Negotiation Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 29, 2026, at 7:00 AM

Call to order: Meeting was called to order at 7:00 AM on Wednesday, April 29, 2026.

Attendees:
-Sherri Horsager, Darin Anderson, Sarah Lerud, Buff Murray, Dallas Dockter, and Nicole Powers

-Others Attending: Superintendent Josh Johnson, Business Manager Jackie Cordie, Ryan Mathias, Jill Askin, Tara Glandt, Rhonda Nudell, Kathy Lentz, Cynthia Klabo, Brian Engelhard, Angela VanBruggen, Tonya Breckheimer, Suzy Becker, Jess Gregerson, Tedi Dimmer, Tom Milbrandt, Courtney Jorrisen, Misty Hokana, and Grant Kraft, ND United.

Approval of the Minutes:
-Motion: Murray motioned to approve the April 22, 2026, minutes.
-Second: Anderson seconded the motion.
-All voted in favor, motion carried.

Purpose of Meeting
-Counter Proposals and Discussion

-Horsager presented the districts response to VCEA proposals.

1. One year contract for 2026-27 – *Yes, accept*
2. Contract language – replace any K-12 with PK-12 – *Yes, accept*
3. Article I. Teacher Rights, Section 1, Rights and Protection in Representation, p.3 – update out of date NDCC references (remove 15.38.1 and update to 15.1-16) – *Yes, accept*
4. Article I. Teacher Rights, Section 1, Required Meetings or Hearings, p.3 – add Principal – *Yes, accept*
5. Article IV. Teacher Evaluation/Personnel Files, Section 1. Teacher Evaluation Document, p.6 – align language with current evaluation system (Marzano Evaluation System) & update language – *Not accepted, district believes proposal conflicts with existing policy and management authority*
6. Article V. Transfer, Section 2. Voluntary, p. 6 – update language and add appropriate Principals – *Yes, accept*
7. Article V. Transfer, Section 3, Involuntary, p.7 – add seniority as the first determinant (keep references to elementary and JH/SH as they are currently structured) – *Not accepted, district believes proposal conflicts with existing policy and management authority*
8. Article VII. Teacher Workload, Section 6. Class Sizes, p 13 – add new language:
    a. PK-3 no more than 18 students
    b. Grades 4-8 no more than 22 students
    c. Grades 9-12 no more than 27 students

    Additional compensation if class size is greater than noted – *Not accepted in current form, district acknowledges concerns but feels guidelines largely reflect current practice*
9. Article VIII. Teacher Compensation, Section 2. Salary Base, p 13, 14 – establish a $40,000 base salary for 2026-27 and the Board to pay for the entire teacher share of TFFR – *Not accepted, district cannot accept proposal as presented, district remains open to continued discussion and alternative compensation structures that align with financial capacity*

10. Article VII. Teacher Compensation, Section 5. Miscellaneous Compensation B., I. p 14, 15 – remove language that states teachers shall not receive personal leave for time substitute teaching – *Yes, accept*
11. Article VII. Teacher Compensation, Section 7. Deductions, p. 16 – remove language about professional dues – *Yes, accept*
12. Article X. Professional Leave, Section 2. North Dakota United President Leave, p. 22 – add North Dakota United President Leave – they will be granted a leave of absence without pay for the term of office – *Not accepted, district does not intend to move forward with adding professional leave for this position*
13. Article XII. Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 4. Copies, p. 24 – update the number of agreement copies to three (3) printed copies – *Yes, accept*
14. Article XIII. Grievance Procedure, Section 1. Grievance Definition, p. 25 – update language to add "or VCPS Policy" – *Not accepted, complaints are governed by the board policy, not agreement language.*
15. Article XIII. Grievance Procedure, Section 5. Adjustment of Grievance, D., p. 27 – change the approval to the VCEA Executive Board vs the entire membership and add that if the Executive Board does not support, they can proceed but they will have to pay for the cost of arbitration on their own – *Open, district acknowledges importance and is open to continued dialogue depending on association's stance on related district proposal*
16. Article XIII. Grievance Procedure, Section 7. Denial of Grievance, p. 27 – change language so that if the Board does not issue a decision within the timeline, the grievance is treated as approved – *Not, accepted district believes it is not in the board or district's best interest*
17. Article XIII. Grievance Procedure, Section 8. Arbitration Procedures, C. Selection of Arbitrators, p. 28 – correct typographical error (be to by) and change the decision of the arbitrator from advisory to binding on the parties – *Not, accepted, district asserts NDCC allows the school board to make last and final offers and that no outside party can make a binding decision on the negotiated agreement*

Horsager, noted that all acceptances are contingent on final school board approval

-Discussion items:- *Come back to at a later time*

1. Can better 403B options be explored
2. The athletic pass earned by taking tickets should still be for the employee + 1
3. Reminder about: Article IX. Teacher Benefits, Section 6. Annual Coverage, p. 18

-Lerud presented VCEA's Concerns and Response

- Regressive bargaining/takeaways
- Removing seniority as a primary factor in RIF (Reduction in Force)
- Moving from five to six class period for JH/SH
- Zero dollars increase to the base for three consecutive years
- Removal of Extra Curricular from the Negotiated Agreement
- Removal of the Name of the insurance plan from the agreement (the history was that the name was promised to remain when the association agreed to change insurance wording (previously))
- Proposed changes to the grievance procedure – including linking grievances to policy rather than the Negotiated Agreement
- Recruitment value and retention value of the matrix (has been used for 50+ years)
- VCEA wishes to keep matrix as is
- VCEA open to wordsmithing

