

November 9, 2006

Board approves highest raise in decades

The School Board of Alachua County has approved new contracts for both teachers and education support professionals (ESPs) that will provide both groups with the highest raises in more than three decades.

During the November 7 meeting, board members unanimously approved new contracts and salary schedules for teachers and ESPs. The approval came after Gunnar Paulson and Sande Calkins of the Alachua County Education Association presented the results of the ratification vote by employees. Instructional employees approved their new contract and salary schedule by a vote of 1250 to 34. Among ESPs, the vote was 1058 voting for and 8 voting against the new contract.

“There were a lot of happy faces next to the yes votes,” said Calkins.

“This was a good salary year, I think an excellent salary year,” said Paulson. “I appreciate the effort both the board and the ACEA put into this.”

Under the new contract, the district will spend \$11.8 million dollars more on salaries and benefits this year than last year. That includes more than \$200,000 in savings on last year’s health insurance costs.

Under the new instructional salary schedule, the beginning teacher salary will increase from \$28,375 to \$30,700. The number of steps will drop from 27 to 26, which means teachers will reach the top of the salary scheduled sooner. Teachers’ supplements will also rise.

The ACEA and the district agreed to an across-the-board increase in salaries of 7.65% for all ESPs. Eligible employees will also receive a step increase.

“The road to get here was bumpy, but we came through with flying colors,” said School Board chairman Wes Eubank. “We’ve got great contracts and great salary schedules.

The district is working to have the raises in employee paychecks by November 15, and to have retroactive pay to employees by the first paycheck in December.

The board also approved language changes in both teacher and ESP contracts that were agreed upon by the ACEA and district negotiating teams.

The new salary schedules are available on the district’s website at www.sbac.edu under ‘Employee Information.’

Board to vote on 2007-08 school calendar on Nov. 21

Draft of new calendar available on district website

Following a public hearing on November 7, the school board has set a final vote on the 2007-08 school calendar for November 21.

Representatives from the district and ACEA worked together to develop the new calendar. Under a new Florida law, districts may not begin school any earlier than two weeks before Labor Day. As a result, the first day of school in 2007 is tentatively set for Monday, August 20.

The proposed calendar also includes the three flex days originally introduced during the 2005-06 school year. They have been tentatively set for Thursday and Friday, December 20 and 21, and Friday, February 15.

The proposed calendar is available on the district’s website. Following the board vote, the final calendar will be published in *Employee Express*.

District employees earn several state honors

Several Alachua County Public School employees have recently been recognized for their work by statewide professional organizations. They include:

Pat Lopez, French Teacher, Buchholz High School

Lopez, a 28-year teaching veteran, was named the French Teacher of the Year by the Florida chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French. The recognition means that she is now a member of the Teacher's Hall of Fame, a program sponsored by the Florida Foreign Language Association to recognize the accomplishments of foreign language teachers statewide.



Pat Lopez works with two of her students during a French class at Buchholz High School.

Don Devito, Music Teacher, Sidney Lanier-Anchor School

The music education program Devito created for his special needs students at Sidney Lanier-Anchor School has won the Innovate Program Award from the Florida Music Educators' Association. Devito will travel to the association's conference in January to accept the award.



Music teacher Don Devito and student LaShay Johnson accompany Dr. David Akombo of Indiana University during a video-conference lesson.

Phyllis Erney, Guidance Counselor, Kanapaha Middle School and Bill Goodman, Director of Guidance

Erney and Goodman have both been recognized this year by the Florida School Counseling Association. Erney has been named the Middle School Counselor of the Year for the state, while Goodman has been named Administrator/Supervisor of the Year. Both will be honored later this month at the association's annual conference in Orlando.



Bill Goodman and Phyllis Erney review student data at Kanapaha Middle School.