

Professional Association of Support Staff (PASS), Indian Creek CUSD #425 Public Posting of Most Recent Collective Bargaining Proposals

The Professional Association of Support Staff (PASS) of the Indian Creek School District #425 consists of 24 para-educators who take great pride in our Indian Creek Schools and in the work we do to help maintain the school district's educational excellence. The members of PASS devote our professional lives to the children of our community. Education is our chosen profession, our passion and our commitment. As stated in the district's mission statement: "Education is everybody's responsibility" and "The district strives to create a physically, emotionally, mentally safe and healthy environment for all". We PASS members play an integral part in achieving these school district goals.

The dedication of the district's para-educators is evident in the 165 combined years of experience attending to the needs of our school district's students. Over half of our PASS members have between 5 and 30 years of longevity with the district. 83% of PASS members live and pay taxes within the school district and have or have had children or grandchildren attend the Indian Creek schools. Yet fully one-third of our PASS members themselves need an additional one or two jobs to support their families.

Over the years the roles and responsibilities of a para-educator or paraprofessional, formerly known as a teacher's aide, have increased, such that in Illinois each para-educator is now required to be licensed by the State of Illinois, at a cost of approximately \$200.00 for the exam and license. This State of Illinois para-educator licensure requires 60 college credits or the passage of an equivalency exam. These tuition, exam and licensing costs are incurred by the individual para-educator, not the Indian Creek school district.

PASS member para-educators have committed their school district careers to helping students grow and prosper. Even during this difficult period of collective bargaining negotiations, PASS members have continued to fully devote themselves to the welfare of the students. It's time that the Indian Creek School Board put these negotiations – which began in February 2015 -- to rest and recognize the contributions made by ALL of its PASS member employees.

According to the school district newsletter of May 1, 2016, retiring district superintendent Dr. Rockwood listed as one of her accomplishments "adding over \$10,000,000 to our fund reserves" during her tenure as superintendent. Yet the para-educators starting wage has remained at \$8.59/hour for at least 10 years, and PASS members who have worked in the district for between 13 and 30 years are paid no more than \$14.98 an hour. PASS's compensation proposal does not put the district in any financial distress whatsoever since the district had a positive Education Fund balance alone of over \$11 million as of June 30, 2015, with the district maintaining 606 days "cash on hand".

PASS members are not being unreasonable in proposing that the para-educator starting wage be increased to \$9.92/hour, retroactive to the beginning of the just concluded 2015-16 school year, so as to be competitive with surrounding school districts:

District Name	Enrollment	Superintendent Salary w/Benefits	Para-Educator Starting Wage/Hour
Indian Creek	750	\$196,500	\$8.59
Hinckley-Big Rock	707	\$175,400	\$10.00
Sandwich	2150	\$218,900	\$11.57
Somonauk	795	\$124,400	\$11.22
Sycamore	3,763	\$206,100	\$10.15
Leland	254	\$99,310	\$9.38

To settle a three-year contract would cost less than \$29,000 in salary increases over the Board of Education's projected para-educator salary costs. This amounts to an increase of approximately \$1200.00/para over the three-year contract term.

PASS began the bargaining process with the school district in February 2015 for this, our first contract. Many language items have been agreed upon but PASS continues to simply request a fair and equitable settlement whereby all of its members receive a living, non-poverty level wage, one which is in parity with para-educator salaries in surrounding school districts.

The remaining, unsettled negotiations proposals of PASS are as follows:

Salary Compensation

PASS proposed salary increase: A retroactive hourly increase of \$1.33 for all PASS member para-educators for year 1, the 2015-16 school year -- Projected Cost: \$26,538

The parties have already agreed upon 3% salary increases for PASS members for the upcoming two school years, 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Rationale: Since PASS member para-educator support staff wages are much lower than para-educator salaries in surrounding school districts, and as the starting salary has not been increased for at least 10 years, it is important that the initial contract year salary increase be significant to equitably adjust those salaries for the duration of the contract. At its January 2016 board meeting the Board of Education granted 3% salary increases to all district administrators and to all other, non-PASS member district support staff, retroactive to July 1, 2015, so retroactivity should not be an issue here.

PASS has also proposed the no-cost item of creating a joint District-PASS committee to create a formal para-educator salary schedule during the term of the contract, as no formal para-educator salary schedule is in place in the district.

Sick Days Increase

Increase annual sick day allotment from 10 to 12 – Projected Cost: \$3640 in year 1, at current salary rates
Projected cost at PASS salary increase proposal of \$1.33 in year 1: \$4100
Projected costs in years 2 & 3 at agreed upon 3% salary increases: \$4223 and \$4350

Rationale: District/Board of Education policy 5:330 provides as follows: "Full-time educational support personnel who work at least 600 hours per year receive 12 paid sick leave days per year. Part-time educational support personnel who work at least 600 hours per year receive 10 paid sick leave days per year." All PASS members are full time "educational support personnel" who work well over 600 hours per year, but some years ago the Board reduced their annual allotment of sick leave days from 12 to 10, contrary to the Board policy. PASS has simply proposed that the Board comply with its written, stated policy on this issue for the remainder of the contract term.

Health Insurance

Currently the district "pays the difference of the least expensive single monthly insurance premium [\$530.62 for the 2016 calendar year] minus a \$34 monthly employee contribution". PASS has proposed that the current premium cost-split arrangement remain in place for the duration of this initial contract, this despite the fact that the district's current monthly insurance premium rates range from \$530.62 (HMO single) to \$2017.84 (PPO family), which renders the district-offered insurance options completely unaffordable for the majority of PASS members and their families.

Despite the parties agreeing to 3% salary increases in years 2 and 3 of this initial contract, the Board of Education is proposing that PASS members agree to 5% increases in the monthly employee insurance contribution each of the next 3 years.

PASS has also proposed that it too be permitted to participate in the joint District-teaching staff insurance “monitoring committee” established in the teachers’ collective bargaining agreement to “monitor insurance coverage, explore options to maintain coverage, and restrain cost increases”, with the Board ultimately retaining “final authority on any changes in the current health insurance”. To date the Board of Education negotiators have categorically rejected this no-cost PASS proposal.

We, the members of PASS, believe that if we stand together in our commitment to come to a fair agreement that is reached through dialogue and discussion with the Indian Creek Board of Education, that the interests of the district para-educators, the district’s students, the school district itself, and the community can be fully realized.