



3102 N. Habana Avenue, Tampa, FL 33607 | 813-238-7902 (T) 813-237-4541 (F) | www.hillsboroughcta.org

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2026-2027 Bargaining Tentative Agreements FAQ

SALARY / COMPENSATION

What is my raise for 2026-2027?

Your increase depends on your bargaining unit, position, salary schedule, current step/level and eligibility for additional payments or supplements.

ESP employees can determine how much of a raise they will receive by comparing your current Pay Grade/Step (*see your pay stub*) with the step you will advance to on the same salary schedule. Other additional payments may apply to eligible employees (i.e. Schools of Need, Transformation Network, etc.). Please refer to the 2026-2027 ESP Economic Agreement for specific eligibility information.

Instructional employees can see how much of a raise they will get, by comparing your current salary step (*see your pay stub*) with the step you will advance to on your same salary schedule. Other additional payments may apply to eligible employees (i.e. Transformation Network, Schools of Need, ESE payment, NBCT, Student Services payments, etc.). Please refer to the 2026-2027 Instructional Economic Agreement for specific eligibility information.

Tentative 2026-2027 ESP and Instructional Economic Compensation Agreements and Tentative 2026-2027 Salary Schedules with comparison information can be found on the “CONTRACTS” page of the HCTA Website under 2026-27 Ratification Information.

- [Tentative Instructional 2026-2027 Economic Agreement](#) and [Tentative 2026-27 Salary & Compensation Charts](#)
- [Tentative ESP 2026-2027 Economic Agreement](#) and [Tentative 2026-27 Salary with Directions for Comparison](#)

The current 2025-2026 ESP and Instructional salary schedules are published in [Appendix C of the 2025-2028 HCTA ESP Contract](#) or [Appendix C of the 2023-2026 HCTA Instructional Contract](#) and in the Salary Schedules book on [the HCPS Employee Relations site](#).

Will we get retro pay?

Yes. The ESP & Instructional compensation agreements, upon employee ratification and School Board approval, will be effective July 1, 2026.

When will I receive my raise, retro pay and other payments?

Upon employees ratifying the agreement at the completion of the voting period September 28-October 8, 2026, and the School Board approving the agreement on October 20, 2026, we expect base salary increases and step/level movement to be included as early as possible during the first semester. Other supplements and additional payments may have different pay dates which are listed in the tentative compensation agreement. HCTA will work with HCPS and provide updates to our members as these dates become clear and available.

Is my salary schedule changing or am I advancing a step?

Eligible Instructional **and** ESP employees will receive one step movement on all current salary schedules based on completed years of experience. Completed years of experience is defined by working half plus one day and receiving an effective evaluation for the 2025-2026 school year.



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ESP employees who are Department Representatives (Job Code 51314) will also advance from Pay Grade 25 to Pay Grade 26, effective July 1, 2026.

School Psychologists will be moved to the newly developed School Psychologists Advanced Degree Salary Schedule (205 days).

I earned my step. Why do we have to negotiate for this every year?

You absolutely earned your step. HCTA negotiated an experience-based salary schedule because we believe another successful year of service should be valued.

Florida law does not guarantee employees an annual step or salary increase, and salary raises are dependent on additional/increased funding included in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) proposed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor each year. Many school districts do not have traditional experience-based step schedules at all. Hillsborough employees advance based on completed years of Effective and/or Highly Effective experience because HCTA negotiated and protects that advancement in our contract!

In fact, when the Board previously refused permanent step advancement in 2022-2023, HCTA challenged it through impasse and won. This school year employees can expect their experience to be recognized because that protection is in our contract.

What does “eligible employee” mean?

Generally, “eligible employee” means you must have worked half of the school year plus a day in the prior 2025-2026 school year and have an effective or higher evaluation score on your most recent (2025-2026) annual evaluation. New hires without an evaluation are still considered “eligible.”

Some of the additional payments/supplements are based on position, licensure and other requirements, so it is important to review the tentative economic agreements.

