

Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update

The Newton Teachers Association made the disturbing decision a short time ago to shut down schools for our students tomorrow, Friday, by striking illegally. This decision is particularly damaging in the wake of the pandemic. This will be unbelievably difficult and stressful for our children and our families/caregivers.



The Newton School Committee has shared the message below with NPS families:

By now you are aware that the Newton Teachers Association (NTA) voted to strike, beginning Friday, January 19, 2024. We empathize with our families, and most of all our students, who will bear the burden of this disruption.

The School Committee's focus right now is returning our kids to the classroom. We will do everything possible to reach a competitive agreement that both honors our educators and provides program improvements and necessary supports for our students.

The NTA can end this strike at any time and educators can return to the classroom. We ask them to do exactly that so that students do not continue to experience disruption to their educational experience. We call on the NTA to end this strike and work with us in a serious and meaningful way to settle this contract.

We have deep respect for the dedication of our educators and the work they do in the classroom every day in service to our students. We look forward to settling this contract swiftly so that our students can return to their routines.

*Sincerely,
Newton School Committee*

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As a Mayor and a mother, I believe that educating our children is the most important service the City of Newton provides.

Budgets are an expression of our values and I have always prioritized funding for the Newton Public Schools.

I also agree with those who believe that the Newton Public Schools need more funding. The March 2023 operating override that I proposed was crucial because

we need more ongoing financial resources to support our students. The override did not pass.

Despite our subsequent financial constraints, I immediately went to work to try and take some of our new unusually high one-time available money to create a plan that improved NPS budgets for the foreseeable future. I developed and presented several plans over the summer and fall to the City Council, but these plans were not fully supported.

In December, Superintendent Nolin, School Committee Chair Brezski, and I rolled up our sleeves and crafted a plan to allocate additional funding over multiple years from one-time funds, including an overall increase to the Newton Public Schools of 5% for our next school year.

Superintendent Nolin recommended that this additional funding be distributed across funding priorities in order to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the school system. They include:

- Offering a competitive teacher contract
- Reducing some large high school class sizes in math and science
- Restoring some high school electives
- Improving elementary level math and literacy intervention in the five schools where it is needed most

The negotiating team put some of these funds to good use in their most recent offer.

What's Happening Right Now?

Since strikes by teachers' unions are illegal in Massachusetts and NPS had evidence that a strike was about to occur, the Newton School Committee filed on Tuesday a "strike petition" with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations (DLR) to request that the Commonwealth Employment Relations Board (CERB) conduct an investigation into the union's unlawful strike activity.

This morning, the CERB Board held a Strike Investigation hearing where lawyers representing the Newton Public Schools gave evidence that an unlawful strike was about to occur. Lawyers for the Massachusetts Teachers Association appeared on behalf of the Newton Teachers Association. At the end of the hearing before noontime, the CERB said they would issue a decision as soon as possible. That decision could come later this evening.

We will have to see what actions the CERB takes tomorrow. In particular, we will be watching to see if the CERB files an action in Superior Court to address the union's decision to strike.

A negotiation session had been previously scheduled for Friday, Jan. 19 and the Newton School Committee is committed to attending.

NPS Operations

The Superintendent, Dr. Anna Nolin, sent along a short time ago the following information:

Dear NPS Families,

*Today, the Newton Teachers Association (NTA) voted to strike, beginning Friday, January 19, 2024. Given this vote, **school is canceled for Friday, January 19, 2024. School will not be in session. Buildings will be closed and all school-related events and activities will be postponed until the strike ends.** As with any emergency school closure, the day(s) will be made up at some point before the end of the school year.*

As a parent and long-time teacher, I am heartbroken that the failure of negotiations has led to this moment. This is detrimental to the health and well-being of our students and they should always be our first priority.

*I empathize with our families who need to find childcare and with our students for whom disruptions to learning routines, social connections, and extracurricular activities are upsetting. **The School Committee has shared that they are working as quickly as possible to resolve the outstanding issues related to the contract. While they do their work at the negotiating table, we will do our work to take care of kids and families and to ensure the safety of our buildings and operations.***

Please see the information below on meal pick up should your family need assistance while the strike remains in effect. If you need access to medical or health supplies in your school building, please reach out to your school principal directly and they will connect you with our Director of School Health Services. Unfortunately, we cannot facilitate access to the building for any other items left there.

*The Newton School Committee will soon be engaged in intensive sessions to settle the contract and end the strike. **Each day by 7:30 pm, I will communicate with families if school will be in session the next day. As working parents ourselves, we understand how difficult this uncertainty will be for you.***

Updates will be posted here:

[*Newton Public Schools Homepage*](#)
[*School Committee Webpage*](#)
[*School Committee Negotiations Webpage*](#)

We all hope for quick resolution to this conflict so that our students can return to school. We care deeply for our teacher colleagues and respect the work they do in support of your students every day. We all want the very best learning environment and educational experience for our Newton Public School students.

*Sincerely,
Anna P. Nolin, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*

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A Correction

In yesterday's update, I included two examples of teacher salaries. One example was unintentionally incorrect so here is the paragraph with corrected information.

- A newer teacher who is currently on Step 3.0 at NPS and has earned a Master's degree earns \$67,559. (If that teacher has earned a Bachelor's degree, \$62,116.) [With the School Committee's last proposal, next school year that teacher would make \$73,198 with a Master's degree (\$67,268 with a Bachelor's degree)].
- A senior teacher who has been here longer, let's say currently at the top of the pay scale (technically known as Step 14.0) and has earned a Master's degree and completed 45 educational credits, earns \$115,473. [This teacher under the School Committee proposal would earn \$121,924 next school year.]

This information is available at the NPS website under the School Committee's Negotiations tab [here](#).

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Teaching and learning are core values for all of us.

We have outstanding teachers. They have tough jobs. I am committed to a competitive and sustainable contract.

The Newton Teachers Association should be negotiating with the Newton School Committee and our students should be in their classrooms.

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller



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