

Dear CPS Families,

After nearly a year of bargaining, the Chicago Board of Education voted last week to approve the new four-year agreement between CPS and CTU.

At its core, this contract does all of the following for our CPS community:

- Fairly rewards the excellent work of our educators
- Makes investments that are financially responsible for the District, and
- Keeps the best interests of our students at the forefront.

I'm proud that the final agreement largely preserves the strategies and practices that the District has already been using to drive our students' significant post-pandemic gains. For example, the contract maintains the school funding model that CPS introduced last year, which sets a baseline of resources for each school, regardless of size or location, including a minimum of three holistic (elective) teachers in every elementary school, and at least one counselor in every school. While upholding this model, the agreement also maintains the District's flexibility to make adjustments due to financial challenges, changes to law, or other unforeseen situations.

The best thing we can do for our students is to let their momentum continue building without interruption – which is why I'm glad that this contract is not a major departure from prior agreements, and why I'm glad we were able to avoid a strike, which has been so disruptive to students and families in the past.

And because we have remained consistent in our vision, the vast majority of the provisions in the final agreement are consistent with what the District has been offering for the last eight months since September 2024.

I am grateful to our negotiation team which spent countless hours listening to our staff and providing thoughtful counter proposals. I feel confident that we have been successful in honoring the service of our teachers while staying true to the core values that are propelling our District forward.

[Click here](#) for a look at the highlights of the contract, and how we got there.

Contract Details

The four-year labor agreement approved today includes the following:

- A pay raise of 4 percent in Year 1, and 4 to 5 percent in Years 2-4, depending on inflation.

- The COLA for Year 2 will be 4 percent based on inflation
- This was CPS' initial offer to the CTU
- Modifications to the pay scale for veteran teachers and paraprofessionals
- Adding several hundred new staff to serve our District's highest-need students
- Smaller class sizes, especially for our youngest learners
- A modest increase in planning time for elementary school teachers
- Provisions that maintain CPS' strong teacher evaluation system
- Tripling the amount of funding for athletic staff, programs, equipment, and transportation
- Maintaining our commitment to a teacher assistant in every general education pre-k classroom
- Full-time, network-based fine arts positions to serve schools that have a vacant art position
- Transitioning 50 additional CPS schools to become Sustainable Community Schools over four years.

As a reminder, for this year, the only financial commitments in this contract that the District will be implementing are the 4 percent COLAs; the rest of the provisions will be implemented over the course of the contract.

Our District's Financial Outlook

The Board of Education has approved an amendment to our FY2025 budget to use our last remaining funding for this fiscal year to pay for the first year of the new CTU contract. As you may recall, CPS strongly advocated that this funding be set aside to reward our talented teachers, rather than reimburse the City of Chicago for a pension payment.

Looking beyond this year, however, CPS' financial outlook remains dire. Like most school districts across the country, CPS is being impacted by the expiration of federal pandemic aid. CPS is facing a projected budget shortfall of at least \$529 million for FY2026 (July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026), not including the impact of continued threats to federal funding for our District. This is consistent with what we have been projecting for our District for over a year, and it reflects why we were unable to agree to many of the CTU's initial proposals.

In order to balance the budget, some combination of increased revenue and reduced expenses will need to be achieved. These decisions will not be easy, and will require a

strategic partnership between the Board of Education, the City of Chicago, and our partners in government, philanthropy, community-based organizations, and other areas.

Become An Advocate for More School Funding

Part of our strategy is to secure more education funding from the State of Illinois, and there are ways you can help!

On Tuesday, April 29, students, families, educators, and leaders from CPS and districts across the state will travel to Springfield to advocate for more state funding for our schools. We are asking the state to support our students in three specific ways:

- **Increase evidence-based funding (EBF) for public education across Illinois to \$550 million each year.** Eight years ago, state lawmakers created a new formula to increase public school funding based on student need. The goal was full funding by 2027, but the state is significantly behind, and CPS remains massively underfunded according to the formula.
- **Increase support for nutrition, special education, and transportation to \$165 million across Illinois.** CPS requires additional support to serve students who receive free and reduced meals, and a growing population of students with disabilities, including those who require transportation to and from school.
- **Increase support for early childhood education to \$75 million.** Pre-k gives our youngest learners a vital foundation for their educational journey, which is why CPS has expanded our pre-k offerings to every neighborhood in Chicago. But we need additional support to continue offering preschool citywide.

I urge you to add your voice to this campaign by sharing what more funding would mean for your child's school. Visit our cps.edu/AdvocacyDay page for a list of ways to share your story.

With a new labor agreement now in place, our District can unite around all that lies ahead, including appealing to our federal, state, and city lawmakers for more education funding and fully implementing our [five-year strategic plan](#).

I thank you for your partnership along this path and look forward to all of us finishing the school year strong!

Sincerely,

Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer

Chicago Public Schools