I’m at the top of the pay scale, what am I getting?

ESP Employees at the top of their respective Pay Grade (Level 24) who do not advance one step/level will receive an additional \$1,500 one-time, FRS-eligible longevity supplement.

Instructional employees already at the top of the A/B/E/G/P/Q and Student Services pay scales for one year will receive an additional \$1,500 one-time, FRS-eligible longevity supplement, and those who have remained at the top for two or more consecutive years will receive an additional \$2,250 one-time, FRS-eligible longevity supplement.

I’m near the bottom of the pay scale, will I get a raise?

See above “*Is my salary schedule changing, or am I advancing a step?*”

I have an advanced degree; will I get the advanced degree supplement?

Yes. The advanced degree supplements for Instructional employees were won at the 2022-2023 impasse and are now included in Appendix C of the Instructional Contract. While the School Board refused to increase the amount of these supplements this year, these supplements will continue to be paid to certificated instructional personnel who have an advanced degree in their area of certification **and will continue to include certified instructional personnel who have an advanced degree regardless of certification area**. The inclusion of advanced degrees regardless of certification area was fought for and won thanks to the relentless advocacy of our HCTA members and members all across the State who participated in lobbying and educating



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lawmakers to change the Florida Statutes governing this payment! They do not need to be renegotiated each year thanks to our HCTA union winning impasse to permanently include these in our contract!

Does the \$6,000/\$3,000 millage payment continue?

Yes. These important supplemental payments will continue for the 2026-2027 school year and are secured for 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 thanks to the legally binding Memorandums of Understanding that our HCTA union negotiated!

Why does HCTA still take credit for the Millage Referendum?

Because without HCTA's organizing efforts, fundraising and campaigning, this referendum would not have passed. Voters did not pass previous millage referendums that were on the ballot because HCTA was not asked to partner and take lead under prior district leadership. This time HCTA led the grassroots campaign, and it passed decisively. This victory resulted in a minimum annual payment of \$6,000 for Instructional and \$3,000 for ESPs for four years, on top of bargaining raises. We've always said it's not a replacement for bargaining, but it's real money in your paycheck.

Furthermore, HCTA worked diligently to negotiate clear and legally binding MOUs so that 92% of the total millage revenue allotted to HCSP is dedicated solely to employee supplemental pay.

[Instructional-SIGNED MOU Millage 2024-2025 Instructional \(November 7, 2024\)](#)

[ESP-SIGNED MOU Millage 2024-2025 ESPs \(November 7, 2024\)](#)

What is happening to the ESE supplement?

Instructional: The ESE supplement will decrease from \$1,500 to \$1,000, and eligibility has been revised. The School Board initially proposed eliminating the ESE supplement entirely. HCTA successfully negotiated to preserve approximately \$2.4 million for the supplement, although we were not able to maintain the previous amount or eligibility for all positions. Eligibility includes : Access Points, Behavior Support, Hearing Impaired, Hosp/Homebound, Pre-K ESE, SLH, Staff Occupation Therapist, VE, Visually Impaired, and all instructional employees at our Exceptional Centers (*Caminiti, Carver, Dorothy Thomas, Lavoy, Lopez, Peters & Simmons*).

ESP: HCTA proposed an additional ESE supplement for ESP employees multiple times this year, but the School Board did not agree. In 2024-25, HCTA negotiated a permanent base-pay increase for eligible ESE ESPs by moving employees one level on the salary schedule and also regrading their positions one pay grade for a permanent base pay increase, rather than relying on a variable supplement that could change or end.

Our HCTA bargaining team will continue to advocate for this recognition of our ESE Instructional & ESP employees each year.

Are other existing supplements continuing and are there any new supplements?

Yes!

The [Transformation Network](#) and [Designated Schools of Need](#) will continue but with some changes (*review MOUs*).

National Board Certified Teacher supplements, ASHA CCC's, and Student Services Licensure supplements will all continue.

