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ILLINOIS EDUCATIONAL LABOR
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Submitted by Kim Ullsmith, Field Service Director AFT Local 604

Introduction:

The Joliet Township Paraprofessional Council, AFT Local 604 represents 110 paraprofessionals and security staff servicing approximately 7,000 students at two high schools in Joliet. The union is dedicated to advocating for its employees and students in the district and the biggest difficulty they are facing is attracting and retaining qualified employees to support the students' educational needs and safety of the students and staff. The bargaining team is committed to negotiating a contract that provides stability for the students by offering a salary to not only attract quality employees but also retain them.

The collective bargaining agreement between JTHS Dist. 204 and the JTHS Paraprofessionals expired on July 1, 2025.

Negotiations Overview:

Bargaining began April 7, 2025, with fourteen bargaining meetings, two of those with a Federal Mediator from FMCS on September 15 & 30, 2025. Both parties have tentatively agreed to all proposals except for salary.

The union had 6 members at the negotiating table this included their President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and their Field Service Director from AFT Local 604.

The district had five at the table including their Assistant Superintendent, Board member and their attorney.

- Two members, including the Board member, ceased attending bargaining in the early sessions despite repeated union requests to reinstate or replace the board member.
- Negotiations continued without Board representation.

Union Proposals:

The union presented proposals on the following issues, with the majority focusing on updating contract language and aligning benefits with other district employees:

- Recognition Clause
- Non-Discrimination

- Availability of Statistical Data
- No Strike Provision-Union withdrew this proposal
- Duration and Termination
- Rights of the Paraprofessional
- Conditions of Employment
- Seniority and Evaluation
- Grievance Procedure
- Uniforms
- Translating and/or Interpreting
- Fringe Benefits
- Employment for Additional Hours
- Longevity
- Leaves
- Sub Pay Rates
- Shift Differential
- Salary

District Proposals:

The district presented proposals on the following issues, mostly focusing on updating contract language, except for Sick Leaves in which they requested to change front loading sick leave to accumulated sick leave for new personnel to reduce financial loss due to early resignations. The union has tentatively agreed to all these proposals, highlighting mutual recognition of retention issues.

- Rights of the Paraprofessional
- Sick Leaves
- Grievance Procedure (Individual Problems)
- Employment for Additional Hours
- Overtime for Security Personnel
- Salaries and Benefits

Salary Proposals:

Wages for all bargaining unit positions 2024-2025

	No License	0-59 Credits/ License	60+ Credits/ License	Teachers License
1	\$15.68	\$16.00	\$16.82	\$17.88
2	\$15.91	\$16.23	\$17.06	\$18.14
3	\$16.18	\$16.51	\$17.36	\$18.45
4	\$16.66	\$17.00	\$17.87	\$18.99
5	\$17.03	\$17.37	\$18.27	\$19.40
6	\$17.42	\$17.75	\$18.68	\$19.81
7	\$17.81	\$18.15	\$19.10	\$20.23
8	\$18.21	\$18.55	\$19.53	\$20.66
9	\$18.62	\$18.96	\$19.97	\$21.10
10	\$19.04	\$19.37	\$20.42	\$21.55
11	\$19.46	\$19.80	\$20.88	\$22.00
12	\$19.90	\$20.24	\$21.35	\$22.47
13	\$20.35	\$20.69	\$21.83	\$22.95
14	\$20.81	\$21.15	\$22.32	\$23.45
15	\$21.28	\$21.61	\$22.82	\$23.95
16	\$21.76	\$22.09	\$23.33	\$24.46
17	\$22.24	\$22.58	\$23.86	\$24.99
18	\$22.75	\$23.08	\$24.40	\$25.52
19	\$23.26	\$23.60	\$24.94	\$26.07
20	\$23.78	\$24.12	\$25.51	\$26.63
21	\$24.32	\$24.65	\$26.08	\$27.21
22	\$24.86	\$25.20	\$26.67	\$27.79
23	\$25.42	\$25.76	\$27.27	\$28.39
24	\$25.99	\$26.33	\$27.88	\$29.01
25	\$26.58	\$26.92	\$28.51	\$29.64
26	\$27.18	\$27.52	\$29.15	\$30.28
27	\$27.79	\$28.13	\$29.80	\$30.93
28	\$28.41	\$28.75	\$30.48	\$31.60
29	\$29.05	\$29.39	\$31.16	\$32.29
30	\$29.71	\$30.04	\$31.86	\$32.99

Security Paraprofessionals Salary Schedule

	2025-26			
	A	B	C	D
	No License	0-59 Credit w/ License	60+ Credits w/ License	Teachers License
1	\$15.99	\$16.32	\$17.15	\$18.23
2	\$16.23	\$16.56	\$17.40	\$18.50
3	\$16.47	\$16.80	\$17.66	\$18.77
4	\$16.75	\$17.09	\$17.96	\$19.10
5	\$17.24	\$17.59	\$18.49	\$19.66
6	\$17.63	\$17.98	\$18.91	\$20.07
7	\$18.02	\$18.37	\$19.33	\$20.50
8	\$18.43	\$18.78	\$19.77	\$20.93
9	\$18.85	\$19.20	\$20.21	\$21.38
10	\$19.27	\$19.62	\$20.67	\$21.83
11	\$19.70	\$20.05	\$21.13	\$22.30
12	\$20.15	\$20.50	\$21.61	\$22.77
13	\$20.60	\$20.95	\$22.09	\$23.26
14	\$21.06	\$21.41	\$22.59	\$23.76
15	\$21.54	\$21.89	\$23.10	\$24.27
16	\$22.02	\$22.37	\$23.62	\$24.79
17	\$22.52	\$22.87	\$24.15	\$25.32
18	\$23.02	\$23.37	\$24.69	\$25.86
19	\$23.54	\$23.89	\$25.25	\$26.42
20	\$24.07	\$24.42	\$25.82	\$26.98
21	\$24.61	\$24.96	\$26.40	\$27.57
22	\$25.17	\$25.52	\$26.99	\$28.16
23	\$25.73	\$26.08	\$27.60	\$28.77
24	\$26.31	\$26.66	\$28.22	\$29.39
25	\$26.90	\$27.25	\$28.86	\$30.02
26	\$27.51	\$27.86	\$29.51	\$30.67
27	\$28.13	\$28.48	\$30.17	\$31.34
28	\$28.76	\$29.11	\$30.85	\$32.02
29	\$29.41	\$29.76	\$31.54	\$32.71
30	\$30.07	\$30.42	\$32.25	\$33.42

