July 22, 2026 - Instructional Bargaining Update

School Board Presents First Compensation Proposal.
HCTA Counters with Investments in ALL Instructional Employees.

On Wednesday, July 22, 2026, HCTA's Instructional Bargaining Team and the School Board's bargaining team met for the fourth bargaining session for the Instructional contract for our 2026-2027 negotiations.

Following the School Board's July 9th budget presentation for both ESPs and Instructional bargaining, which focused on the District's financial outlook, health insurance costs, and implementation of Florida's new Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA), the parties returned to the table to begin negotiating Instructional compensation for the upcoming school year due to statutory requirements for the TSIA. During the July 9th session, HCTA requested extensive financial information and asked more than 30 questions to better understand the District's budget assumptions before salary proposals were exchanged.

If you missed that update, you can review:

- July 9 HCPS Budget Review, Compensation, Insurance & TSIA
- HCTA July 9 Bargaining Update
- HCTA Understanding the 2026-2027 TSIA FAQ
- Rewatch the July 9, 2026 session

School Board Presents Initial Compensation Proposal

Due to legal requirements on the timeline for negotiating the "TSIA" for instructional employees, this session focused on the School Board's initial compensation proposal for Instructional, which included:

- Annual salary step advancement for eligible instructional employees.
- A $1,500 top-step longevity payment for employees at the top of their salary schedule.
- Continuation of the $20 planning-period substitute compensation.
- Continuation of fingerprint monitoring.
- Continuation of the employee-only no-premium health insurance option.
- Continuation of the previously negotiated Transformation Network and Designated Schools of Need Memorandums of Understanding.

What the School Board Did Not Include?

The proposal did **not** include:

- Any additional base salary increase beyond the annual step.
- Continuation of the ESE supplement.
- Continuation of the Student Services licensure supplement.
- Continuation of the ASHA CCC supplement.
- Continuation of the National Board mentoring/professional learning payment.
- Other compensation proposals currently on the bargaining table.

HCTA Pushes Back

Throughout the session, HCTA President Rob Kriete, Chief Negotiator Brit Wegmann, and fellow HCTA members or our bargaining team asked numerous questions regarding the District's proposal and the decision not to continue several compensation initiatives that employees received during the previous school year.

The School Board indicated that the primary reason for not continuing these supplements was “cost”.

For example, the School Board representatives estimated that continuing the current ESE supplement alone would cost approximately $4.7 million annually. The School Board’s CFO also explained that:

- Health insurance costs continue to rise significantly requiring the Board to cover $57.8 million in new costs for all employees for 2026-2027.
- Approximately $5.2 million in additional local funds will be required beyond the TSIA allocation to fund the District's salary proposal for instructional employees.
- District departments, excluding schools, will be required to reduce expenditures by more than $20 million to help balance the budget.

HCTA questioned whether eliminating compensation supporting employees serving our highest-needs students was the best long-term decision. President Rob Kriete summarized the concern by asking whether the District was simply *"robbing Peter to pay Paul."*

The School Board acknowledged the concerns raised by HCTA regarding ESE and Student Services positions and stated it remains open to reviewing counterproposals.

Health Insurance Update

The School Board also shared additional information regarding employee health insurance for 2027.

The District plans to dedicate approximately $42.6 million toward HCTA represented employee health insurance premiums, allowing the approved plan to include:

- No increase in employee premium costs.
- No increase in deductibles.
- Reduced physician and specialist co-pays.
- A new Value PPO option for families seeking lower payroll deductions.
- A new Gardner Health Network option providing eligible employees with up to $1,000 (individual) or $2,000 (family) in co-pay reimbursements.

HCTA still questions the elimination of the $720 annual opt-out credit and will continue addressing that issue through negotiations.

“TSIA” Update

The School Board also provided updated information regarding implementation of the Legislature's new Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA). The Board’s team now estimate approximately 6,459 employees may qualify under the eligibility requirements established by state law. While additional eligible employees are certainly positive news, it also means the available funding must now be distributed among more employees.

Current estimates suggest the average salary increase funded through the $12.6 Million TSIA funding for HCPS may now be closer to $1,800 or less per eligible employee, rather than the School Board’s previous estimate of about $2,100 or the frequently referenced "$3,000 raise."