All other important supplemental payments and rates already in Appendix C of the ESP and Instructional contracts will continue for the 2026-2027 school year.

NEW/INCREASED ESP Supplements: HCTA successfully negotiated an increase to the professional learning stipend from \$9/hour to \$11/hour. Additionally, HCTA negotiated an exciting NEW MOU for ESPs who successfully complete a Micro-



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Credential during the 2026-2027 school year to receive \$250 payment (*up to \$500 for an individual – no more than 40 total payments may be paid during the 2026-2027 school year*).

What is changing for School Psychologists?

For the past three years, HCTA has been working to correct longstanding salary inequities for School Psychologists who had been left behind on the old *HealthPro* salary schedule for years while all other Instructional salary schedules and experience levels advanced.

In 2023-24, HCTA replaced the old *HealthPro* schedule with new *Student Services* salary schedules, recognizing years of experience and moving Speech-Language Pathologists, School Counselors and Social Workers onto the improved schedules while retaining their years of experience. However, the salary issue for School Psychologists remained.

This year HCTA negotiated a new 205-day Advanced Degree salary schedule for School Psychologists, finally helping address that inequity and better recognizing their years of experience, advanced education and professional credentials.

See the new School Psychologist Salary Comparison Chart on [the last page of the Tentative 2026-2027 Instructional Salary Scales](#)

Will my retro payment be taxed at a higher rate?

No. Typically, the IRS formula for withholding pay may trigger a higher percentage of a large lump sum payment (such as retro pay) to be withheld from your paycheck. But when you file your taxes for 2026, your overall tax burden will not be different. You will receive the extra pay that was withheld in the form of a larger tax refund (or a smaller tax bill).

If you do not want a higher percentage of your lump sum payment to be withheld, contact the Payroll Office at: Payrollinformation@hcps.net.

Are employees on leave (FMLA, health, personal) eligible for the increase?

Employees who are on leave will receive increases upon returning from leave.

The State's Veteran Teacher Funding

Didn't the State provide \$3,000 for veteran teachers?

No. The State did not provide or guarantee an additional \$3,000 raise for every veteran teacher. The Legislature provided a fixed amount of salary-increase funding statewide for eligible teachers with 10+ years of Florida public-school teaching experience and established \$3,000 as the maximum increase, not the amount each teacher would receive.

This was also not an additional \$12.6 million on top of other State funding available for salary increases. Rather the veteran-teacher allocation was the same annual TSIA salary-increase funding but with the Legislature restricting the 2026-2027 designated growth funding to a specific group of veteran classroom teachers.

Hillsborough's share of approximately \$12.6 million after the charter-school allocation must cover the compensation costs for all eligible HCPS teachers including employer costs that are added on top of an employee's salary (e.g. retirement, Social Security and Medicare). The amount available is not enough to provide every eligible teacher in Hillsborough an additional \$3,000.



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Who qualifies for the State veteran teacher funding and why are veteran counselors, resource teachers, other student services and other instructional employees excluded?

The State specifically limited this funding to full-time classroom teachers and certified prekindergarten teachers funded through the FEFP who have at least 10 years of full-time teaching experience in a Florida public school.

Because of that restriction, all ESP employees and many HCTA Instructional employees were excluded, including student services, instructional coaches, site and district resource teachers and other student services and instructional personnel that are not classified as classroom teachers under the statute, as well as those with less than 10 years of full-time teaching experience.

This eligibility restriction was established by the State, not by HCTA or the School Board.

If I qualify, am I getting \$3,000 in addition to my step?

No. The State funding is not adequate for Hillsborough to achieve a separate \$3,000 payment on top of your step. For eligible veteran teachers, the State funding is being used toward the cost of their 2026-27 step advancement and longevity payments for those who do not receive a step, as well as the required employer costs associated with those salary increases, such as retirement and Social Security/Medicare.

As explained above, the State established \$3,000 as the maximum increase but did not provide enough funding for every eligible veteran teacher to receive \$3,000.