- VCEA concerned that so many proposed wording changes, alter the meaning not just cleaning up language
- VCEA agrees clarity is needed and open to reducing repetition by cross-referencing sections
- VCEA does not feel there is enough time this spring for subcommittees; the propose next school year to clean up language and bring any changes back to next year's negotiations.
- VCEA will not agree to change seniority as a first determinate in the RIF (Reduction in Force)/Recall; they would be open to listing subsequent factors after seniority – 38 districts have RIF provisions in their Negotiated Agreement, and they wish to keep theirs
- VCEA cannot agree to the proposed class load changes – Teacher Workload – it was noted that loss of second prep time would reduce the availability of teacher subbing and support. It is also noted that loss of second prep time was a major concern for some teachers – for some more important than salary
- VCEA agrees that School Term Language should align with NDCC
- VCEA states an increase in base pay is needed to avoid falling behind and to ensure everyone benefits (including Extra Curricular compensation)
- VCEA says that keeping Extra Curricular in the Negotiated Agreement helps keep coaching salaries competitive and that some coaches would reconsider coaching if it was removed
- VCEA objects to shifting items from the agreement to board policy (perceived takeaway)
- VCEA wants to keep the insurance name in the agreement
- VCEA is willing to clean up outdated language, but wants key protection to remain the same
- VCEA insists the Grievance procedure remain in the Negotiated Agreement (it is noted that formal grievances are rare – it is important to have the procedure)

-Horsager noted that it was not intended to remove the grievance procedure from the agreement, it was to differentiate grievances related to board policy vs grievances related to the Negotiated Agreement.
-VCEA noted the current definition already does differentiate.
-VCEA stated that 81 districts have a grievance procedure in their Negotiated Agreement

-Murray raised concerns with the districts redlines to remove the purpose of the Health Insurance Committee (HIC) and removing the language of the required minimum fund balance and also shift more control to the school board.

- VCEA wants the current language to remain, and the oppose moving the decisions soley to the board and removing protections they believe have contributed to healthy fund balances and they want the language to stay about the board will provide, single, single + dependent and family coverage.

-Horsager noted that some redlining may have been an error and is open to clarifying and restoring appropriate language. The board is open to cleaning up wording to reflect a recommendation role for the committee while not improperly binding the board. She also discussed whether it may be preferable to go back to "equal or better coverage" rather than tying the agreement to a specific name.

-Sick Leave Bank & Possible IRS Implications – need clarification
-The board wants to clarify that the SLB only applies to teachers or a broader faculty
-VCEA asked for clarification on how it would be tracked or taxed, current practice does not treat them separately.

-TFFR Pick Up – it was noted that this area is already tightly regulated

-VCEA noted that the districts wording changes seems like nitpicking or to lead to perceived takeaway, even if framed as clean up.

-Prep Time /Workload – VCEA reiterated that secondary teachers see the second prep time as critical, noting that many teachers sub during prep time.

-Discussion around the transition to the new school with the potential for schedule changes.

-Budget
-Anderson discussed the proposed $2,400 base increase and that would be an approx. $400K increase to the budget and would deplete any district carry over after three years. He noted the district has experienced a decline of approx. 200 students over the last 10 years, representing roughly $2 million in less revenue. He further noted that increase could result in cutting four teaching positions or eight support staff and potential program or extra-curricular reductions.

-Anderson also expressed uncertainty with state funding.

-Murray mentioned the potential savings once the schools are consolidated and that could be around $500K in district savings. It is noted that these savings are uncertain at this time.

-Matrix Restructure

-The districts position is that, the current matrix is not financially sustainable at the levels required to raise the base to where both sides agree it should be.

-The district believes a restructured matrix could increase the base and preserve or even improve the top salary while keeping the cost within the district's financial capacity.

-Anderson referred to what was done at the Sheyenne Valley Career and Tech Center, stating that the teacher would only move to the new matrix once it benefited the teacher, if not they can stay on the old matrix, but it would be frozen until moving becomes beneficial.

-VCEA stated they need to understand the number of steps and the overall structure of the new matrix, how the lane changes and steps would work (amount, progression), impact on individual teachers.

-VCEA stated the current matrix plays a role in recruitment and retention.

-Both sides agree, that testing multiple matrix scenarios can be complex, and there was discussion on subgroup/committee meetings between formal meetings.

The district asked VCEA to let them know if they are open to exploring a matrix change before investing too much time in modeling a new matrix.

-VCEA noted they felt some collaborative ideas were raised late rather than during the guideline sessions and they are open to collaboration but this process feels like it is ripping up the Negotiated Agreement and/or shifting too much into policy.

-The district stated their committed to transparency and a collaborative problem solving.

-Lerud and Horsager will schedule a time to meet to identify sections for suitable clean up

Next meeting agenda:

1. Approval of the April 29, 2026, meeting minutes.
2. Continuation of Counter Proposals & Discussion

Next Meetings Date/Time:

- Friday, May 8, 2026, at 7:00 AM

Adjournment:
- Time: 7:54 AM

Date: 05-08-26

SCHOOL BOARD

Valley City School Board Lead Negotiator

TEACHERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

VCEA Lead Negotiator