

March 29, 2023

Contacts

Rob Kriete
President, Hillsborough CTA
Rob.Kriete@floridaea.org

Graham Picklesimer
Executive Director, Hillsborough CTA
Graham.Picklesimer@floridaea.org

Union Prevails in Impasse Hearing on Pay Dispute for School District Employees

TAMPA – A hearing officer issued a decision today ruling in favor of the Hillsborough County Classroom Teachers Association in its dispute with Hillsborough County Public Schools over step payments for employees. The controversy over whether employees should receive experience credit—and the associated pay increases—for their last two years of service resulted in HCTA declaring impasse in its contract negotiations with the school district last July.

Special Magistrate James Stokes, appointed to resolve the parties' impasse by the Florida Public Employee Relations Commission, held a hearing on December 8 to allow the parties to present arguments supporting their respective bargaining positions. The school district argued that it was irresponsible to grant recurring salary increases while it was in an operational deficit. The union argued that HCPS employees are paid poorly compared to their counterparts in similar school districts, and that HCPS was misrepresenting its financial position and the impacts of recurring salary increases on the long-term budget outlook, as well as systematically failing to use its flexibility under the law to use capital funds to support certain operating expenses.

Mr. Stokes sided with the union, writing that “The employees of the District stood-up when the District needed them to. Its now time to make the correction from those years with a proper salary adjustment...The District should be concerned that, without a meaningful adjustment, the District could begin seeing its employees looking elsewhere for employment with better compensation.”

“It’s been a long road, but this is a great day for educators in Hillsborough County and around the state,” said HCTA President Rob Kriete. “The Special Magistrate saw clearly what we knew all along: our educators deserve more than what the district has been offering, and the district can afford more.”

If Superintendent Addison Davis does not object to Mr. Stokes’ recommendations, they will go into effect as soon as the employees and the School Board ratify them. If Mr. Davis objects, this would compel a hearing before the School Board at a date to be determined, and delay employees’ receipt of step payments.

Mr. Kriete is not worried about any such procedural delays. “I think the Superintendent knows the right thing to do in this situation. I’m optimistic we’ll be able to ratify quickly and get money into everyone’s pockets within the month.”

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Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association is the certified bargaining agent for over 17,000 teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, paraprofessionals, secretaries, clerks, and other educational employees of Hillsborough County Public Schools. Connect with Hillsborough CTA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and at <https://www.hillsboroughcta.org>