

## Unit A Memorandum of Agreement (2018-2021) | Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Unit A?

Unit A is a unit in the Framingham Teachers Association (“FTA”) that includes all teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and adjustment counselors, department heads, nurses, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, school psychologists, academic coaches, coaches of athletics, school librarians, library media specialists, etc. Substitute teachers are not included in this unit.

### How was the contract negotiated?

The FTA and the Unit A Subcommittee comprised of Framingham Public School staff and School Committee members engaged in Interest-Based Bargaining (“IBB”) when negotiating this contract. Traditional bargaining requires the parties each take and hold to a position, often resulting in a ‘my way or the highway’ approach. Alternatively, in IBB, more consideration is given to why a particular outcome is desired by each negotiating party. In very general terms, the answer to the ‘why’ question reveals a party’s interests. When parties are negotiating over interests, the process becomes more collaborative. IBB is often referred to as a ‘win/win’ approach because the process yields an agreement that recognizes that absolute equality of results is not necessarily a realistic expectation in negotiation; instead, the focus is on understanding WHY a party is seeking a particular position on an issue.

### Why was the contract approved now?

A Collective Bargaining Agreement (“CBA”) is usually negotiated for a period of 3 years. The duration of the last CBA was 2015-2018. It was, therefore, time to negotiate another CBA, and the FTA and the School Committee began IBB negotiations in May of 2018 and completed negotiations in August of 2018. Since then, the parties have been working to finalize the language of the Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”) for Unit A and School Committee ratification.

### Does this contract align with the FPS Strategic Plan?

The FPS Strategic Plan guided every aspect of negotiations. Specifically, by focusing on hiring and retention incentives as well as creating a setting conducive to a collaborative, consistent, and equitable teaching environment that promotes co-planning, professional learning communities, and professional development and increasing actual time on learning for students, the negotiated CBA addresses the following High Leverage Goals:

- 1.0: Develop a shared understanding of high quality instruction, including content and instructional strategies, by all staff and executed in all classrooms and instructional settings;
- 1.1: Create a system and culture of consistent and accurate assessment, data analysis, reflection and feedback;
- 2.0: Promote academic achievement and social and emotional growth for all students;
- 2.1: Deliver targeted supports and interventions based on the analysis of data and identification of student-specific needs;
- 2.2: Support a culture of rigor and excellence for all students in all settings;
- 4.0: Create and nurture a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers that supports the district’s focus on increasing student achievement; and
- 4.1: Establish hiring practices that diversify school and district staff to reflect the student population of the Framingham Public Schools.

### How do the COLAs compare to other recent contracts?

Most school districts allot 6% total COLA (“cost of living adjustment”) over the period of a three year contract. Our contract is a total of 6.65%, but, most importantly, does not include a mere cost adjustment. Instead, the 2019-2020 3.5% is not a COLA but rather compensates teachers for an unprecedented change in working conditions which the district believes will strongly support student achievement and equity. Currently, the elementary day is 6 hours of instructional time, whereas middle school is 6 hours and 45 minutes of instructional time, and high school is 6 hours and 55 minutes of instructional time. As a result of this CBA, elementary teachers will work an additional 46.25 hours each per year, resulting in an additional 22,000 hours of instruction per year for our elementary students. Because all teachers will work a 7 hour work day as a result of the CBA, there will be time for teacher co-planning and collaboration, which are research-based effective teaching practices that are essential to the improvement in the education of our children. In exploring neighboring districts, and especially districts with whom we consistently compete for diverse and qualified candidates, most CBAs, such as those Boston and Cambridge, offer at least a 2% COLA, and that is without any further demand for a change in work conditions and hours. See [presentation](#).

### Why is the COLA in FY20 3.5?

As noted above, the 3.5% in FY20 (School Year 2019-2020) is NOT just a COLA, or “cost in living adjustment”. It is an adjustment for a change in teachers’ working conditions and hours. In other words, the elementary teachers’ day is increasing by 3.7% with an adjustment to annual compensation of 3.5% (COLA plus Additional Instructional Time). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) requires at least 900 hours of structured instruction time per year. At present, FPS offers the minimum hours of instruction to our elementary students, in stark contrast to other districts - all who offer longer instructional days. In order to improve our student outcomes, we must change the length of daily student instruction, which alters the teachers’ workday; doing so naturally requires a change in their compensation. With the new CBA not only will students receive an additional 22,000 hours of instruction per year at the elementary level, but also teachers, as a result of the increased time, will have scheduled time for co-planning and collaboration, which are research-based effective teaching practices that are essential to the improvement in the education of our children. The increase in the elementary workday also establishes work parity among the levels as currently elementary teachers work a shorter day than do those at other levels.

### How will the contract help teacher retention? Where does Framingham stand with teacher pay in comparison to other districts?

Higher compensation for teachers when coupled with opportunities for professional growth (through professional learning communities, collaboration, co-planning, and compensation for professional development) are the key to hiring and retaining diverse and highly qualified staff who will possess equity in their workload. Other highly competitive districts, like Boston and Cambridge, offer employees and prospective applicants a more robust salary schedule that rewards teachers obtaining credits beyond a Masters by offering salary incentives when educators obtain 45, 60, and 75 credits beyond the Master’s degree. In addition, beginning in 2018-2019, neighboring districts have been providing at least a 2% COLA, and that is without a change in teachers’ work day. The changes made to the salary schedule will allow Framingham to compete for top candidates who mirror our student demographics. Furthermore, under the new CBA teachers may earn salary credits which allow Framingham employees to receive

salary incentives that can only be used to augment one's salary in Framingham, and unlike graduate credits, are not transferable to other districts; consequently, salary credits will promote staff retention and reduce incentives for teacher to explore career opportunities elsewhere.

*What major changes were made? How will these help underperforming schools?*

The new changes in the CBA allow the district to establish guidelines for instructional minutes of core subjects to help drive equity in all schedules. As already noted, each elementary child's instructional day will increase by 15 minutes daily. The new elementary schedule will specify at least 90 minutes of literacy and 60 minutes of math every day, from which students may not be pulled. A daily intervention and enrichment period will provide extra help for struggling students and offer opportunities for enrichment. Teachers will have common planning time opportunities daily to ensure that every student receives the same instruction regardless of teacher or school. In addition, identical schedules will allow for regrouping by student needs during small-group instruction to allow for differentiated instruction and interventions. Periods that allow for "pull out" support will be staggered by grade throughout the day. If we offer teachers scheduled opportunities to develop a common understanding of high quality instruction and standards-based content knowledge in ELA and Math, then students will have equitable access to rigorous and engaging standards-based instruction to increase student achievement.

In addition, the newly negotiated CBA acknowledges that while without doubt FPS teachers are dedicated and deeply devoted to their students, as a district we should always strive to limit teacher absences. After all, studies show that teacher absences in excess of 10 days per year greatly impact student performance; when teacher absences are coupled with student absences, the education of our children suffers markedly. Moreover, the cost of substitutes creates a drain on limited resources. In the previous CBA (2015-2018), teachers who attended evening conferences received an unrestricted comp day, which resulted in high absenteeism around holidays. The elimination of the evening conferences will improve teacher attendance. In an attempt to curb teacher absenteeism even further, the new CBA reduces the number of sick days for which a doctor's note needs to be provided, allows the district to request doctor's notes when an absence abuts a holiday or long weekend, and enables the district to investigate the appearance of abuse of sick time in instances where a teacher has been absent for 10 or more non-cumulative days.

The new CBA also celebrates the diversity of our staff by establishing equity among genders by instituting a uniform parental leave for teachers for the purpose of giving birth to and/or receiving a newly born infant or for the placement of a child under the age of 18, or under the age of 23 if the child is disabled, for adoption, surrogacy, or foster or court ordered placement.

Furthermore, in an attempt ensure equity of workload and consequent optimum services for children, the CBA forms a committee to study the workload of special educators, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, etc. In seeking to improve our hiring practices, a committee will be generated under the purview of the CBA to examine potential incentives for hard-to-fill positions (i.e. special educators, science and math teachers, bilingual teachers, etc.).

Lastly, the CBA revises the language for reductions in the teacher force, allowing teachers' performance and skills (i.e. language skills), rather than mere seniority, to play a role in the retention of teachers in situations where layoffs may occur. This language reforms the district's

ability to keep high performing teachers in order to provide equitable and outstanding instruction to all students.

*Is it affordable?*

Yes. FPS has planned for this amount in the current FY19 budget and no new funding request is necessary. For FY20 and FY21, FPS leadership has and continues to proactively work these new statistics into their long term planning budget documents and has found cost savings elsewhere. It is important to note that Chapter 70 funding from the state, as well as grant funding covers sizable portions of salaries, reducing the local impact. Throughout the bargaining process FPS has collaborated with the City of Framingham's Chief Financial Officer on the details and for long term financial planning purposes.

*How will we know we are getting a return on this investment and are spending funding properly?*

A return on an education investment, just like any other investment, requires both time and patience. If teachers and administrators develop and execute a deep understanding of professional learning communities that focus on improving instruction, curriculum, and assessment, then teacher collaboration and use of effective instructional practices in classrooms will increase and lead to improved student achievement. Due to the leadership changes, FPS Strategic Plan, and impacts of the FY18 and FY19 budgets, we have already seen the schools who have engaged in proactive turnaround work march proudly on the path of improvement. The District has been establishing clear expectations, providing strategic and equitable resources, and promoting data-driven and research-backed teaching practices. To move to the next phase of implementation and support our students, staff, and city, we will make the changes negotiated in this CBA. We believe that this CBA will enable the district to move intentionally and proactively towards improving all student outcomes.



