

Albany Educational Support Professionals (AESP) Negotiations Summary - 2024

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Albany Educational Support Professionals (AESP) Negotiations Summary - 2024

February 12, 2025: Board Ratification of Agreement

After an AESP vote to approve the negotiated agreement in late January, the Albany Area Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the agreement.

Retroactive pay for employees will be processed and will be paid out on a separate payment during the 3.15.25 pay period. All new rates of pay will be applied beginning the 3.15.25 pay period as well.

January 8, 2025: Session #11

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:15 pm on Wednesday, January 8th, 2025 in the Conference Room of the Albany Area Secondary School. This was our Eleventh meeting together.

The AESP group provided a response to the Tentative Agreement reached on December 11th. There were some technical changes to minor errors in calculated amounts and some language corrections. Both teams worked together to update those corrections in the shared Tentative Agreement. There was additional discussion regarding a form included in the negotiated agreement and a form that was requested to be included.

The AAS team agreed to look into both forms and respond the following day. Updated versions of the Tentative Agreement were provided to the AESP team the following morning. This included a REDLINE and CLEAN version of the Tentative Agreement.

The AESP will work to set dates and processes for sharing the tentative agreement with their membership and then holding a membership vote. The next Board business meeting will be held on February 12th. The AESP

has committed to providing results of a vote to the AAS team prior to Friday, February 7th in order for any agreement to be voted on by the whole Board on the 12th.

December 11, 2024: Session #10

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, December 11th, 2024 in the Conference Room of the Albany Area Secondary School. This was our Tenth meeting together.

The AESP group provided updated MOUs that are currently attached to the negotiated agreement. They proposed maintaining these MOUs with updates to dates. The AAS team agreed. There was then discussion about the last district proposal and the subsequent requests by the AESP to have the district finance department calculate some tweaks and adjustments to various language items to determine how they were calculated financially.

The meeting concluded with a 'Tentative Tentative Agreement' with the understanding that the AAS team needed more time to ensure proper calculations and to edit all of the language items into a single document. The AAS team agreed to work on this and have a comprehensive agreement with a financial summary sheet back to the AESP team for review. The current agreement is summarized as follows:

	AESP Current Proposal
Salary Increases	3% year 1 3.75% year 2 Step increases Payments retroactive to July 1st of 2024
Health Insurance Contribution Increases	Increase single coverage from \$472 to \$479.50 per month Increase family coverage from \$805 to \$850 per month
403B Contributions	Increase contributions by \$50 in each step
Longevity	Add a 25th year longevity step for \$1.35 per hour
Personal Leave Payout	Payouts at the employee's hourly rate of pay (AAS offered not to cost this to the overall calculation of the package)
Nursing Pay	Increase \$0.50 per hour increase for specific licenses to \$1.00 per hour
Differentials	Increase from \$0.30 to \$0.35 per hour for Special Education and Custodial Differentials Add all Early Childhood Paraprofessionals to the Special Education Differential language
Total Package increase over 2 years	14.13%

There are no plans to meet again at this time. It is expected that after confirmation of the Tentative Agreement by both parties, the process will shift into the voting and approval process by the AESP and eventually be brought to the Board for a vote during an upcoming Board meeting.

November 13, 2024: Session #9

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, November 13th, 2024 in the Conference Room of the Albany Area Secondary School. This was our Ninth meeting together.

AESP began with a counter proposal to some language items. The AESP indicated an interest in withdrawing some items. The AESP provided the counter proposal below, which was followed by an offer from the district with the indication that this was the highest total package they felt would have strong board support.

	AESP Current Proposal	AAS Counter Proposal
Salary Increases	4% year 1 4% year 2 Step increases	3% year 1 3.75% year 2 Step increases
Health Insurance Contribution Increases	Increase single coverage from \$472 to \$479.50 per month Increase family coverage from \$805 to \$850 per month	Increase single coverage from \$472 to \$479.50 per month Increase family coverage from \$805 to \$850 per month
403B Contributions	Increase contributions by \$50 in each step	Increase contributions by \$50 in each step
Longevity	Add a 25th year longevity step for \$1.35 per hour	Add a 25th year longevity step for \$1.35 per hour
Personal Leave Payout	Increase from \$30 per day to \$40 per day for those under 1500 hours Increase from \$60 per day to \$75 per day for those over 1500 hours	Paying the full hourly rate regardless of hours worked in a year. The district also offered to not cost this towards AESP.
Total Package increase over 2 years	16.10%	13.91%

There was also a significant discussion around the purpose and the process for aligning paraprofessional differential payments and the impact that would have on the distribution of money. The District agreed to take the proposal from AESP and work to identify a full cost estimate.

