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Chicago Principals and Assistant Principals Reach Historic Tentative Agreement on First Comprehensive Union Contract

Agreement goes to vote this week; strengthens school leader safety and autonomy, restores many assistant principals, provides an annual three percent cost of living adjustment.

CHICAGO - The Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA) and Chicago Public Schools shared more details Monday after reaching a historic three-year tentative contract agreement last week for principals and assistant principals. The agreement follows nearly a decade of advocacy and more than two years at the bargaining table.

“For nearly 10 years, we fought for school leaders’ right to lead without fear, with physical and psychological safety, due process and professional dignity,” said CPAA President Kia Banks. “This agreement is a critical step toward a school system that values the expertise of school leaders so that students are better served.”

CPAA represents about 1175 CPS principals and assistant principals. School leaders won the right to bargain collectively under a 2023 state law that CPAA members fought for in Springfield. Bargaining began in April 2024, and an interim agreement in August 2025 provided a four percent cost-of-living adjustment effective July 1, 2024 and July 1, 2025, pending a full contract.

Benefits of the tentative agreement are as follows:

- **Protects school leaders’ safety.** A binding protocol requires the District and members to collaboratively develop a safety plan when a school leader requests one, along with support and follow-up after an incident. School leaders will have the option to deliver restriction letters to the people who harmed them, and their good-faith judgment in an emergency is protected.

- **Guarantees due process.** It recognizes the value of constructive, non-disciplinary employee coaching, training, and supervision, and codifies that bargaining unit members may be disciplined or discharged only for just cause.
- **Protects school leaders' authority to lead.** The agreement protects principals' authority to staff, hire and lead instruction in their buildings, and requires CPS to notify the union when policy changes affect school leaders' working conditions.
- **Restores assistant principals.** The agreement establishes a review committee for SY 2027-28 and SY 2028-2029 to detail central funding supports for schools with 200 to 249 students. Notably, this student count includes Pre-K, which was previously omitted from the CPS budget formula for allocating assistant principals. Smaller schools receive targeted budget support, and a joint CPS/CPAA committee will review assistant principal and other centrally- funded positions. Earlier this year, budget cuts eliminated central funding for assistant principals at schools with fewer than 250 students, and many schools kept those leaders only by spending discretionary dollars.
- **Raises pay by up to nine percent over the life of the three-year contract.** School leaders receive a three percent cost-of-living increase in each of fiscal years 2027, 2028 and 2029, in addition to step increases. Salary schedules address wage compression between assistant principals and teachers. Payment is retroactive to July 1, 2026, and principals who stay at the same school may be eligible for a $6,000 retention incentive. Individual increases vary by grade and step. An additional Memorandum of Understanding also increased pay by four percent each year for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

"I am grateful to the CPS management team for their willingness to listen and adapt to new understandings, and I am particularly proud of our bargaining team, led by President Banks, for their commitment and sacrifice," said former CPAA President Troy LaRaviere, who led the union when school leaders first organized.

"In every single discussion, debate and disagreement with CPS, the team always brought it back to what our brothers and sisters need…" said bargaining team member Principal Raul Magdaleno of Thomas Kelly College Preparatory High School.

CPAA members are voting on ratification this week. Upon member ratification, the agreement goes before the Chicago Board of Education at its monthly meeting in December.

"I want to again commend both teams for working hard to reach this agreement,"said CPS CEO/ Superintendent Dr. Macquline King. "I believe this agreement reflects our appreciation and

respect for our dedicated principals and assistant principals and puts us all on a path for greater collaboration and innovation on behalf of our schools and students."

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About Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA)

The Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA), AFSA Local 2, AFL-CIO, is the union for principals and assistant principals in Chicago Public Schools. School leaders set the vision, culture and instructional direction of every school in the district. They recruit and develop great teachers, keep students and staff safe, and partner with families and communities. CPAA stands with those leaders every day: advocating for them and supporting their professional growth to ensure their expertise shapes the decisions that affect Chicago's schools. When school leaders are supported, students thrive. Learn more at www.mycpaa.com and connect with CPAA on social media.

About Chicago Public Schools (CPS)

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is dedicated to providing a high-quality education to all students, beginning with the District's free full-day preschool programming for four-year-old scholars and continuing through neighborhood, magnet and selective-enrollment elementary schools that provide a rigorous K-12 education with schools that specialize in the fine arts, world language and culture, dual language, STEM, International Baccalaureate (IB), classical programs, and more. The rising District-wide freshmen-on-track and high school graduation rates reflect the hard work of the CPS community, including families, staff, and students across 626 schools. CPS celebrates the diversity of its more than 300,000 students who cite about 196 home languages. Learn more about CPS at www.cps.edu and connect with CPS on Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn.