



Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association

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August 19, 2026 HCTA Instructional Bargaining Update

Nearly Five Hours Negotiating Improvements to Our Contract

On August 19, HCTA's Instructional Bargaining Team met with the School Board's team for nearly five hours to continue negotiations over the extensive contractual improvements developed by HCTA members.

This is an open-book bargaining year for the Instructional Contract, providing an important opportunity to negotiate improvements throughout the agreement, not just wages and benefits. HCTA members have spent months reviewing the contract, identifying problems and developing nearly 100 pages of proposed improvements to working conditions and employee rights.

The School Board did not come prepared with responses to HCTA's August 7 counterproposals for Section 2: Work Year & Hours. Instead, the August 19 session focused on HCTA countering the Board's responses to Sections 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

HCTA's August 7 proposals include significant improvements addressing:

- Stronger protections for planning time, including employees working at multiple sites, assignment changes after the school year begins, K-8 schedules, and ESE Center and Access Point staff.
- A remote/virtual work option on designated non-student teacher workdays.
- Specialized training and PLC opportunities for ESE Center and Access Point staff and centralized information for Professional Study Days.
- Improved scheduling protections for K-8, Technical College and multi-site employees, including travel time and reasonable limits on duties beyond the normal workday.
- Improved protections for Floating Teachers and Support Facilitation assignments.
- Additional opportunities and scheduling improvements for Student Services, including 11-month critical-shortage positions, priority for t-Pay opportunities before outside contractors, Half-Time employment options, and compensation.
- Protections for Library Media Specialists, including against involuntary placement into specials rotations, recurring multi-site assignments and use of the Media Center as a general student supervision area.
- A comparable duty-free break when elementary teachers cannot receive a break after three consecutive hours.
- Clarification and improvements regarding vacation time and standardized District procedures for employee sign-in and late arrival/early departure.

These proposals remain on the table awaiting a School Board response.

August 19: HCTA Counters the School Board

The majority of the August 19 session focused on Section 3: Employment Rights & Responsibilities, including HCTA counterproposals to:

- Strengthen and clarify the SIP waiver process.
- Protect ESE personnel from being expected to complete case management, IEP documentation and compliance work beyond the contractual workday, and require IEP, MTSS, CST and other mandated meetings to occur during the workday.
- Improve conference day/night make-up procedures, including opportunities for virtual conferences.
- Make extensive improvements to duties, class coverage and compensatory time protections and recordkeeping.
- Remove the additional 25 minutes beyond the normal workday currently permitted for Tuesday meetings.
- Clarify the one-hour lunch during pre-planning.
- Improve notice of District assessment timelines and grade submission/finalization procedures.
- Address responsibilities for handling money, purchasing materials and school-wide inventory.
- Protect employees when enrollment or allocation changes result in unsafe class sizes or burdensome workloads.

Additional counters included improvements to Sections 4, 6, 7 & 8:

- Student referral processing and student management procedures.
- The Instructional Materials Selection Committee.
- Faculty Steering Committees, their responsibilities and processes.
- Job descriptions, including defining and placing reasonable parameters around "other duties as assigned."
- Facilities and other employee working-condition provisions.
- Complaint procedures and employee protections.

Progress: Tentative Agreements Reached

Although substantial work remains, the parties have reached a few positive Tentative Agreements:

Grades, Section 3.14.1: Updates access to the District-designated electronic gradebook, requires training on the system, and clarifies the grade submission deadline as no later than noon on the fifth workday following the grading period.

Steering Committees, Sections 6.6.1 & 6.6.2: Clarifies the secret-ballot election process, meeting procedures and the Steering Committee's role in providing structured faculty input regarding matters affecting the worksite.

Employee Facilities, Section 7.1.1: Expands outdated language applying only to "teachers" to instructional personnel, including access to clean restrooms, appropriate workrooms, telephones, copiers and necessary

supplies. It also clarifies that instructional workrooms should not be used as assigned workspaces for Student Services personnel.

There Is Still A LOT More to Negotiate

HCTA still has significant proposals to counter School Board responses in Sections 9, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 26. Nearly 100 pages of proposals were not developed simply to change words on paper. They reflect real issues HCTA members experience in their worksites and meaningful opportunities to improve employees' daily working conditions.

HCTA intends to give those proposals the serious bargaining they deserve.

What About Compensation?

Our bargaining team knows compensation is at the forefront of employees' minds.

ESP compensation negotiations are moving more quickly because the ESP contract is currently in a closed-book year, limiting negotiations to compensation and a couple of contractual provisions. Instructional is in its open-book year, giving HCTA an important opportunity to improve the entire contract.

That does not mean HCTA has accepted the School Board's last compensation offer.

HCTA and the School Board have reached tentative agreement on the legally required Teacher Salary Increase Allocation (TSIA) funding, but TSIA is not the end of compensation negotiations.

The parties are conceptually in agreement on retroactive step movement for all eligible employees, a longevity payment for employees already at the top of their schedule, continuing National Board supplements, continuing the ESE critical shortage supplement (*however the School Board wants to reduce which positions are eligible and reduce the payment by \$500*), moving School Psychologists to a new salary schedule, continuing the School Board covering the cost of fingerprint monitoring, and the School Board absorbing an 18% increase to employee health insurance (\$35.5 Million).

However, HCTA continues to pursue additional improvements, including:

- Improvements to base salary schedules.
- Addressing the disparity in hourly compensation between 10-month and 12-month employees.
- Eliminating the 198-day Student Services salary schedule and adding a Master's +30 level to the Specialist Degree schedule.
- Student Services licensure/ASHA CCC supplements.
- Increased advanced-degree supplements.
- Additional supplements recognizing specialized responsibilities, credentials and hard-to-fill positions.

The School Board remains resistant to most, if not all, of these proposals.

Why Hasn't HCTA Settled Yet?

We understand the urgency employees feel about compensation. HCTA wants employees to receive raises as quickly as possible, but speed cannot be the only measure of successful bargaining.

By only increasing the base student allocation (BSA) by 1.6%, the State has once again failed to adequately fund public schools to keep pace with inflation, rising costs of living, mandates on our public schools, and an 18% increase to employee health insurance costs alone. At the same time, important pieces of Hillsborough's 2026-2027 financial picture are still developing.

Enrollment is one of the largest drivers of District funding. State and District budget assumptions included a projected decline of approximately 7,000 students, while [more recent information from the Superintendent indicates Hillsborough may instead experience a slight enrollment increase over last year](#). The District's final budget and the 2025-2026 Annual Financial Report, which is completed on September 11th, will also provide important additional financial information.

HCTA has a responsibility to evaluate the best and most current information available before reaching a final agreement on employee compensation based on unknowns.

That is not unnecessary delay. It is responsible bargaining.

While this is a more difficult budget year than the last few years, some of the most meaningful improvements we can achieve do not require millions of dollars but meaningful improvements to our contract.

Protecting planning time. Reducing unnecessary work beyond the contractual day. Improving workload protections. Establishing reasonable scheduling practices. Protecting professional autonomy. Clarifying duties and employee rights.

Working conditions have value.

This is our opportunity to negotiate those improvements, and HCTA will not abandon months of work and nearly 100 pages of member-developed proposals simply because there is pressure by the School Board to settle quickly.

Our goal isn't to delay an agreement. Our goal is to negotiate the strongest agreement possible for the employees we represent.

You can watch yesterday's session here: <https://youtu.be/COQ4SDRmX6w?si=O33795uwdbOjvZgf>

Stay tuned for the next bargaining date.