Cahokia Federation of Teachers, Local 1272, IFT-AFT, AFL-CIO
A comprehensive overview of current negotiations between Cahokia Unit School District #187 and Cahokia Federation of Teachers, Local 1272

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Submitted
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Introduction

The Cahokia Federation of Teachers, Local 1272, represents approximately 382 members who operate as a single, unified local under one constitution and one elected leadership team. Historically, the membership comprises three distinct functional groups—certified staff, secretarial personnel, and service workers—who have traditionally bargained their contracts concurrently and voted collectively as one cohesive body.

Following the expiration of the collective bargaining agreement in the summer of 2025, Local 1272 members have continued to work diligently throughout the 2025–2026 school year without a contract while maintaining their commitment to reaching a fair agreement with the district. They are beginning a second year without a contract.

Negotiations

The Cahokia Federation of Teachers, Local 1272, and Cahokia Unit School District 187 began collective bargaining negotiations in June 2025. Along with its initial proposal, the Union submitted a comprehensive rationale and position statement (enclosed). The Union's core negotiating objectives focused directly on stabilizing district staffing, protecting educational quality, and challenging regressive changes to working conditions, specifically addressing the following critical issues:

UNION CONCERNS -

> **Staffing Depletion and Unlicensed Instruction:** The district has suffered, and continues to suffer, a severe loss of certified staff. As a direct result, an increasing number of students are being taught by permanent substitutes who frequently lack proper teaching licenses.

Curriculum Shift to Online Platforms: The district replaced traditional, educator-led curricula with an online learning platform (Edgenuity), altering instructional delivery and working conditions.

Deficiencies in Special Education and Support Services: High turnover among specialized staff—including special education teachers, speech therapists, nurses, and social workers—has left high-needs and special education students severely underserved.

Regressive and Punitive Sick Leave Policy: The district implemented a strict mandate requiring every member to provide a formal medical certificate to receive pay for any sick leave usage, even for absences as short as one hour. This policy applies universally, including to employees with flawless attendance records and zero history of sick leave abuse. The Union formally challenged this policy due to the financial waste of using taxpayer funds for unnecessary medical visits and its severely negative impact on staff retention.

Where we started a year ago…

Union initial proposals were modest: with only 14 changes to the certified CBA, for example, and some proposed changes were not substantial. For instance, the Union sought to add health aide hours and work year to clarify current practice for one of the 14 changes.

The Union asked to discuss the current sick leave policy and reserved the right to submit a more formal proposal after discussion.

The Union asked to raise the dollar caps on criteria to get a bonus for good attendance.

The Union proposed raising the dollar amounts for reimbursement for tuition reimbursement when employees go back to school and further their education.

The Union proposed the district pay more for health care.

The Union proposed a 4 year contract with an indexed salary schedule instead of a schedule where raises are put on the base. This would have changed the pay structure in the middle and end of the schedule where the district is losing experienced staff. This change would make Cahokia more competitive and create a more stable staffing environment for our students. The Union

In contrast, the District proposed significant changes to contractual rights and workplace protections. Instead of bargaining together, the district offered different contract lengths for the three groups.

The district initially sought major language changes by proposing for following:

