

This email is going to all PFT Members

Dear PFT Members,

PFT has been regularly engaged in Interest Based Problem Solving (IBPS) negotiations with the district to discuss budget solutions, health and welfare, and the contract sections noted on the attached Initial Proposal. Sessions have occurred on February 15, March 4, 12, 25, 27, & 29, April 19 & 29, and May 2. We do not yet have a tentative settlement agreement for 2024-25 but hope to have one soon. Our next sessions are scheduled for tomorrow, Wednesday, May 8, and Monday, May 13.

Below are some reminders from a previous negotiations update if you are interested in more details on the state & PUSD budget and health & welfare.

Why does PUSD have a budget deficit?

- Decreasing COLA (3.96% to 1.27% to 0.76%)
- Sunsetting of COVID pandemic related one-time funds and Average Daily Attendance (ADA) relief
- Low(er) Attendance Rates across the district
- Increasing Operating Costs
- Unfunded/Underfunded Mandates
- 50 positions, approximately, funded with one-time funds.

These factors, collectively, will result in a multiyear PUSD general fund structural deficit. As a result, the district is seeking 15 million in budget solutions for 2024-25 and plans to draw about 13 million from the reserve account. Additionally, another 10 million in budget solutions are projected to be needed for 2025-26.

Negotiations Update

- PFT has been and will continue to advocate for budget cuts to be made as far from the classroom as possible!
- The results of the PFT bargaining survey will be used to guide further conversations.
- There will be no layoffs for the 2024-25 school year.
- A Supplemental Early Retirement Plan (SERP) *will not* be offered for the 2023-24 school year.
- Health & Welfare
 - PFT has been able to avoid an increase in the cost of the dependent premium coverage for the basic health plans for about 16 years. This is great for PFT members! However, health care costs have regularly increased, and the district has been pursuing greater employee contributions from PFT unit members for many years.
 - In the 2018-19 & 2019-20 Settlement Agreement, PFT and PUSD agreed to begin to explore other health and welfare models beginning in the fall of 2019.
 - It's now more than four years later. We are in the 2024 health plan year, and we have not yet reached agreement on a new health and welfare model.
- PSEA is in the second year of implementation of an 80/20 cost sharing model for health and welfare. This means PUSD pays 80% of the dependent premium costs of the basic health care plans, and PSEA members pay 20% of the premium costs for their dependents.

- Per a recent School Board Meeting, management plans to move to the same 80/20 cost sharing model.
 - PFT feels this cost sharing model places a very large burden on employees, and we are not in favor of it! We will continue talks about a reasonable health and welfare cost sharing model in our upcoming negotiations sessions.

You might be wondering, what happened to the “old” health and welfare model that we used in the past that kept our premiums the same for so many years? If you’d like more background info, please see the section titled, **The Fair Share Model**.

The Fair Share Model

Historically, PFT and the district used a “fair share” negotiations model. This meant we took a collective look at the new, ongoing revenue provided to PUSD by the state each year. We then subtracted out increased costs for the PFT unit (things like teachers moving on the salary schedule due to more years of experience or more education, increased costs in health and welfare, etc.). The money that was left over after these increased costs were deducted was the amount with which we negotiated things like salary increases, class size reduction, etc. Sometimes this involved estimates to ensure settlements were timely, in which cases a “true up” was calculated the following fall once budget conditions were firm. This true up data was used as a starting point for the following year’s negotiations.

- The fair share model worked well for many years. Then it began failing to yield any funds with which to negotiate for several years (beginning in 2016-17). In the absence of the fair share model, we established settlements based on funding and on the desire to remain competitive with neighboring and similarly funded districts.
- In March of 2018, the parties agreed to work to develop and implement a new fair share formula that would yield funds with which to negotiate.
- Despite research into other district fair share models and a year’s worth of problem-solving conversations on this topic, the parties were unable to find a workable model that would yield funds with which to negotiate.
- Year-over-year increases for dependent care health premiums had historically been one of the costs deducted from new and ongoing state revenues as part of the fair share formula. In the absence of a workable fair share formula, a concrete mechanism for accounting for increases in health and welfare premiums no longer existed.
- In August of 2019, the parties agreed to jointly explore alternative Health and Welfare models beginning in the fall of 2019. We are currently in the fifth school year since this agreement. We have been unable to come to agreement on a new health and welfare model. Hence, conversations are continuing this school year, with a renewed sense of urgency on the part of the district due to budget constraints.

In Solidarity,
Kelly