



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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District 97 and OPTA Reach Agreement

On Tuesday, January 27, 2015, the District 97 Board of Education and Oak Park Teachers' Association (OPTA) approved the terms of a new teacher contract that will run through the 2017-18 school year. Below is additional information about the new contract, including a joint statement and key outcomes.

Joint Statement Regarding New OPTA Collective Bargaining Agreement

The Board of Education, district administration and Oak Park Teachers' Association (OPTA) have spent the past year working on a new contract for our teachers. During that time, we engaged in meaningful dialogue about a variety of critical issues that reflect the changing landscape of education. However, whether reviewing modifications to the law, identifying opportunities for professional development or discussing the complexities of compensation practices, we have always remained focused on and dedicated to the creation of a transformative agreement that will shape the future of our schools and enable our students to reach their full potential.

We are pleased to announce that our collective and collaborative efforts over the last 12 months have led to the approval of a new deal that will:

- Recognize and reward our teachers for their tireless service on behalf of the children of Oak Park.
- Support the long-term sustainability of our district.
- Help our schools move from great to world class.
- Benefit the community by further strengthening the quality of our schools, while also aiding the fulfillment of our referendum promise to reduce annual growth.
- Contribute to the continued growth and development of our students.

We thank the members of the negotiating teams for their hard work on this important endeavor. We also thank the community for the patience and understanding it exhibited throughout this process. While it took longer than anticipated to reach this juncture, the time and energy invested by everyone involved reflect a strong commitment to education and passionate belief in the vital role it plays in the lives of our children. We are incredibly proud of what we have accomplished, and look forward to working together in the years ahead to help our students succeed both in and out of the classroom.

Key Outcomes

Compensation

- Establishment of a sustainable compensation structure that:
 - Provides District 97 students with continued access to high-quality educators.
 - Creates a fair and equitable system for paying teachers.
 - Continues to recognize the importance and value of continuing education and externally validated endorsements and certifications.
 - Aligns with the district's history of sound, fiscal management.
 - Supports the district's referendum promise to reduce annual growth.
- Replacement of traditional steps and lanes (25 steps with 8 lanes) with a compressed salary schedule featuring four bands and five recognitions that emphasize teacher effectiveness. These recognitions include earning one or two master's degrees, a doctorate, and endorsements from the Illinois State Board

of Education that are attained through the successful completion of coursework and the passage of tests and are added to a teacher license. They also include obtaining National Board Certification (<http://boardcertifiedteachers.org/>), which is widely considered the most respected professional certification in education.

- Elimination of automatic increases for any teacher who receives a summative evaluation of unsatisfactory or needs improvement.
- Increase in the reimbursement for tuition, including cover the costs associated with pre-approved coursework and fees associated with pursuing National Board Certification.
- Introduction of a higher average starting salary, which will align District 97 more closely with other districts in the area and help it attract and retain highly qualified and skilled teachers from diverse backgrounds in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Retirement

- Creation of a 403(b) plan, which includes a 50 percent district match up to a maximum of two percent for all OPTA members. The plans offers greater stability given the uncertainty of the Illinois Teacher Retirement System (TRS), and will enable the teachers to diversify their retirement funds.
- Sunset of the 4x6 retirement option (four consecutive years with a six percent increase to salary base). OPTA members who are interested in this option will have until February 2016 to declare their intent to retire, which means it will be completely phased out of the district by 2020.
- Addition of a post-retirement payment provision that will recognize OPTA members who retire with decades of service, but are not eligible for the 4x6 option. This provision, which will feature declining payouts for individuals who are retiring through 2024, will sunset following the completion of the 2023-2024 school year.

Insurance

- Transition from a system where the district contributed a set percentage based on the type of plan (e.g., PPO, HMO, etc.) to one where the district will contribute a set dollar amount based on the type of coverage (e.g., single, family, etc.).
- Equal split between the district and individual OPTA members of the cost of an annual premium increase on any plan that is greater than seven percent. District will fully cover any annual premium increase up to seven percent regardless of the type of plan.

Professional Development and Planning Time

- Increase the number of professional development opportunities that are available for OPTA members, as well as the amount of time they have for planning. Doing so will help:
 - Improve student learning.
 - Enhance instructional practices.
 - Build on the capacity of our employees.
 - Aid in the effective implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program.
 - Allow for increased collaboration across buildings and grade levels.
 - Promote greater consistency district wide.
- Establish a Professional Development Learning Committee that will be charged with planning and coordinating impactful and meaningful professional development opportunities.

- Increase the minimum amount of planning time from 260 minutes to 300 minutes.
- Provide all OPTA members with a minimum of a 30-minute block of planning time per day.
- Increase the number of Institute Days from four to six per year.
- Increase the number of grade level and department meetings from three to nine per year.
- Establish new roles/stipend positions that will help lead the district in critical areas such as curriculum development, use of data and assessment.
- Combine or eliminate some existing roles/stipend positions to provide greater clarity and minimize redundancy.
- Adjust stipends to more accurately reflect responsibilities and time commitments.
- Offer professional development opportunities during Institute Days or weekly staff meetings that are focused specifically on diversity.

Additional Provisions

- Increase the number of leadership opportunities that are available for OPTA members, while also more clearly defining what those opportunities entail.
- Establish a more streamlined process for individuals who voluntarily seek transfers within the district.
- Revise several sections of the agreement based on changes in the law, including those that address:
 - Caseload numbers and minutes for special education
 - Reductions in Force
 - Evaluations, including the impact of informal observations on summative ratings
 - Sick leave