

# CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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*Superintendent of Schools*

**To develop students who are competent and creative thinkers, curious and confident learners, and compassionate citizens.**

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## **Canton School Leadership Offers Competitive Salaries, Expanded Industry-Leading Benefits, via a Fiscally Responsible Contract to Educators for the Benefit of the Students, Educators, and the Community**

CANTON – The Canton School Committee wishes to provide an update to the community regarding the ongoing contract negotiations with the Canton Teachers Association (CTA).

“We truly appreciate and value the work of our Canton Public Schools educators and are genuinely hopeful that a positive resolution will soon be reached,” said Superintendent Derek Folan. “Our educators are crucial to the success of our District and to the high achievement and growth of our students. We support a contract that is fair to both sides and continues to ensure Canton is a desirable destination for high-quality educators and professionals, who are essential in fostering the educational excellence and culture of joy we seek in our schools.”

**Background:** Since December 2021 the School Committee has been actively negotiating in good faith to reach agreements with the CTA. The Committee’s goal is to reach consensus on a contract that the educators will ratify that will center on educational excellence, reward Canton’s educators for their dedication and hard work and be fiscally sustainable for the community, especially in the current national economic climate.

As part of that effort, the School Committee Negotiations Team, made up of Superintendent Derek Folan, the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Finance and Operations, and Committee members, entered into negotiations with many of the same priorities shared by the CTA. As of today, negotiations remain ongoing with teachers (Bargaining Unit A) and Educational Support Professionals (Bargaining Unit E).

**Current Offer:** The current school leadership offer to Unit A (teachers) provides a 7 percent raise over three years. The yearly raise is in addition to regular wage adjustments included in the teacher contract that honor years of service and the level of education a teacher has achieved (often referred to as “steps and lanes”). Many of Canton Public School teachers can expect raises that range from 10 to 14 percent via this contract.

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While a teacher in Canton makes approximately \$4,000 more than the state average per year, the school committee has offered significant raises that would make Canton's teachers among the most highly compensated in the region, including comparably sized school districts in Norfolk County and in the Hockomock League, Canton's interscholastic athletic league.

Because school leadership seeks to lift up Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) in Unit E, the package offers them a minimum of a 16 percent raise. Even at year one of the contract, within this unit, experienced Education Assistants will see their pay increase to \$26.34 per hour. Senior Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) tutors will earn \$36.62 per hour. Senior Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) and Speech-Language Pathology Assistants (SLPA) will earn \$43.85 an hour. The district financial package includes additional concessions and opportunities for pay which are detailed in the Frequently Asked Questions document (FAQ) that accompanies this release.

**Benefits:** We have made a substantial increase in benefits including: increased parental leave, bereavement leave, religious leave, and sick bank time. These are all significant changes school leadership has offered, and will benefit both Unit A and Unit E members. The focus has also been on recognizing the importance of ESPs, and Canton has offered to provide Unit E members with time off they don't currently qualify for under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA); this places Canton among the most progressive districts in the state.

**Key Issues:** Canton school leadership has made 40 concessions to the Canton Teachers Association. Canton school leadership's priority 'ask' has been to address the practice of staff using personal days to extend long weekends and vacations, and without consulting their supervisors. School leadership shares CTA's goal of doing what's best for students, which is maximum teacher-led instructional time.

What's more, stakeholders at every level, from students and families, and educational assistants to teachers, have reported concern about this practice and the Superintendent has made clear that it has had a negative impact on school culture. The proposed adjustment will bring personal leave into line with the industry standard, and support achievement of our educational goals. Thus, the Committee has made several language proposals to make progress addressing this priority issue, without a resolution to date. Three personal days would remain in the contract and have been proposed to be used one at a time for personal business, with exceptions possible when done in consultation with supervisors.

The School Committee and school leadership view mental health as a top priority. Sick time is, has been, and will continue to be, available for staff to use for mental health needs.

**Financially Sustainable Salary Increases:** All of the school leadership's financial offers to Unit A and Unit E have been vetted through the school department's finance office and the town of Canton's financial director. Offers are fiscally responsible and sustainable. The school leadership team shares CTA's goal to arrive at a contract that maintains Canton's ability to attract highly qualified teachers, ensures that every Canton educator receives a competitive wage, and is financially sustainable for the town of Canton.

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“Our negotiations team has been consistent in working to drive progress for the students, educators and families of Canton,” said School Committee Chair Kristian Darigan Merenda. “We’ve continued to show up, ready to collaborate and have proactively offered new concessions and additional support in hopes of reaching agreement. We are committed to working in good faith until a resolution can be reached that both rewards our educators for their hard work and experience, and is fiscally sustainable for our community.”

**Budget Available:** It has been suggested in the community and on social media that the School Committee has \$3.3 million available in the budget for salary increases for FY23. Although this number appears in a Quarter 1 Financial Report presented in December 2022 by the Finance Director to the Committee, a large portion of this amount is already earmarked for already planned salary increases for Unit A and Unit E and has been reflected in the financial proposals made by the Committee. However, the remainder of that total amount is not available for salary increases, because it reflects other salary costs that are already mandated/anticipated. These include items such as longevity, stipends, and substitutes.

**Urgency in Seeking Resolution:** The next mediation session is scheduled for late January, the School Leadership team has offered to meet in advance of the late January date, and has provided an additional proposal since the last meeting. We remain committed to developing a contract that works for the students, educators, and community as a whole.

**For media inquiries contact:** Superintendent, Derek Folan at [foland@cantonma.org](mailto:foland@cantonma.org)

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