This reinforces what HCTA has communicated throughout negotiations:

The Legislature established a maximum increase of up to $3,000, not a guaranteed payment for every eligible employee. The actual amount depends upon available funding and the number of employees who qualify under state law and does not consider or allocate funding in addition to the step advancement. The School Board's proposal therefore uses the TSIA funds towards a step increase alone for eligible employees as well as a longevity payment for eligible employees at the top of their salary scale, and also uses general funds to ensure all other employees not eligible for TSIA funds also receive the step increase or top-step longevity.

While a positive start knowing that the step increase and longevity pay are agreeable in concept to both parties, our HCTA bargaining team did NOT accept the School Board's proposal, but did offer a counter. (see below)

Millage Referendum Update

HCTA also requested additional information regarding the continuation of the voter-approved Millage Referendum salary supplements.

The School Board reported:

- The referendum generated approximately $183.7 million for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.
- Approximately $32.4 million of that total was distributed to charter schools.
- HCPS retained approximately $151.3 million.
- Approximately 92% ($139.2 million) of that amount was dedicated to employee salary supplements.

The School Board's CFO reported that the $136.9 million was spent on approximately 23,500+ employees, which is a positive year-end difference of approximately $2.3 million. He further explained that because future property tax revenues remain uncertain, particularly with a proposed statewide ballot initiative affecting property taxes, the School Board believes maintaining the current referendum supplement provides greater long-term stability throughout the remaining years of the agreement.

Equally dividing the $2.3 million difference would equate to maybe $97 per employee (before tax) and will serve as an amount that will be utilized for employee pay during the remaining life of the 4-year referendum agreement. HCTA will continue monitoring referendum revenues each year, consistent with the negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (ESP | Instructional), to ensure employees receive every available dollar over the life of the agreement.

HCTA's Counter Proposal

Following a caucus, HCTA returned to the bargaining table with a comprehensive counterproposal.

HCTA proposed:

- A 1% base salary increase (approximately $9 million in addition to the salary step) for all instructional salary schedules
- Annual salary step advancement for eligible instructional employees ($11.7 million)
- A 2% increase to the hourly rate for twelve-month instructional employees (estimate unknown)
- Increasing the top-step longevity payment to $2,500 ($6.8 million)
- Continuing the $750 Student Services Licensure Supplement (estimate unknown)
- Continuing the $1,500 ASHA CCC Supplement (estimate unknown)
- Increasing the ESE Supplement to $2,000 (estimate unknown)
- Creating a $2,500 Critical Shortage Supplement for School Psychologists (estimate unknown)
- Continuing the $1,000 National Board mentoring/professional learning payment (estimate unknown)
- Continuation of the $20 planning-period substitute compensation (estimate unknown)

HILLSBOROUGH CLASSROOM TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
Serving Education Professionals since 1921

- Continuation of fingerprint monitoring
- Continuation of the employee-only no-premium health insurance option ($35.5 million)
- Continuation of the previously negotiated Transformation Network and Designated Schools of Need Memorandums of Understanding

NOTE: HCTA also intends to continue pursuing additional compensation proposals already on the bargaining table that are in the contract through contract language negotiations. This would include Section 18 and Appendix C of the Instructional contract.

The School Board requested time to review HCTA's counterproposal before responding.

What Happens Next?

The parties will return to the bargaining table on:

Monday, July 27, 2026
9:00 a.m.
HCTA Office – 3102 N Habana Ave, Tampa, FL 33607
Register to View online

We anticipate receiving the School Board's response to HCTA's counterproposal and continuing discussions regarding both TSIA implementation and the broader compensation package for instructional employees. ESP negotiations will also continue.

The Strength of Our Union Is Not the Bargaining Team. It's Our Members.

Every proposal our HCTA bargaining team members bring forward reflects what employees have told us through surveys, Contract Action Team meetings, worksite conversations, and member feedback. Our bargaining team is made up of HCTA members who are advocating directly for their colleagues at the table.

But negotiations also require agreement from the School Board.

The bargaining team provides the voice. Members provide the leverage.

When thousands of employees speak together, decision-makers listen. When only a handful speak up, it's much easier to assume employees are satisfied with the status quo.

Real union power isn't created by the people sitting at the bargaining table. It's created by the members standing behind them.

Here's how you can help:

- Join HCTA if you're not already a member or ask your colleagues to join today!
- Talk with your coworkers about what's happening in negotiations.
- Read bargaining updates and watch negotiation sessions.
- Contact School Board members and tell them to invest in the employees who make our schools successful. (plan to attend the next School Board meeting on July 28th)
- Attend or watch our next bargaining session on Monday, July 27.

Together, our voices create the leverage that moves negotiations forward!