

Contract Q and A

Salary/Raise

Q: Why was the decision made to seek Board Paid TRS over an increased percentage raise?

A: Board paid TRS increases an employee's net pay more than the same percentage added to the salary.

Example:

Employee A makes \$50,000 but has full board paid TRS (9%), no deduction is taken from their paycheck for retirement. So the \$50,000 is their salary in which they are paid.

Employee B makes \$50,000 but received a 9% salary increase, \$54,500. That employee would then be responsible for paying their full TRS (9%). Their TRS amount will be \$4,905, resulting in \$405 a year paid to TRS. The board paid TRS is considered creditable earnings, so the employee would have no loss in salary for TRS earnings consideration.

Q: On the "Licensed-Financial-Presentation-2022-2025" document, slide 3 outlines that the proposed plan includes having the district pay 1/3 of employee's TRS contribution for the 2022-23 school year and ending with the district contributing 100% of employee's TRS contribution for the 2024-25 school year. The "Cert-Salary-22-25" document has a line referring to "Creditable Earnings" where this contribution is added to the new step amounts. Is this the gross income amount we would expect to see on our paychecks since a lower amount would be subtracted from our salary each month?

A: The creditable earnings is the amount reported to TRS, so it is your salary plus any amount of board paid TRS. The number is important to determine your retirement benefits. The employees gross pay will remain the amount from the salary schedule before TRS is added. The payment of TRS will be an employer contribution, much like the employer portion of health insurance paid by the district.

Q: What about extra duty pay? How much will that be in this contract?

A: Extra duty pay is not part of the collective bargaining agreement and the District has maintained no interest including it.

Q: When will we see this raise in our checks? What month of the 2022-2025 contract?

A: The first paycheck for certified staff on the new contract will be September 2022.

Q: There are maybe 40 social workers, speech clinicians and school psychologist who hold licenses in their respective fields. Why can't we get a one-time payment of \$1000?

With respect to social workers and the LCSW, social workers need 3000 supervised hours, by an LCSW. Several of us have willingly supervised our colleagues for free. Many people have to pay for clinical supervision which ranges \$50-\$75 each week.

A: The attempt was to add an equivalent to National Board Certified Teacher. There were several considerations we tried to get for all of the special education related service areas. The only agreeable language was for them to add the one-time payment of \$1,000 and giving credit for 6 graduate college hours. One consideration for them not being able to do more is all money paid affects creditable earnings. TRS only allows a 6% increase for an employee without the District incurring a 13-14% penalty for that increase above 6%.

Q: Will Art therapist qualify for the \$1000 stipend for highly qualified. The LCPC is the same level as LCSW and CCC?

A: That information was not presented to the committee from the members that were speaking for related services. It is certainly something we can address with the district

Q: What is longevity and when is it paid?

A: Longevity is paid when an employee cannot advance additional steps on the salary schedule.

Q: Explain the change in longevity?

A: When in longevity you still get the 1% increase, plus longevity was increased from \$500 to \$1,000. The 1% increase is a minimum of \$691.37 for a Bachelor Step 25, and the maximum is \$791.64. Then a \$1,000 is added to that, and 1/3 of TRS is paid in year 1. The minimum 1% raise and longevity at \$1,000, would equal \$1,691.37. which is almost \$500 more than steps are in our current contract. Plus an additional \$2,100 will be paid of the TRS contribution. No steps were removed in this negotiations.

Q: Were IMRF payments negotiated for and if not why????

A: Asking for TRS and IMRF was part of our ask from the district. Their counter of \$1.75/hour and step movement was considered preferred to other option overall for all ESPs.

Q: Our current out-of-pocket for family health insurance is \$770 per month. If that amount goes up, the 3% TRS contribution will not be noticeable for some.

A: The total TRS contribution increase each year of the contract, so year one it will be 3%, year 2 - 6%, and year 3 - 9%. In year will the minimum additional an employee would notice for the TRS part would be approximately \$100/month, plus the 1% and step movement. The difference from an employee as a Bachelor Degree step 1 in 2020-21 to Bachelor Degree step 2 in 2021-22 is an increase of \$2,884.42. In the final year of the contract the District will pay the employee's entire TRS contribution, which would be a minimum of \$337.50/month.

A first year teacher in 2020-21 made \$39,748, at the end of the contract that same teacher only getting their step movement would have total income of \$49,064.97. That would increase the employee by almost \$10,000 over a three year period.

