

## **CONTRACT NEGOTIATION BASICS**

### **What is collective bargaining?**

- Collective bargaining is the process of negotiating pay, conditions, and rights for all three Bargaining Units that make up EA Council Local 604. The result is a legally enforceable contract.

### **What is a bargaining unit?**

- A group of employees represented by a labor union and to whom the contract applies. EA Council Local 604 consists of three bargaining units.

### **Who are our bargaining units?**

- Teachers: Anyone who needs a Professional Educators License (PEL) to work, whether you have a classroom or not, is covered in this section;
- Support Staff; and
- Office Staff.

### **When do our bargaining negotiations begin?**

- Bargaining for the new contract began on February 12, 2026.

### **Who does the bargaining?**

- Both EA Council Local 604 and East Aurora Administration each has a bargaining team.

### **When will the contract negotiations be finished?**

- The process can take several months or longer, depending on how quickly agreements are reached, the language is finalized, etc.

### **When does our current contract expire?**

- At the end of the 25-26 school year.

### **What happens if the old contract expires before the new contract is ratified?**

- Then we will continue to be covered by the old contract until the new one is finalized. This means continuing at one's

current pay rate, but eventually being reimbursed for the pay we would have received (pro-rated) had we finished at the end of 25-26.

### **How can I get involved?**

- Our strength is in our collective. Acts of solidarity are essential because they show that the members are united behind our negotiators!
- You have the right to wear union buttons and shirts, and to display stickers and signs in/on your car.
- Public sidewalks, even on the school side of the street, can legally be used to promote union activities, including talking to parents, holding signs, and chanting. The first amendment protects your right to free speech.
- Union materials can be posted, disseminated, and discussed in copy, lunch, and break rooms. You can discuss union matters with co-workers during lunch and plan periods, as well as before and after school.
- Labor law prohibits retaliation for union speech and organizing.
- Wear blue or your union shirt on Thursdays!

### **BARGAINING GLOSSARY**

**Table Team:** A group of designated representatives from the union or management who negotiate the contract. They are authorized to present proposals, respond to offers, and reach tentative agreements on contract terms.

**Bargaining Table:** The "bargaining table" refers to the time and place where parties meet to negotiate. It does not have to be a physical table; it simply means the process of working together to reach an agreement.

**Big Bargaining Team (BBT):** The Table Team is a small, focused group that handles the direct back-and-forth during bargaining sessions. The BBT, on the other hand, is a larger group that provides direction and oversight for the process. Our BBT is made up of House of Delegates members [elected building representatives and senators] who serve in this role separately from their duties as building representatives/senators.

**Caucus:** A caucus is when one bargaining team requests a break from the joint bargaining session to meet with their team privately. A

caucus usually lasts between ten to twenty minutes, but can be longer or shorter.

**Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB):** The IELRB administers the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA).

**Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA or Act):** The IELRA is a law that establishes the right of educational employees to organize and bargain collectively, to define and resolve unfair practice disputes.

**Conceptual Agreement (CA):** A conceptual agreement begins as an idea that is developed and agreed to at the bargaining table by both table teams. Language is then developed to reflect that idea. The Big Bargaining Team (BBT) reviews and approves the draft. After approval, the draft is developed into a tentative agreement (TA).

**Tentative Agreement (TA):** A TA is when proposed contract language is finalized; i.e., written, agreed upon, and then parked until ratification by all three bargaining units. A TA is contract ready language.

**Ratification:** When a contract (CBA) is approved via majority vote by members of all three bargaining units in an open election. This is the final step in the negotiation process.