- Eliminating bidding rights for all three contracts, removing employee fairness and choice.
- Eliminating transfer protections from all three groups.
- Restricting of personal days from all three groups.
- Limiting the timeline in the grievance process for all staff.
- Making sick leave abuse a terminable offense.
- Cutting progressive discipline steps.
- Cutting three paid holidays for 12 month employees.
- Requiring all 12 month employees to work snow/emergency days in person.
- Gutting the long-standing retirement incentive language.
- Changing overtime to FLSA rules, which would make it harder to qualify for overtime pay.
- Eliminating all past practices.
- Implementing a subjective new evaluation instrument for non certified staff.
- Changes that were specific to individual job titles and groups:
- Requiring a 12 step, detailed lesson plans for teachers which would be time consuming and micro-managing. This would amount to a huge workload increase.
- Forcing homebound instruction for teachers regardless of preference.
- Redefining teacher plan periods - increasing unpaid obligations and destroying time to prepare.
- Requiring additional unpaid meetings for certified staff after the school day ends.
- Removing support for disruptive students that impede the education of other students.
- Eliminating job descriptions for secretaries and replacing all specialized roles like attendance and registrar with one generic job wiping out expertise and pay restrictions.
- Reducing the training requirements for secretarial jobs reducing professional standards and support.
- Eliminating the contractual reimbursement requirement when they deny secretary vacation time.
- Eliminating the limits on new salary placement. This would allow them to hire new people above experienced staff.
- Extending probation periods. They openly admitted they wanted this language because they hire people with criminal records and need more time to weed them out if it doesn't work.
- Eliminating job descriptions for custodians, like secretaries, and specialized roles wiped out.
- Eliminate training for security positions.
- Reclassifying security and making it easier to eliminate people and positions.
- Extend the probation period for service workers with the same justification as secretaries, because they hire people with records.

The big picture is the district wanted to centralize power at the administrative level by removing bidding, transfers, job descriptions and past practices. They hoped to increase workload with meetings, stricter requirements, added duties and more discipline risk. Many of their proposals would have stripped away safety, due process and fairness. They sought to divide the workforce with special deals for new hires, inconsistent salary structures and wiping out seniority.

During the bargaining process, the district frequently engaged in direct dealing. The Superintendent went to every building in December, called individual teachers into an office and offered his proposals, questioning them during the process. The Union filled ULP's. Additionally, the superintendent sent his offers directly to members and advised them not to trust their union.

The administration attempted to strip every unit of important rights, and tried to create a fully top-down system with no checks, no transparency, and no worker protections.

The parties have met approximately 23 times. On June 2, a federal mediator was utilized and a tentative agreement reached. The membership rejected the TA, which led to the district invoking the public posting process.

Key issues

On July 1, 2026, the Union held a general membership meeting to discuss the reasons why people rejected the District's last, best, and final offer.

1. The financial offer does not remedy the reasons District 187 is losing so many certified staff members. The offer leaves the middle and higher end of the salary schedule uncompetitive to attract and retain professionals to best serve students.

2. Insurance has steadily increased, and if it continues to increase at average rates, members anticipate they will lose most of the raise or even go in the hole.

3. As the Union explained to the district during bargaining, language changes to Article 22 - Job Posting and Bidding in the certified contract language is a major sticking point for the membership. The District seeks to eliminate teacher's rights to fairness and employee choice in work assignments. Currently, there is a fair path for certified staff to move to a grade level or subject where they feel best suited. In a district with a lot of administrative turnover and instability, the bidding article allows teachers to own their jobs and have a voice in their placement. Under the proposed language, teachers could only apply for open positions and be moved. Proposed language changes:

   Article 22 - JOB POSTING ~~AND BIDDING~~

~~All vacancies in existing or newly created teaching, administrative, or guidance positions which occur during the school year are to be posted in teachers' lounges and offices of all buildings. All teachers are to be given the opportunity to bid on vacancies for a period of five (5) working days.~~

~~All persons interested in such vacancies shall submit a bid for each position desired. All bids shall be sealed until after the expiration of the posting period. Award of bids shall be based on order as determined as follows:~~

1. ~~Proper certification for position being bid;~~
2. ~~A "highly qualified" bid shall be considered before someone not "highly qualified as defined by ISBE;~~
3. ~~A bidder's group classification as determined by the Joint Committee Layoff List, i.e., a group 4 applicant shall be considered before a lower group applicant. A Person's position within the group shall not be considered and a tie will go to Step 4:~~
4. ~~An applicant with more years teaching in the relevant grade level or subject matter. Garage levels shall be categorized as K-3, 4-6, and 7-8 (if not departmentalized), and~~
5. ~~The applicant with more years teaching in the district.~~

~~If no bid is received, the position becomes an appointed position.~~

~~New positions created or any other vacancies which occur on or after the last day of teacher attendance of the current school year will be filled by a new appointee for the following school year and not subject to the bidding procedure until the end of the school year.~~

