling stated that one of his proudest accomplishments was the bill he co-sponsored repealing the three percent limitation on creditable earnings.

The lesson for all of us, even if you are not a fan of the sausage making process, is that vigilance of the legislative process is imperative for those of us who have decided on this career of public service. From those issues that will allow us to “survive in retirement” to rules governing our everyday actions and requirements in the classrooms and hallways of Lake County: legislative action and our profession are inseparable. With your assistance in providing the work related concerns and offering suggestions, your Union becomes your best vehicle for collectively and effectively delivering them to those who enact legislation and sign it into law.

This is just one example of why your Union is and continues to be involved in politics.

In unity,

Michael T. McGue, President,
Lake County Federation of Teachers
Zion-Benton Federation of Teachers Ratifies New Four-Year Agreement

by Michelle Standridge,
IFT Field Service Representative

The Zion-Benton Federation of Teachers reached an agreement with the Board of Education over the summer on a new Collective Bargaining Agreement which was ratified by the membership at the end of August. The four-year extension will continue through the 2022-2023 school year.

The new contract calls for Tier 1 (levels 1-17) teacher salary increases of 4.75%, 4.875%, 4.875% and 4.5% and Tier 2 (levels 18-33) teacher increases of 4%, 4.375%, 3.875%, and 4%. Longevity bumps after levels 25, 27, and 30 are also equivalent to the Tier 1 percentage increases. Classified staff members in the bargaining unit will receive both a market adjustment and a salary increase in year 1 of the Agreement and will receive alternating percentage raises and equal dollar raises totaling 4.5%, 4.875%, 4.875%, and 4.5%. In total, new money for classified staff with the market adjustment and percentage increase in year 1 totaled almost 9%. Included also in this contract were extracurricular increases of 4.75%, 4.875%, 4.875%, and 4.5%, inclusive of lane movement, the addition of new activities, and varied increases in the miscellaneous stipend schedule. Starting pay for new teachers increased in each year of the Agreement as well.

Some of the language highlights include bringing classified and certified staff in alignment on special leave policies and continued medical assistance in instances related to staff injury, the addition of language that would allow for Union notification when a FOIA request is submitted that asks for personal information about members, the formation of a school calendar committee tasked with exploring when final exams are scheduled, additional sick leave days for certain categories of classified staff employees, an increase in the pay for classified staff who work during spring and winter vacation periods, and the formation of an evaluation appeals committee.

As part of the bargaining process, the Council and Board also agreed on three MOUs related to courtesy & respect with regard to workplace harassment, a process for new extracurricular sponsorships, and how the retirement incentives apply if you have time in more than one retirement system.

Because the Council had done two extensions and the full contract hadn’t been opened up since 2011, the master document also underwent significant clean-up to roll in MOUs, legislative changes, and other items that needed to be addressed.

Council President, Kelly Regnier was pleased to be able to take this deal to her membership and stated, “We are happy to have a four year deal. The collaborative process that we engaged in with our Board of Education resulted in a contract that will be good for both our members and our district. We are particularly pleased with salary enhancements for our classified staff and the creation of the Evaluation Appeals Committee for our certified staff.”

On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Kelly Regnier, Certified Vice-President Scott Martensen, Mike Isaacs, Jasey Kolarik, Colleen Newton, Mark Rakher, Colleen Valentine, and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.