



**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Lexington Community  
FROM: School Committee Members: Sara Cuthbertson, Larry Freeman, Kathleen Lenihan, Eileen Jay, and Deepika Sawhney  
RE: Status of Contract Negotiations  
DATE: January 24, 2023

Many of you have reached out to the School Committee and the Select Board, requesting updates on the status of negotiations with the Lexington Education Association. Our school system is one of the best in the nation, thanks to our outstanding educators. We love our teachers, and we have deep respect for the work they do on behalf of our children.

***1. Why are contract negotiations so challenging right now?***

A convergence of events has created a challenging statewide context for those of us who are negotiating contracts at this time. There is a nationwide labor shortage; inflation is on the rise; and we are on the heels of a global pandemic.

The 2022-23 school year has also been marked with many high-profile disputes between school boards and unions representing teachers in Massachusetts. Despite state law prohibiting strikes and [undaunted by fines](#), [Brookline teachers](#) went on strike for one day last year. [Teachers in Haverhill](#) went on a four-day strike, and [Malden teachers](#) went on a one-day strike in October. Following a year of negotiations, [Melrose educators](#) voted to strike, but were able to reach a three-year agreement over the weekend prior to any work stoppage. After being at the bargaining table for many months, School Committees in [Medford](#), [Stoneham](#), [Weston](#), and [Wellesley](#) have voted to declare an impasse and are in mediation with a neutral third party from the state.

***2. How does the collective bargaining process work?***

In accordance with State law, the School Committee is the bargaining agent or “employer” of school employees for collective bargaining purposes. The School Committee must bargain in good faith with the association and its representatives in an effort to settle a contract, which we have done and will continue to do.

If the parties are unable to settle a contract, Section 9 of the law establishes a mechanism for the resolution of bargaining impasse through mediation, and then if necessary, fact-finding, and voluntary interest arbitration. Ideally, enlisting the support of a mediator is a mutually agreed upon next step in the process, although either side can declare an impasse at any time. It is our hope that in the near future we will be able to reach a fair contract for all parties involved prior to any involvement by the State due to impasse.

### 3. *Is the School Committee and its representatives engaging in good faith bargaining?*

The School Committee bargains with six collective bargaining units, and all but one contract is settled at this time. Since March of last year, the School Committee, the Administration, and the LEA have devoted more than **187 hours** to finalize a contract for the Lexington Education Association. We have come a long way, and we hope to finalize the contract in the near future.

#### *Timeline*

- **After 10 months, 15 negotiations sessions, and over 187 hours, we are still at the bargaining table with the LEA.**
- LEA contract negotiations began in March 2022. All School Committee members have been involved in the negotiations process and receive frequent updates during executive sessions.
- In an effort to settle the contract prior to the start of the new 2022-2023 school year, the School Committee offered to continue to bargain with the LEA over the summer; however, the LEA opted not to bargain over the summer.
- The School Committee has also offered the LEA a one year contract that was responsive to LEA concerns and offered a sizable increase while the details of a three year contract were being worked out. To date, there has been no agreement reached with the LEA on a one-year contract.

#### *Compensation*

- We know our teachers work hard and often outside of the school day. Teachers are contracted to work 184 days per year and approximately 7.5 hours per day. The average full time 1.0 teacher in Lexington Public Schools earns \$94,313 in compensation, not including longevity or stipends.
- Educators have been moved on what is referred to as “step and track.” This means that approximately 41% of educators have earned a step increase this year, and they will also receive a cost of living adjustment when the contract is finalized. The average teacher step increase that has already been processed this year is approximately 5.78%, with teacher step increases in the range of 2.33% to 11.49%.
- Approximately 59% of educators at the top of the scale do not benefit from the automatic movement, which is why a one year agreement was offered, while we worked out the details of the three (3) year contract.
- Despite what has been stated publicly, the School Committee does not control—nor do we have access to—the Town’s Capital Stabilization Funds.

#### *Proposals and Tentative Agreements*

- Throughout the negotiations, the parties have met in good faith and have had productive and important discussions about the shared interests of both parties in furthering the educational goals of the Lexington Public Schools. In this process there have been many tentative agreements reached by the parties, as well.

### 4. *Concerns have been expressed about summer pay. Why didn't educators receive summer pay?*

In Lexington, we are fortunate to be able to offer our teachers many opportunities to earn additional compensation in the summer. While there is no contractual set time for when people will be paid for the extra summer work; there was a processing issue that occurred with the payments from this past summer. The administrator who oversees the summer payment process was caring for a loved one with a terminal illness, and there were some understandable oversights during this challenging time, which have been addressed. We responded to the LEA's concerns with a thoughtful plan within 24 hours of this being brought to the attention of administration. All members have received their summer curriculum pay.

*5. What makes Lexington an attractive place to work?*

The level of support for education in our community is unparalleled, thanks to our educators. We have amazing students and families and an incredibly supportive school community. Our schools are well-resourced and are among some of the highest performing schools in the nation. We have highly favorable class sizes, we offer generous collaborative time compared to other districts, and we are working to find ways to do more. Approximately 59% of our educators are veteran teachers; many have worked in this school system for the entirety of their careers, and we hope they will be here for many years to come. The Lexington Public School system also offers a robust complement of professional learning opportunities that staff members often identify as one of the most rewarding aspects of being a part of Lexington Public Schools.