~~All positions filled by appointees during the school year will be posted for bid no later than May 1 and assigned no later than May 30 of the current school year.~~

~~B vacancies resulting from a successful bid shall be bid no later than the last day of student attendance and assigned within five (5) working days~~

~~A vacancy is defined as a bargaining unit position newly created or resulting from a promotion to administration, a successful bid, death, dismissal for cause, resignation or retirement.~~

A. As positions become vacant or are created by the Board, a vacancy notice shall be posted internally, and may at the same time be posted externally, for a minimum of five (5) calendar days, on the website, e-mailed to employees and All-Call if available.

   Any employee may apply for the vacant position(s) within those five (5) days. The Board shall fill certified position vacancies in accordance with the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/24-1.5. The Board's decision on who it hires for a teaching position shall not be grievable or arbitrable. For non-certified positions, the Board shall determine and select the applicant to fill the position.

B. A vacancy shall be defined as any opening in a newly created position or any opening in a bargaining unit position which occurs as a result of an employee's resignation, retirement, promotion, or termination which the Board decides to fill. Positions filled by a voluntary or involuntary transfer shall be to consider vacancies under this provision.

C. Vacancies occurring 30 calendar days prior to the start of the school year or during the school year need not b e posted.

4. Another sticking point is Article 56 - Favored Nations in the certified CBA. This article guarantees management cannot receive a larger percentage increase than certified staff. This year during the bargaining cycle, the Union learned the district was paying an assistant superintendent more than his contractual amount. His contract is for approximately $200K per year. Every year the Union requests his salary through information requests. The district failed to share that they were paying this employee extra earnings not covered by his contract or posted in board minutes, even though the Union directly asked for ALL payments, benefits, wages, and stipends. This administrator has been paid $1.25 million beyond what they reported for the last 4 years. The Union learned this 'accidentally' and also learned through FOIAs that some district employees do not report to work at all. The HR Director's mother was getting her Medicare Supplemental Health Insurance Premiums paid for by the district. Curtis McCall Jr called his staff "greedy, privileged, and protected' in bargaining, and he has also said he needs these changes for our students. The Union contends only certified administration would benefit from this, not students or taxpayers. The District would like to delete this entire article. Additionally, this Superintendent has given huge raises to exempt, non-certified positions including his wife and brother, as well as other politically connected individuals, not in certified positions. The district proposed deleting the following language:

~~Article 56 - Favored Nations Clause~~

~~If any other current certified employee in Cahokia Unit School District #187 receives a higher percentage increase in salary, excluding step increases, extended work years, and promotions, the members of the Cahokia Federation of TEachers, Local 1272, will receive that percentage increase.~~

~~The parties agree that the Favored Nations Clause shall not be applied in the case where a certified employee not in the bargaining unit receives a benefit under terms outlined in the Early Retirement Incentive Article 49.~~

5. Another sticking point is the proposed lesson plan language. While the Union firmly believes all teachers should plan and doesn't object in any way to planning, the district's requirements go above what planning should be intended to do. Planning is for teachers, not for the district to check a box.

The district proposal includes the following required components: title, learning standard, materials used, learning objective, direct instruction, guided practice, and assessment/homework. Besides being time consuming, the teachers we have heard from said this mandate would make it harder for them to do their jobs. This is viewed as a paperwork requirement, not something that actually improves the experience for our students.

The curriculum adopted by the district aligns to state learning standards. Our current evaluation tool gives administration the ability to address staff who are not adequately planning and preparing per evaluation rubric/guidelines.

6. CUSD 187 has also entered an agreement with an agency to hire international teachers. The administrative cost per teacher per year is $13,500 to District 187. There is a pattern of ignoring staffing problems and paying outsiders more than union members. The district hires online speech teachers, health aides through an agency, and retired teachers all at higher wages than the collective bargaining agreement and instead of fixing the pay structure, climate, and culture.