It is unfortunate the cost of health insurance, specifically a family plan, these costs have been increasing throughout our country and our insurance group has held cost under the industry average in recent years.

Step Placement

Q: I started in the district in 2016-2017 and I have never had a step. Will I stay at step one like a new hire employee after bring here 5 years? I'm currently employed as a administrative assistant.

A: The last 5 years there have been two contract agreements. For ESPs, the agreed salary for those employees was agreed to be a \$1.00/hour raise in the last contract each year of the three years. Based on feedback from members we requested step movement and a raise.

Q: Will our step be the one that we should be on for paraprofessionals?

A: The employee step is based on the year you were hired and the subsequent contract after your hire date if step movement was give or a flat amount was raised for all employees in that group. No steps are being restored in this contract.

TRS

Q: How easy would it be for the district to come back in three years and say that they can no longer afford to cover our TRS payments? Would that be something we are expected to renegotiate or will this be a permanent change?

A: The expectation would be this is not a negotiable item for the future, this would be like having paid health insurance for the employee. The only part that would be considered for future negotiations is if TRS would change guidelines for the plan.

Q: With the proposal of 3% TRS contribution, does that mean only 2/3 comes out of my monthly pay?

A: In the first year the district will pay a 1/3, you will pay 2/3, 2nd year, district will pay 2/3 and you will pay just 1/3, year three they will pay full TRS contribution.

Q: For certified staff - will TRS still be paid if you are getting the 6% retirement incentive ?

A: If an employee is currently receiving the 6% incentive or will start it in 2022-2023, No.

The maximum increase a TRS member can receive is a 6% increase in their salary, the district can only pay 6% above your salary from the previous year, that is TRS regulations, not the district.

Q: In the event one was to leave their position, would the TRS contributions that the district paid for stay with them, or are those funds essentially forfeited?

A: No your contributions and your employer's contributions always stay with TRS.

Q: Will the district covered TRS affect those of us that are getting the 6% incentive for the last 3 years before retirement? I'm asking will we get both the board paid TRS and the 6% raise on our Step/Lane for those years. Example I can retire in 2026. I would declare my last 3 years in Spring of 2023. Would I still get the 4561 TRS paid by board and a 6% raise on my 22/23 salary of 74278 (not including the TRS benefit)

A: Your retirement incentive will be based on what you receive in the year before you start the retirement incentive. In the situation of the example above the employee would receive 6% increase to their 2022-2023 earnings, and 3% of the Board Paid TRS. It is recommended employees entering the window of retirement consult with TRS about what scenario is best for them.

Q: Is the TRS paid on all earnings or just your salary?

A: TRS is paid on the certified staff's salary, extra duty and sub pay is not included.

Q: I just learned that TRS does not allow more than a 6% raise or the district receives a penalty. So my question is does the district receive a penalty every time someone moves over on the schedule due to education? Is that increase added to the raise percentage increase?

A: The total increase in salary from one year to another is used to calculate the percentage increase (step movement, lane movement, salary increase). Understanding the trigger for a penalty is a little complicated. Not every single increase will trigger a penalty, but the issue is the unknown of when the rules will cause that penalty. First the answer is different depending on when an employee started in the TRS system as there are now a Tier I and Tier II plan. Because a District does not have a crystal ball, it is difficult for one to determine if a salary package could create a penalty for one employee or potentially 50 or 100. The link below provides a full explanation of TRS and excess cost penalty.

https://www.trsil.org/sites/default/files/documents/8excesscosts_1.pdf

Q: What does the district currently pay toward our TRS? There are quite a few categories of TRS under the Benefits section of our paychecks, so I'm not exactly sure. Will we be taxed on what the district contributes? Just wondering if them paying the contribution will have tax implications for us. Thanks!

A: The contribution the District makes on your behalf is not considered in your gross salary, but it is reported to TRS for your creditable earnings. If 3% was added to your salary that would be taxable, and it will also increase the amount you would pay to TRS. An employer paid TRS contribution increase your net (take home) pay by the amount of their contribution.