Did HCTA agree to use veteran-TSIA funding for all employees?

No. As of July 22, the District identified approximately 6,500 Instructional employees who met the State's veteran-teacher eligibility requirements. That number was based on the workforce at that time. HCPS has since added approximately 200 Instructional employees, so the final number of eligible veteran teachers will be somewhat higher, depending on how many of those employees meet the State's 10+ years of Florida public-school teaching experience requirement.

Hillsborough's State allocation is approximately \$12.6 million, and that funding must cover both salary increases and required employer costs such as retirement and Social Security/Medicare. Using the July estimate of 6,500 eligible employees and the District's approximately 21.69% employer cost rate, that represents approximately \$10.35 million available for actual salary increases, or about \$1,592 per eligible employee if it were simply divided equally. Because the eligible population has grown since July, the actual per-employee amount would be somewhat lower.

But the funding is not being divided equally. HCTA negotiated to preserve our experience-based salary schedule. Depending on where an eligible veteran employee is on the schedule, their negotiated increase is:

- \$1,335 for most veteran step advancements
- \$1,350-\$1,500 for the highest step advancements
- \$1,500 longevity for employees at the top who do not receive a step
- \$2,250 longevity for employees who have remained at the top for two or more consecutive years

The State's \$12.6 million is being applied toward these negotiated increases for eligible veteran teachers. It is not enough to cover the full negotiated cost. Step advancement costs approximately \$11.7 million, longevity payments cost another \$5.9 million, and the new School Psychologist salary schedule costs approximately \$395,353, for a total of approximately \$18 million before ESE and other supplemental payments. That means the School Board is contributing approximately \$5.4 million beyond the State's \$12.6 million allocation toward these negotiated salary and longevity costs alone.



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Health Insurance

Why are health insurance costs increasing so much again in 2027?

HCPS health plan costs are increasing approximately 18% for the 2027 plan year, requiring approximately \$42.6 in additional District funding for the employees HCTA represents. *(\$35.5 million for the Instructional bargaining unit and \$7.1 million for the ESP bargaining unit alone to absorb the increased costs)*

HCPS is self-insured, which means the District directly pays employees' healthcare claims and avoids administrative fees collected by the insurance company. The increase is being driven by the rising cost and use of medical care, prescription drugs, high-cost claims and other healthcare inflation, not simply by the School Board deciding to pay or charge more money to the plan.

This is not unique to Hillsborough, and it is not expected to simply go away next year. A new national study of public school districts found that 98% of district leaders report rising healthcare costs are affecting their budgets, with prescription drugs, expensive treatments and high-cost specialty medications among the leading drivers. Districts across the country report using reserves, changing benefits and making other budget reductions to absorb these increases.

The negotiated District investment allows HCPS to absorb much of the 2027 increase rather than simply shifting those costs to employees through substantially higher premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs. That is why such a significant portion of this year's negotiated compensation package is going toward health insurance rather than salary increases.

Learn more about the nationwide impact of rising healthcare costs on public schools:

[AASA/ASBO: Rising Premiums, Falling Opportunities — The Budgetary Impact of Health Care Costs on School Districts](#)

Are my copays, deductibles or premiums going to increase?

No. Despite the approximately 18% increase in health plan costs, employee premiums and deductibles on the existing plans will not increase in 2027, and copays will actually decrease.

- Premiums: No increase for employees or dependents.
- Deductibles: No increase on the existing plans.
- Copays: Primary care and specialist copays will decrease by \$5.
- \$0 employee-only coverage: A no-premium employee-only option will continue.

HCPS is also adding a new Value PPO option for 2027. This plan has higher deductibles but is designed to provide employees covering dependents or families with an option for lower monthly premiums.

Want to see what HCPS actually contributes toward your health insurance? The negotiated 2027 premium agreements show both the employee and School Board contribution for each coverage level:

Instructional: [2027 Instructional Health Insurance Premium MOU](#)

ESP: [2027 ESP Health Insurance Premium MOU](#)

What is the new Garner Health reimbursement program?

