



## District, ACEA near agreement on salary package

Following two recent bargaining sessions, Alachua County Public Schools and the Alachua County Education Association (ACEA) may be close to an agreement on an overall salary and benefits package for employees.

“It appears we are near agreement on a total dollar amount for salaries and benefits,” said Joan Longstreth, the district’s assistant superintendent for human resources and the chief negotiator for the School Board. “We’re looking at spending \$11.6 million more on the total package than we did last year.”

The current offer would increase the amount of money the district spends on salaries and benefits for teachers and educational support professionals (ESPs) by about 10.97% over last year. The increase in salaries alone would be just over 9%.

An additional \$217,000 will also be available to include in salaries this year. That amount represents savings the district realized in health insurance costs last year.

The next date for bargaining on salaries has not yet been scheduled. ACEA president Gunnar Paulson has indicated that the union would like to wait on scheduling another session on salaries until contract language is settled.

Paulson said that since the district and union were much closer on salaries than on language, he would prefer to focus on language.

Three bargaining sessions on language have been scheduled for the week of September 25. One session on language in the ESP contract has been scheduled for Monday the 25<sup>th</sup>. Two sessions on the teacher contract have been set for Tuesday the 26<sup>th</sup> and Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup>.

“We’re optimistic that we’ll be able to settle the contract language soon, perhaps even during the week of the sessions,” said Longstreth.

District officials are hoping to wrap up the negotiations on salaries as quickly as possible to meet what they consider a critical goal—getting employees retroactive checks in their hands before the winter break.

Even after an agreement is reached, the raises must be ratified by the employees and approved by the school board during one of its regular meetings. The implementation of the changes through the district’s payroll office will also take some time.

“If we settle soon, we hope we can get that extra money into our employees’ paychecks before the break,” said Longstreth.

## United Way campaign kicks off September 25

A community-wide initiative to make sure children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten is one of the key elements of this year’s United Way campaign.

Success By Six is one of the major programs supported by the United Way of North Central Florida, and superintendent Dan Boyd says it’s an effort that will have an impact on local schools.

“If all our students entered our schools ready to learn, imagine how much more successful our efforts could be,” said Boyd.

Contacts from each school and worksite will be talking with their follow-employees during the next couple of weeks about contributing to the campaign. Last year district employees donated nearly \$50,000 to United Way.