The information below can be found on TRS website at https://www.trsil.org/employers/payments/contribution-rates_earnings-limitations

CONTRIBUTION RATES

CONTRIBUTION TYPE	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
TRS Contributions			
Member TRS retirement contribution	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%
Employer TRS retirement contribution	0.58%	0.58%	0.58%
Employer TRS contribution on federally-funded salary	10.66%	10.41%	10.31%
THIS Fund Contributions			
Member THIS (insurance) contribution	1.24%	1.24%	0.90%

CONTRIBUTION TYPE	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Employer THIS (insurance) contribution	0.92%	0.92%	0.67%

Sick Leave

Q: Regarding the 135 sick day bonus: Will faculty that have between 135 and 225 sick days currently, be granted the 35-day bonus at the end of the first contract year? For example, at the end of the first contract year, I will have approximately 219 sick days. Will I get the 35-day bonus since it is the first year of this contract in which I am over 135 days, or do I miss out on that since I hit 135 many years ago? I do realize that I would be eligible for the 55-day bonus after the following year. Thank you!

What if I am passed 135 sick days but never get to 225 days does that mean I never get the extra 21 days?

A: If next school year you started above 135 days, you will receive 35 days instead of 14. If the following year an employee has 225 or more they would receive the 55 days.

FMLA and Maternity/Child-rearing leave

Q: Do we lose our benefits (insurance) when out on pregnancy leave?

A: Your insurance benefit is paid as long as you are working or using paid leave. At the point an employee is not being paid by the District, the employee would be responsible for the premium.

Q: Has the language been updated to clarify if employees have to use their sick days while on approved FMLA maternity leave?

A: FMLA and maternity leave are two different but sometimes connected parts of the contract and board policy. The District has always had the practice of requiring a person taking maternity/paternity/child rearing leave or FMLA to use sick days. We asked for changes in the language and policies, the only acceptable agreement from the District was to clarify language to state sick leave must be used. This applies to male and female employees. FMLA is a federal law, and the provision in the law allows an employer to decide if they require an employee to use some or all of their applicable sick leave or other benefits.

Other

Q: What happens if this contract is not approved by the membership or Board?

A: The two bargaining teams would have to return to the negotiations table, and would start at their last offers before a final tentative agreement was reached. We would not be able to ask for a financial package that would be greater than our last proposal to the District.

Q: I understand the pay scaling but how does one know what step they fall under?

A: In Skyward Finance click Employee Information, then Personal Information, and then Lane Step History

Look at the column for Lane and Step.

Q: Can you please explain the change in dental insurance

A: The only change with dental insurance is to mirror the language of health insurance if two people both work for the district and are legally married. The amount the District pays for the 2nd employee can be contributed to the family plan.

Q: Does "license" refer to School Social Workers?

A: License refers to all employees holding a Professional Educator License from ISBE.

Q: When do people with an LCSW get the \$1000 bonus? In September 2022?

A: It will need to be submitted for review by Human Resources by October 15th. HR or the AEA will provide additional information regarding the process as it is finalized.

Q: If you are currently holding an associates degree as an ESP/classroom TA and you are currently or planning on going back to school for a bachelor's degree, will the individual get the increase once the certification is earned and proven? And does the bachelor's degree have to be in education?

A: The normal deadline for turning in college credit work is October 15th to be credited for the current school year.

For a paraprofessional, the degree does not have to be in education.

Q: My concern is if the district is downsizing the security force.

A: The District has added two positions this year, unfortunately they have not been able to fill those vacancies or have subs for anyone that is out.

Q: Non-work days for 11 month ESP employess has a strikethrough on the language stating that those days may be used during student attendance days with supervisor approval. What is the new language on when those days may be used?

A: There is no agreed upon language in the contract on Non Work Days. There is a section on Vacation Days, there was language that was removed because 11 month employees do not have vacation days.

Q: Under filling vacancies there is new language regarding filling positions that list interviewing with HR, and qualifications, ect. The last statement for Certificated Staff is: When all other factors are equal, seniority will prevail.

However, this statement is not listed under ESP filling vacancies. Why not? Why would seniority for ESP's not be considered in the same circumstances as Certificated Staff?

A: The language related to certified/licensed staff is from school code and PERA. The expectation would be if two applicants are considered identical, then seniority would be a factor.

Q: Did the union address the need for more social workers and counselors in our district? Our students' needs for services and mental health support.

A: The AEA does not have the power in negotiations to bargain a specific number of employees in a category, but we have been vocal in our support for the mental and emotional well being of our students. In addition, the IEA offers numerous Professional Developments for staff to become more informed about trauma among our students. Alton CUSD has always staffed numerous employees in related services areas like social work for supporting students, and has a partnership with Centerstone that provides additional supported services. One of the major factors is the shortage of educational personnel in general that there are not enough people looking to fill all the openings that could be available.