New in 2027, HCPS employees enrolled in a health plan can receive reimbursement for eligible out-of-pocket healthcare costs when they use a Garner Top Provider. Garner Health identifies top-performing doctors based on patient outcomes and other medical data. When employees use an eligible Garner Top Provider, Garner can reimburse eligible costs including copays, labs, imaging and prescriptions, up to:



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- \$1,000 for individual coverage
- \$2,000 for family coverage

Reimbursements begin for healthcare received in 2027, but employees can register now, search for Garner Top Providers and add them to their care team.

[Get started: Garner Health Provider Finder](#)

Why is the \$720 health insurance opt-out credit ending?

The \$720 annual FSA contribution for employees who waive HCPS health insurance will end in 2027. HCTA advocated to preserve all employee health insurance benefits with no increased costs, and did not propose or agree to eliminate this benefit. With health plan costs increasing approximately 18%, the School Board determined that the approximately \$3 million currently spent on the opt-out credit would instead be used toward covering the increasing cost of providing employee health coverage to the group plan that nearly 20,000 employees enroll in.

Contract / Working Conditions Highlights

What are some of the highlights in the tentative agreement for Educational Support Professionals?

In addition to the salary and health insurance changes explained above, the tentative ESP agreement includes several improvements to employee rights and working conditions, including:

- **Reclassification:** Strengthened language requiring reclassifications affecting groups of ESP employees to be addressed through collective bargaining, with a formal Reclassification Request Form added to the contract.
- **Professional Learning:** ESPs requesting to attend teacher in-service programs must receive written notice of their placement or the reason they were not placed at least one day before the program. The professional learning stipend also increases to \$11 per hour.
- **Health Insurance Oversight:** Both the Clerical and Paraprofessional bargaining units are guaranteed representation on the District Insurance Committee, with stronger language requiring regular review of relevant health-plan information.
- **Department Representatives:** Employees in Job Code 51314 will be regraded from Pay Grade 25 to Pay Grade 26.
- **Additional Compensation Opportunities:** The agreement continues Transformation Network and Designated Schools of Need supplements and provides a new \$250 payment for approved ESP micro-credentials, subject to the program requirements and availability.

See all proposed ESP contract changes: [2026-27 ESP Ratification Summary](#)

What are some of the highlights in the tentative agreement for instructional staff?

In addition to the salary and health insurance changes explained above, the tentative three-year Instructional contract through 2029 includes significant new and strengthened employee protections, including:

- **Planning Time, Coverage & Workday Protections:** Strengthened existing protections for planning time, substitute



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coverage and duties, including advance notice of coverage assignments when possible, limits on coverage for resource/non-classroom personnel, and a protected one-hour duty-free lunch during pre-planning and Professional Study Day.

- **ESE Workload & Meetings:** Strengthened existing protections for ESE personnel with case-management and IEP responsibilities who must be released from non-classroom assignments to complete required documentation and compliance work, with ESE, MTSS, CST and other mandated meetings scheduled during the normal workday.
- **Termination & Grievance Rights:** Strengthened due-process protections, including just-cause language for unpaid disciplinary suspensions and the right of discharged employees to appeal through binding arbitration.
- **Student Discipline:** Strengthened and clarified the student removal and referral process to align with Florida's Teacher Bill of Rights and the District Student Code of Conduct.
- **Unit Loss & Supplements:** New protections require supplemented positions to be addressed before positions subject to unit loss are identified, along with greater transparency around supplemented-position assignments.
- **Additional Employee Protections:** New or strengthened language addresses multi-school workloads, Media Specialists, Faculty Steering Committees, Student Services workspaces, FMLA, instructional materials/personal funds, grade reporting and other working conditions.
- **New MOUs:** The agreement also includes new provisions for paid funeral leave, remote work on designated non-student days, instructional materials, transfer/open hiring, and unit-loss/reclassification procedures.