The district had 80 permanent substitutes - some perhaps not fully licensed to teach the subject/grade levels, and some retirees filling in for special education positions without special ed licensure; there is a clear pattern of children being underserved in CUSD 187. This goes far beyond 'there is a shortage of teachers.' The district has no trouble finding administrative staff and non-certified exempt employees because they pay very competitive wages in these areas.

Our guiding principles leading us to a final offer

Every proposal contained in this package is guided by four priorities:

- Putting students first by attracting and retaining qualified employees.
- Creating stable schools through competitive wages and benefits.
- Protecting taxpayer investments by reducing costly employee turnover.
- Reaching a fair compromise that allows both parties to move forward together.

The Union recognizes that every agreement requires compromise. Throughout negotiations, Local 1272 has significantly narrowed its proposals and restored existing contract language in nearly every area. The remaining proposals represent the issues our members believe are essential to creating a stable workforce for the future.

The Union's outstanding proposals

The Union, contingent upon the board accepting this package proposal, withdraws all prior proposals and reverts to current contract language except for language identified below and T/A's already agreed to by the parties.

SERVICE WORKERS

20. INSURANCE BENEFITS

A. The parties agree to the following for health insurance benefits:

(a) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than ~~$7,979.00~~ $8,979 annually towards the health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage in excess of ~~$7,979.00~~ $8,979 annually.

(b) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than $~~3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually towards the health insurance premium costs for family/dependents coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for family/dependents coverage in excess of $~~3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually.

TERM OF AGREEMENT

This salary agreement and formal contract shall be effective July 1, ~~2021~~ 2025 through June 30, ~~2025~~ 2029.

Service Workers Salary:

2025-2026: 5% on cell, step increase for employees eligible for a step.

2026-2027: 5% on cell, step increase for employees eligible for a step.

2027-2028: 4.5% on cell, step increase for employees eligible for a step.

2028-2029: 4.5% on cell, step increase for employees eligible for a step.

SECRETARIES

ARTICLE 16 - HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE

B. The parties agree to the following for health insurance benefits:

(a) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than ~~$7,979.00~~ $8,979 annually towards the health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage in excess of ~~$7,979.00~~ $8,979 annually.

(b) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than $~~3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually towards the health insurance premium costs for family/dependents coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for family/dependents coverage in excess of $~~3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually.

TERM OF AGREEMENT

This salary agreement and formal contract shall be effective from July 1~~, 2021~~ 2025 through June 30, ~~2025~~ 2029.

Secretaries Salary:

2025-2026: 5% on cell, step for employees eligible for a step.

2026-2027: 5% on cell, step for employees eligible for a step.

2027-2028: 4.5% on cell, step for employees eligible for a step.

2028-2029: 4.5% on cell, step for employees eligible for a step.

TEACHERS

ARTICLE 4 - USE OF SCHOOL DAY

Teachers shall use the school day for:

1. Planning and preparing for their classes.

2. Teaching their pupils daily, using Board approved curriculum.

3. Evaluating pupil progress and discussing with their colleagues the effectiveness of their own planning and implementation of their plans.

4. Reporting and evaluation of pupil progress to the school administration and to the parents of the children whom they teach at such times as specified by district policy and according to accepted practice, which accepted practice shall require teachers to enter student assignments that are graded by the last workday of each week. Providing time for conferences with students, parents, supervisors and administrators.

5. For safety and accountability purposes, every school day, teachers must accurately enter the student attendance in the current student attendance program. HS/MS must enter student attendance within 30 minutes at the start of each period. Pre-K through 5th Grade must enter student attendance within 30 minutes of the first hour each day.

6. Assuming other responsibilities for the education, health, safety and welfare of their pupils as directed by their administrators. Union accepts this language provided the package is agreed to by the board in its entirety.

ARTICLE 48 - HEALTH, DENTAL AND LIFE INSURANCE

A. The parties agree to the following for health insurance benefits:

(a) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than ~~$7,979.00~~ $8,979.00 annually towards the health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for the individual/single employee coverage in excess of $~~7,979.00~~ $8,979.00 annually.

