

October 16, 2006

## District, union agree on salary, language

Alachua County Public Schools and the Alachua County Education Association (ACEA) have reached agreement on a salary/benefits package and contract language for the 2006-07 school year.

“Needless to say, I think everyone in this room is very pleased,” said Joan Longstreth, the district’s chief negotiator, at the end of the bargaining session on Thursday, October 12.

The ACEA, which represents both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs), accepted the district’s offer to spend \$11.6 million more on salaries and benefits this year than it did last year. That amount represents an increase of nearly 11%. Just over 9% of that amount will be used towards salary increases alone. The pay increase will be the highest in decades.

“I’m glad we’ve been able to reach a settlement, and I know our employees feel the same way,” said Superintendent Dan Boyd. “This is a better budget year than we’ve seen in several years, and the School Board has said all along they wanted to direct most of that money to raises.”

Representatives from the district and the union will now meet to decide how the money will be distributed on the salary schedules. On the instructional schedule, both sides agreed to increase

the beginning teacher salary to a minimum of \$30,500. They also agreed to focus additional funds on both the middle and upper ranges of the current salary schedule.

Other than some minor changes to both the instructional and ESP contracts, both sides also agreed to stick with current contract language for this school year.

Employees will vote on the proposed contract after the new salary schedules have been developed. The results of the employee vote will then be shared with the School Board. The contracts will also be presented to the board for ratification.

If that process can be completed by the first board meeting in November, it’s expected that employees will receive their raises before the end of the month and a check for their retroactive pay before the winter break.

The district and ACEA will also continue meeting to discuss a plan for implementing the new state-mandated teacher performance pay plan called STAR, or Special Teachers Are Rewarded. The state has allocated \$1.5 million dollars to the district for STAR. A plan must be agreed upon by both the School Board and the union and sent up to Tallahassee for state approval by December 31.

### Employees encouraged to invest in United Way programs



The deadline is fast approaching for employees to make a contribution to this year’s United Way campaign. Pledge forms must be turned in by October 19.

Superintendent Dan Boyd says United Way programs, particularly the Success by Six initiative, have a positive impact on children and on the work of local schools.

“Success by Six will help ensure that children are ready to learn before they enter our classrooms,” he said. “That will certainly help our schools in the long run.”

Last year Alachua County Public School employees contributed nearly \$50,000 to the United Way of North Central Florida.

For more information, contact your school or worksite’s United Way campaign coordinator.

# Employees have options to avoid the flu this year

This year Alachua County Public School employees have a number of money-saving options for avoiding the flu. Those options include:

**FluMist Nasal Spray:** Alachua County Public Schools is partnering with the Alachua County Health Department to offer elementary and middle school students and district employees FluMist, a flu vaccine that is sprayed into the nose rather than given through a shot. FluMist will be available free of charge to all employees ages 18-49 who are healthy and not pregnant. Employees with chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes or other conditions will not be able to take FluMist.

Employees interested in receiving FluMist can go to a school where it is being administered to get it. A schedule of the FluMist administration at area elementary and middle schools is available on the district's website at [www.sbac.edu](http://www.sbac.edu). Click on 'Employee Information,' then 'Preventing the Flu' for the schedule and a vaccination consent form. The forms will also be available at each school. A form must be completed before the FluMist will be given. Additional information about FluMist, including information about those who should not receive the vaccine, is also available on the website.

**Insurance Coverage for Flu Shots:** Under the BlueChoice and BlueOption health insurance plans, flu shots given in a doctor's office are covered under the Adult Wellness benefit, which means they are not subject to the calendar year deductible. Employees who have not yet used up their Adult Wellness benefit for this year, which ranges from \$150 to \$250 depending on which plan they are on, will pay only their regular coinsurance amount for the shot. For more information, contact Blue Cross and Blue Shield toll free at 1-800-322-2808 (for BlueChoice) and 1-877-352-2583 (for BlueOptions).

**Worksite Flu Shots:** The district will once again offer employees flu shots at work locations, most likely during October, November and December. The shots will cost \$20. Employees should check with the health/safety/wellness trainers at their worksite to find out when the shots will be offered.

The flu kills about 36,000 in the United States every year, and even mild cases usually mean at least a few days of fever, cough, sore throat, chills, fatigue and other symptoms. Those at particular risk include people with any of the following characteristics:

- Adults over 50
- Children ages 6-23 months
- People with chronic heart or lung disease, including asthma
- People living in nursing homes or chronic care facilities
- People with chronic metabolic diseases, such as diabetes
- Children or adolescents on long-term aspirin treatment
- Pregnant women
- Health care workers, caregivers, household members and others in close contact with high risk people

Rates of flu infection are highest among children. For this reason, a flu vaccination is highly recommended for teachers, educational support staff and other employees who work with children

"People working in schools have a higher risk of flu than people in other professions because they work with a large number of children," said Pat Hughes, who is in charge of the district's health program. "Adults are more likely to get the flu from children."