After a series of Tentative Agreements and some new language items being explored there are:

- 6 language items in discussion
- 4 Pending Tentative Agreement

- 22 Language items with signed Tentative Agreements
- 21 Language items have been withdrawn from consideration

The AESP and AAS are scheduled to meet again on Wednesday, December 11th at 4pm. Both sides appear hopeful a resolution to remaining language items and progress towards total compensation can be reached soon.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member)	(Recused to avoid conflict of interest)
Steve Ruefer (School Board Member)	Not Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

October 23, 2024: Session #8

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, October 23rd, 2024 in the Conference Room of the Albany Area Secondary School. This was our eighth meeting together.

The district provided a compensation counter proposal to the AESP proposal. The district highlighted the increase to health insurance impact on the salary increases

	AESP Current Proposal	AAS Counter Proposal
Salary Increases	4% year 1 4% year 2 Step increases	2% year 1 2% year 2 Step increases
Health Insurance Contribution Increases	Increase single coverage from \$472 to \$479.50 per month Increase family coverage from \$805 to \$905 per month	Increase single coverage from \$472 to \$479.50 per month Increase family coverage from \$805 to \$905 per month

Threshold for district contribution to health insurance	Anyone working over 1,350 hours within a year	Anyone working over 1,350 hours within a year
Total Package increase over 2 years	18.70%	12.86%

Prior to caucusing, the AESP and AFT agreed to withdraw four additional language items. AESP then requested a caucus for the remainder of the scheduled negotiations session.

After a series of Tentative Agreements and some new language items being explored there are:

- 15 language items in discussion
- 1 Pending Tentative Agreement
- 22 Language items with signed Tentative Agreements
- 15 Language items have been withdrawn from consideration

The AESP and AAS are scheduled to meet again on Wednesday, November 11th at 4pm. Both sides appear hopeful a resolution to remaining language items and progress towards total compensation can be reached soon.

October 9, 2024: Session #7

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, October 9th, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our Seventh meeting together.

The AESP provided a list of Tentative Agreements, which both parties signed. Board Member Hansen shared that due to a member of his immediate family becoming a member of the AESP, after this session he would step aside from the negotiations team for the remainder of the process.

AAS shared a review/summary of the discussions that have occurred over the past two meetings regarding lowering the hours threshold for AESP members to receive district contributions. This included comparing the costing of each proposal as well as the language details. So far the AESP had proposed items that calculated a total package increase of about 37%. The district countered with an offer that increased the total package by approximately 10.7% and then 10.9%. It was understood by both sides that these proposals were really focused around building a better understanding about the costs of expanding health care contributions and how to balance that with other language items and salary increases. There has been a healthy and positive discussion about how to work together to realistically expand health care contributions for AESP members.

After a series of Tentative Agreements and some new language items being explored there are:

- 18 language items in discussion
- 1 Pending Tentative Agreement
- 22 Language items with signed Tentative Agreements
- 11 Language items have been withdrawn from consideration

The AESP and AAS are scheduled to meet again two weeks from this meeting on Wednesday, October 23rd at 4pm. The focus of this meeting appears to be on resolving some of the details around health insurance and then to explore common ground on total package cost. The AESP is also working on responses to the 18 language items still in discussion.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Not Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Not Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

September 25, 2024: Session #6

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, September 25th, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our Sixth meeting together.

AESP presented two counter proposals on language items with budget implications. There was also an agreement between both parties to withdraw 3 more language items.

The majority of the conversation was regarding the recent proposal by AESP to reduce the threshold of minimum hours required for a district contribution to health insurance. The District shared their costing of the proposed 5% and 5% salary increase and the proposal for health insurance contributions. Both parties agreed that making progress on offering health insurance contributions was very important and beneficial to both employees and the district. After a caucus, both parties shared some proposals for options on how to approach the health insurance contribution language in a way that can be managed financially and still provides improved value for the AESP.

Currently there are 19 open language items, 14 language items that have been formally processed as Tentatively Agreed, 6 that have been verbally tentatively agreed and 11 that have been formally withdrawn. Both sides will return October 9th with the goal of finding shared language regarding health insurance contributions.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
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Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Not Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

September 11, 2024: Session #5

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, September 11th, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our Fifth meeting together.

AESP presented a set of new language item proposals to add to the list for discussion. AESP also briefly presented their request for a compensation increase of 5% in year 1 and 5% in year 2, further discussion on compensation will follow at future meetings. The parties reached tentative agreement on several more language items during the meetings. And there were additional items withdrawn as well. Of the 53 language items being discussed, 14 have been reached Tentative Agreement and another 6 items are expected to reach Tentative Agreement status at the next meeting. An additional 8 items have been withdrawn from discussion after reaching an agreement between both parties. This leaves the negotiations team with 22 items currently remaining in discussion.