(b) The Board of Education agrees to pay up to and no greater than ~~$3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually towards the health insurance premium costs for family/dependents coverage. The employee will be responsible to pay any health insurance premium cost for family/dependents coverage in excess of ~~$3,692.00~~ $4,192.00 annually.

B. The parties agree to the following for dental insurance benefits: The Board of Education agrees to pay the full dental insurance premiums for the group dental plan. The Board will pay 50% of the premium cost for the group dental plan for dependents. The employee will pay the difference.

C. The parties agree to the following for life insurance benefits: The Board of Education agrees to pay the full life insurance premiums for the employee up to a policy worth $10,000.00.

ARTICLE 57 - DRUG TESTING FOR CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES and NON-CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES

Any certified employee who is present in the workplace while showing signs of being under the influence of alcohol or any illicit substance will be subject to immediate alcohol/drug testing. Any employee who is operating a District vehicle shall be drug/alcohol tested following any accident involving the vehicle.

~~e. All employee tests must be free of the presence of drugs; and~~

~~f. All employee tests must be free of the presence of the following amount of alcohol:~~

~~i. if the employee's sample is obtained within the first hour of a particular employee's regular work day, then the blood alcohol concentration of the employee must be less than .02%;~~

~~ii. if the employee's sample is obtained after the first hour and before the end of the second hour of the particular employee's regular work day, then the blood alcohol concentration of the employee must be less than .01%; and~~

~~iii. If an employee's sample is obtained after the second hour of the particular employee's regular work day, the blood alcohol concentration of the employee must be free of the presence of any alcohol.~~

~~g. If the employee fails the drug/alcohol test as described in subparagraphs a and b of this Article 30, then the employee will be subject to the following discipline in lieu of termination for one time during his/her employment with the District:~~

~~i. Employee will immediately enroll, participate and complete the Employee Assistance Program of the District and provide the District with proof of his/her enrollment, participation and completion of the Employee Assistance Program.~~

~~ii. Employee will be suspended without pay for a period of ten (10) working days.~~

iii. ~~Employee agrees to submit himself/herself to random drug/alcohol testing each time the District conducts the random drug/alcohol testing pursuant to this Article 30 for a period of forty-eight (48) months. The drug/alcohol testing will be performed pursuant to procedures for the random drug/alcohol testing as outlined in this Article 30. All drug/alcohol testing results must be free of any drugs or alcohol, excluding prescription drugs or legal over the counter medications. After successful completion of the forty-eight (48) months of random drug/alcohol testing, the employee will be subject to drug/alcohol testing like any other District employee covered by this Article.~~

iv. ~~After the expiration of the forty-eight (48) month period of drug/alcohol testing described in subparagraph (c)(iii) of this Article, the employee agrees that if any future drug/alcohol testing demonstrates the presence of any drugs and/or alcohol in any amount, then the employee may be subject to immediate termination,~~

~~h. The failure of the employee to comply with all the requirements as contained in paragraphs c(i), c(ii), c(iii), and c(iv) of this Article will result in the immediate termination of the employee.~~ Union accepts this language provided the package is agreed to by the board in its entirety.

Teacher Salary:

2025-2026: 5.0% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2026-2027: 5.0% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2027-2028: 4.5% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2028-2029: 4.5% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.

Non-Certified Salary Supposal:

2025-2026: 5.0% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2026-2027: 5.0% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2027-2028: 4.5% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.
2028-2029: 4.5% on cell, plus step for employees eligible for step.

End of Package Proposal

Conclusion

The Cahokia Federation of Teachers believes this proposal represents a fair and responsible compromise.

Our members have worked through an entire school year—and are now beginning another—without a contract while continuing to educate, support, transport, and care for the students of Cahokia Unit School District 187.

Throughout negotiations, the Union has narrowed its proposals, withdrawn numerous requests, accepted several District priorities, and focused its remaining proposals on the issues that matter most: attracting and retaining qualified employees, strengthening our schools, and providing stability for students.

This package does not seek everything the Union originally proposed. It reflects meaningful compromise by both sides.