

FAQ: MCS & MTA Negotiations

Introduction

Modesto City Schools is committed to keeping staff, families, and the community informed as negotiations continue with the Modesto Teachers Association (MTA). The following answers address common questions about the District's current proposal and the next steps in the negotiations process.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the current status of negotiations between MCS and MTA? Are teachers about to strike?

MCS and MTA mutually agreed to declare an impasse after their July 31 negotiations session. Impasse does not end negotiations. It moves the process into mediation, during which a neutral state-appointed mediator works with both parties to help them pursue an agreement.

What is included in the District's current compensation proposal?

The District's current two-year proposal includes a 2.5% ongoing salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2025; an additional 2.5% ongoing salary increase effective July 1, 2026; and a one-time payment equal to 2% of each member's base salary during the 2026-27 school year. In addition, the proposal includes a significant increase in the District's contribution toward health-benefit premiums.

The proposal also includes new stipends and updated pay rates. The District's Special Education proposal includes a \$1,500 annual stipend retroactive to the 2025-26 school year and a \$3,000 annual stipend beginning in 2026-27.

Is it true that the teachers have gone three years without a salary increase?

Certificated staff received a 7.25% salary increase in the 2023-24 school year. That increase was part of a two-year agreement approved by the Board of Education on June 3, 2024. There was also an increase in the District's benefits contributions in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The District has since put forth additional proposals, beginning in October 2025, which marked the start of the current negotiation cycle. The District's offers, which have increased several times during this 11-month period, have not been accepted by MTA leadership, and negotiations have continued. The salary increases currently proposed

cannot take effect until the offer is accepted, ratified by the MTA, and approved by the MCS Board of Education.

Why can't the District offer a larger compensation increase?

Based on District estimates, the current proposal represents more than \$22 million in additional salary and benefit costs for employees represented by MTA. If comparable increases were provided to all District employee groups, the total cost would exceed \$34 million. Most of the proposed salary and benefit increases are ongoing, meaning the District must be able to afford them this year and in future years.

Why doesn't MCS use more of its reserves for employee compensation?

Reserves are one-time funds, while salary and benefit increases are ongoing costs. Reserves help school districts continue paying employees and operating schools during economic downturns, state funding delays, or unexpected revenue declines.

Additionally, because of outside factors - including current enrollment trends, operational cost increases, and unpredictable state education funding - the District will need to draw from reserves in the coming years to sustain the District's current salary increase proposal.

But some districts have offered their teachers fully paid health premiums. Why can't MCS do that?

Several California school districts, including Oakland Unified, Sacramento City Unified, and Fresno Unified, have faced layoffs, other cost-cutting measures, and, in some cases, even insolvency as they've learned that their labor contracts were not fiscally sustainable. MCS is committed to providing meaningful salary and benefits increases while also acting in the long-term interests of our students, staff, and MCS community.

Is the District proposing a new elementary instructional schedule at every school?

No, the proposal is for a pilot at two elementary school sites, not a districtwide rollout across all elementary schools. Teachers and administrators at participating sites would work together to design the pilot schedule. The District's aim is to increase the number of uninterrupted instructional blocks and expand access to art, music, and physical education while protecting time for English Language Arts and math and implementing meaningful teacher preparation and collaboration time.

Has the District already selected the proposed pilot schools?

Potential sites have been considered, and sample schedules have been developed, but no final determination has been made. The parties would agree on the pilot sites and scheduling parameters, and implementation would follow meaningful collaboration between teachers and administrators at those schools.

Is it true that the District is trying to make teacher evaluations tougher?

No, the current proposal is to begin a collaborative process with MTA to design evaluation processes and tools that reflect teacher voice and provide meaningful feedback. The work would begin after a contract is ratified. Any proposed changes resulting from that work would be addressed through a future negotiations process rather than imposed through this year's negotiations process.

Is it true that Special Education teachers with caseload overages would not receive additional pay?

No, this is false. The District's proposal would retain overage pay for special education teachers whose caseloads exceed established limits. It would also add a stipend and additional adult support through a tiered structure that provides greater support as caseloads increase.

What happens next?

MCS and MTA will continue working through the mediation process, which began on September 9th. An additional mediation session is scheduled for late September. Any tentative agreement would need to be ratified by MTA members and then approved by the MCS Board of Education before it could take effect. The District will continue sharing updates as the process moves forward.