

District, ACEA moving closer to agreement

Negotiators for Alachua County Public Schools and the Alachua County Education Association (ACEA) are getting closer to reaching an agreement on the salary and benefits package for teachers and educational support professionals (ESPs).

During the most recent bargaining session, the district increased the total dollar amount it is offering by half a million dollars by adjusting the amount of money being set aside for health insurance increases. That brings the total additional dollars the district would be spending on salaries and benefits for teachers and ESPs to \$11.6 million, an increase of nearly 11%.

The current offer includes a 9% increase in salaries alone for both the teacher and ESP groups.

The district has also proposed to add another \$300,000 to the teacher salary schedule, contingent on the ACEA accepting a change in the pay structure for teachers in middle and high schools who teach an extra period. Currently

those teachers earn an additional 20% of their pay. Under the new proposal, those teachers would earn an additional 15%. The savings would then be spread out among all teachers. Currently there are about 165 secondary school teachers earning the additional pay for teaching the extra period.

“The money we would save by reducing the extra pay for those teachers from 20% to 15% of their salaries would allow us to boost the pay for all our teachers,” said Keith Birkett, the district’s assistant superintendent for finance. “It’s an idea we hope the ACEA will consider seriously as a way to benefit a very large proportion of our teachers.”

District and ACEA representatives will meet on Wednesday, September 6 to review specific figures included in the salary package. The following day, the full negotiating teams from both ACEA and the district will meet again to discuss the salary package. The session will begin with the union’s presentation of a counter offer to the district’s most recent proposal.

Open enrollment for insurance, other benefits, coming soon

Open enrollment this year will run from October 2-31, and there are some changes in the process. Employees will have a choice of completing the enrollment form themselves or working with an enrollment counselor. All employees should already have received a letter from the Benefits Office allowing them to sign up to meet with a counselor. Those employees who have not yet turned in the form to the benefit contact at their school or

worksite should do so right away.

There are no changes in the health and life programs, but there are new, expanded benefits in the dental program.

Employees are strongly encouraged to read the packets they’ll be receiving this month and attend one of the informational meetings that will be offered. A schedule will be included in the packet.