

La Center School District Bargaining Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated 8-21-19

Q: Where is La Center School District in the contract negotiations process?

A: The La Center School District has been in negotiations with the La Center Education Association (LCEA), the union that represents teachers, since June 4, and we continue to meet with the goal of reaching an agreement as soon as possible. We bargained on August 20 and made some progress but were not able to settle. The district and the union have mutually agreed to mediation. We will begin mediation on Friday, August 23rd with an independent mediator and will meet thereafter as frequently as possible until we reach an agreement.

Q: What happens if the district and teachers union do not reach an agreement by the first day of school on August 28?

A: The district is committed to meeting whenever possible in order to reach agreement with the teacher's union. While we will do all we can to reach agreement before the start of school, the district is working on contingency plans should the teachers association strike. We are committed to delivering daily updates on the bargaining process in order to keep parents and other staff informed.

Q: What is the district's current offer to the teachers? Are teachers getting all of the money the state designated for teacher salaries as a result of the McCleary lawsuit?

A: La Center School District's current best offer gives teachers a 9% raise (above and beyond the 7.6% raise they received last year) and every dollar the state has designated for teacher salaries from the McCleary lawsuit plus an additional \$718,213 originally intended for other programs and services. This will allow our highest-paid teachers to make \$92,515 for a 185-work day. Currently, with our offer of a 9% pay increase, this places La Center's average teacher salary at \$79,754 and near the top of all teachers average salary in the region.

Q: La Center teachers settled their negotiations last year at a lower rate than other neighboring districts. What happened to other districts that bargained higher teacher salaries?

A: La Center teachers agreed to a one-year contract last year that gave them a 7.6% raise and represented every dollar the state gave us for teacher salaries due to the McCleary lawsuit. While other districts bargained higher salaries, many of these districts are now reducing staff and cutting programs because the higher salaries are not sustainable. La Center School District is working to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars and district resources with the goal of avoiding program and staffing cuts.

Q: Why Can't La Center School District use its fund balance to pay teachers more?

A: The district has grown a healthy ending fund balance to ensure we have enough funding in our savings account to pay the bills and afford one month of teacher salaries in the event of an emergency or other unforeseen circumstances. Examples of emergency repairs where fund balance dollars may need to be utilized include emergency roof repairs because of storm damage or HVAC fixes because of heating and cooling issues. Our ending fund balance is our savings account and using savings to make ongoing payments is not sustainable, eventually we would drain our savings account and without intervening measures could go bankrupt. A fund balance might grow over time if the district has a specific issue on the horizon, in La Center's case, it is the anticipated one-time costs associated with opening the new middle school.

Q: I've heard that the La Center teachers are the lowest paid in Clark County, is that true?

A: The current offer on the table places our teacher's average salaries at \$79,754, which is near the top in the region. The state's funding system prior to the McCleary Decision rewarded districts that employed teachers with more experience and education with higher funding allocations for teacher salaries from the state. Now, post-McCleary, the state provides a one-size-fits-all dollar amount to districts regardless of the experience and education of their teachers. Simply put, La Center has great teachers with lots of experience and education, but the state does not provide the La Center School District with adequate funding to pay for the higher salaries of teachers with more education and experience.