See all proposed Instructional contract changes: [2026-27 Instructional Ratification Summary](#)

Ratification /General Information

What are we voting on and who gets to vote?

Employees are voting whether to ratify the tentative agreements reached between HCTA and the School Board.

- Instructional employees will vote on the proposed 2026-2029 Instructional Contract and 2026-2027 Compensation Agreement.
- Paraprofessional and Clerical employees will vote on the proposed revised 2025-2028 ESP Contract and 2026-2027 Compensation Agreement.

All employees in the applicable bargaining unit are eligible to vote, whether or not they are HCTA members. If ratified by employees, the agreements must also be approved by the School Board before becoming final.

When and how will voting take place?

Ratification voting will be conducted electronically through ElectionBuddy by secret ballot.

Voting opens: 12:00 noon, Monday, September 28, 2026

Voting closes: 12:00 noon, Thursday, October 8, 2026

Eligible employees will receive voting instructions through their HCPS work email. Each employee will vote only on the tentative agreement covering their bargaining unit.

Before voting begins, HCTA will hold a Ratification Zoom Meeting on Wednesday, September 23 at 5:30 p.m. to review the agreements, explain the financial information involved and answer employee questions.



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When would the agreement take effect?

If ratified by employees and approved by the School Board, the 2026-2027 compensation agreements are retroactive to July 1, 2026.

Eligible employees will receive applicable salary increases and retroactive pay back to July 1, although the timing of individual payments, supplements and other compensation may vary based on payroll processing.

HCTA will provide employees with updates as implementation and payment dates are finalized.

What if I still have questions?

For answers to your questions, feel free to contact our office at (813) 238-7902 or email HCTA@HCPS.net

Complete ratification documents, tentative agreements, compensation agreements, salary schedules and other information are available under the **"2026-2027 Bargaining Information"** heading on the HCTA Contracts & Ratification webpage: [HCTA Contracts & Ratification Information](#)

We also encourage employees to attend the **Ratification Zoom Meeting on Wednesday, September 23 at 5:30 p.m.**, where HCTA will review the agreements and answer employee questions.

[REGISTER FOR RATIFICATION MEETING HERE!](#)

Why does HCTA membership matter?

Everything described in this FAQ, from salary schedules and health insurance protections to planning time, workload protections, due process and employee rights, exists because HCPS employees have the legal right to organize and collectively bargain.

Florida law now requires public employee unions like HCTA to maintain at least **60% membership** or face a recertification election. Without certification, our collective bargaining rights and the contracts we have spent decades building and protecting are at risk.

This isn't only about this year's raise. It's about protecting the contract itself.

See exactly what's at stake: [What's At Stake: Our Voice, Bargaining Rights & HCTA Contracts](#)

If you're already an HCTA member, **thank you**. If you're not, now is the time to join the more than 8,200 Hillsborough educators standing together to protect and improve our contracts.

[**Click here to join us in this fight to ensure that happens!**](#)

ATTENTION!

Florida law has changed.
What's at stake—our voice, our bargaining rights, and our HCTA contracts.

What is at stake if we lose our ESP and Instructional contracts?

Forced Transfers

Section 15 (ESP) / Section 11 (Instructional)

Increased Duty

Section 18 (ESP) / Section 3 (Instructional)

Stagnant Wages

Section 8 (ESP) / Section 18 (Instructional)

Loss of Representation in Discipline

Section 13 (ESP) / Section 24 (Instructional)

No Workplace Voice

Section 23 (ESP) / Section 9 (Instructional)

Loss of No-Premium Health Insurance

Section 24 (ESP) / Section 13 (Instructional)

NO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING!

Section 1 (ESP) / Section 1 (Instructional)

The solution is us!

A strong union.

A strong membership.

A strong voice.

Stand with HCTA!

Protect our rights.

Protect our future.

Protect our profession.