The District negotiations team hosted a closed Board meeting after the negotiations session. The purpose of this closed meeting was to discuss with the whole Board the negotiations process and to establish the Board's guidance for the District negotiations team around the amount that could be budgeted for compensation. This will provide the District negotiators with information necessary to respond to the recent AESP proposal for compensation during the next negotiation session.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present

Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Ruefer (School Board Member)	Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

August 28, 2024: Session #4

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, August 28th, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our fourth meeting together. Tentative Agreements from the last session were signed by the lead negotiators from each group. AESP began with submitting new/additional language items. Both teams reviewed some proposed language regarding a specific language item. After discussion, it was agreed to both take the time between meetings to make further attempts at revisions in order to meet the shared goal of clarity. Finally, one a shared document, the District team went through the list of shared language items. Several items were withdrawn and additional tentative agreements were noted.

The District and AESP agreed to withdraw 5 items all focused around removal of transportation language with the agreement of a statement that will be added to the negotiated agreement clarifying that transportation services have been contracted out during this contract period. The District agreed to two additional tentative agreements focusing on language clarifications/improvements.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present

Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Not Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

August 14, 2024: Session #3

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, August 14th, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our third meeting together. Each side responded to language proposals that were given at the previous meeting.

The AESP agreed to four language items proposed by the district. The district agreed to three language items proposed by the AESP. An agreement was reached, outside of the negotiated agreement, to re-establish a Labor Management Committee to review employee evaluation processes for all AESP members. The district withdrew two language items as well. With approximately 40 language items in discussion, the next session will have both groups coming with some proposed revisions to current language.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Not Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Not Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

July 10, 2024: Session #2

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, July 10, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was our second meeting together. Each side provided language proposals. Each group provided about 15-20 suggestions for improvement to the negotiated agreement.

Due to time, groups caucused to review the proposal, but the whole group did not reconvene. Responses to the proposed language items will follow during the next scheduled meeting on August 14th from 4pm to 5:00pm.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Not Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Not Present
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present

June 12, 2024: Session #1

The AESP negotiations team (members listed below) met with the Albany Area Schools negotiations team (members listed below) at 4:00 pm on Wednesday, June 12, 2024 in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office. This was a short introductory meeting where members from each team introduced themselves and identified their lead negotiator (identified below). The District negotiations team shared their top priorities for this negotiations session. This included a statement about how the district sincerely appreciates the work that our support personnel does every day that directly and indirectly makes it possible for our students to learn to their fullest potential.

Albany Area Schools' points of focus for this negotiations session:

- Recruiting, retaining and training high quality employees
- Ensuring availability of high quality staff to support our students and staff
- Legal review of contract obligations
- Transparency: Regularly communicating with AESP about and creating summary notes to be shared with constituents.

The district negotiations team provided several documents relating to the benchmarking process. At the time of the meeting, the Director of Business Services and the AESP negotiations team had not yet been able to complete the benchmarking process due to schedule conflicts. The documents shared were meant to provide common understanding regarding the current financial arrangements based on last year. These were provided to both teams as a reference point for future discussions and exploration of possible proposals. These specific documents included:

- The current AESP salary schedule
- The dollar amount and percentage amount of increases in pay related to step increases
- The past year's placement of all AESP members on the salary schedule, with the exclusion of the transportation department (as they are no longer officially employees of ISD 745, but of 4.0 School Services).
- The past year's total hours worked within the district across the AESP group, by salary schedule placement, with the exclusion of the transportation department
- The calculated cost of hourly rate by step, lane and the salary schedule

The formal negotiation session ended around 5:00 pm when each team caucused to discuss negotiations strategies privately.

The next session is scheduled for Wednesday, June 26 at 4:00 pm in the boardroom of the Albany Area Secondary School District Office.

AESP Negotiations Team	Attended
Heidi Eiyneck (Avon Paraprofessional) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Donna Bruemmer (Albany Elementary Head Cook)	Present
Bridget Fischer (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Kelly Welle (ELC Paraprofessional)	Present
Sandy Miller (Education Minnesota Field Representative)	Not Present

Albany Area Schools Negotiations Team	Attended
Scott Hansen (School Board Member) - Lead Negotiator	Present
Steve Rueter (School Board Member)	Present
Dean Dirkes (School Board Member)	Present (Virtual)
Sue Clemen (Director of Business Services)	Present
Travis Okerlund (Superintendent)	Present