Districts Initial Salary Proposal:

Current Security Staff:

2025-2026 3.5% with step

2026-2027 3%

2027-2028 3%

2025-2026 Instructional Paraprofessionals				
		B	C	D
		0-59 Credit w/ License	60+ Credits w/ License	Teachers License
1		\$ 17.09	\$ 17.96	\$ 19.10
2		\$ 17.59	\$ 18.49	\$ 19.66
3		\$ 17.98	\$ 18.91	\$ 20.07
4		\$ 18.37	\$ 19.33	\$ 20.50
5		\$ 18.78	\$ 19.77	\$ 20.93
6		\$ 19.20	\$ 20.21	\$ 21.38
7		\$ 19.62	\$ 20.67	\$ 21.83
8		\$ 20.05	\$ 21.13	\$ 22.30
9		\$ 20.50	\$ 21.61	\$ 22.77
10		\$ 20.95	\$ 22.09	\$ 23.26
11		\$ 21.41	\$ 22.59	\$ 23.76
12		\$ 21.89	\$ 23.10	\$ 24.27
13		\$ 22.37	\$ 23.62	\$ 24.79
14		\$ 22.87	\$ 24.15	\$ 25.32
15		\$ 23.37	\$ 24.69	\$ 25.86
16		\$ 23.89	\$ 25.25	\$ 26.42
17		\$ 24.42	\$ 25.82	\$ 26.98
18		\$ 24.96	\$ 26.40	\$ 27.57
19		\$ 25.52	\$ 26.99	\$ 28.16
20		\$ 26.08	\$ 27.60	\$ 28.77
21		\$ 26.66	\$ 28.22	\$ 29.39
22		\$ 27.25	\$ 28.86	\$ 30.02
23		\$ 27.86	\$ 29.51	\$ 30.67
24		\$ 28.48	\$ 30.17	\$ 31.34
25		\$ 29.11	\$ 30.85	\$ 32.02
26		\$ 29.76	\$ 31.54	\$ 32.71
27		\$ 30.42	\$ 32.25	\$ 33.42
28		\$ 31.10	\$ 32.98	\$ 34.14
29		\$ 31.79	\$ 33.72	\$ 34.88
30		\$ 32.49	\$ 34.48	\$ 35.64

Districts Initial Salary Proposal Instructional Paraprofessionals:

2025-2026 9.93% with step

2026-2027 3%

2027-2028 3%

The union objected to inequity in raises across job titles resulting in a lower offer from the district for instructional paraprofessionals resulting in regressive bargaining.

Districts revised offer to all bargaining unit members after objection to job title raises:

2025-2026 3.5%

2026-2027 3.25%

2027-2028 3.25%

First three steps with 3.5% Increase

25-26	No License	0-59 Credit w/ License	60+ Credits w/ License	Teachers License
1	\$15.99	\$16.32	\$17.15	\$18.23
2	\$16.23	\$16.56	\$17.40	\$18.50
3	\$16.47	\$16.80	\$17.66	\$18.77

Districts most recent offer with mediation on 9/30/25

2025-2026 \$2.00/hour increase

2026-2027 3.5%

2027-2028 3.5%

The union's final proposal:

2025-2026 \$4.00/hour increase

2026-2027 3.5%

2027-2028 3.5%

Current bargaining unit total annual salary: \$3,475,519.00

District Proposal	Union Proposal	Difference
2025-2026 \$3,828,393.04	\$4,176,007.34	\$347,614.30
2026-2027 \$3,962,386.80	\$4,322,167.60	\$359,780.80
2027-2028 \$4,101,070.33	\$4,473,443.46	\$372,373.13

Conclusion:

The union has waited three months since the initial salary proposal by the district to get them even close to their initial offer to the instructional paraprofessionals. This process has been unnecessarily slow and frustrating, marked by the district's attempts to divide the union rather than recognize the shared value of every member's work.

The district currently has a projected surplus of \$18,568,026.00, the difference between the district's last offer and the unions offer is only an estimated \$1,079,768.23 over three years, a fraction of their available funds. Even after meeting the unions proposal, the district will still have \$17,488,257.80 in surplus funds. There is no financial justification for withholding fair wages from the employees who assist in education and keep the schools safe every day.

The Joliet Township Paraprofessional Council remains committed to reaching a fair agreement that promotes long-term employee retention and educational stability for students. Their proposal seeks to reduce turnover, avoid reliance on outside agencies, and build a consistent and safe school environment. The union is hopeful that further negotiations will result in a contract that values the essential role of paraprofessionals and security personnel in student success and safety.

