



Somerville Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Somerville School Committee to Vote on Bold New 3-Year Agreement Overwhelmingly Ratified by SEU Units A and C

Agreement includes equity-focused paid parental leave, \$35K starting para salary

Somerville, Massachusetts -- After seven months of collaboration and negotiation, the Somerville School Committee and the Somerville Educators Union (SEU) Units A and C reached an agreement on a bold and innovative proposed new 3-year contract. Last night, Somerville Public Schools teachers and paraprofessionals overwhelmingly ratified the new 3-year agreement that will take them through the 2024-25 school year. The new agreement reflects a joint commitment to creating a professional environment that reflects our values as a District, is equity-focused, and is grounded in doing what is best for students. Among the hallmarks of the agreement are a comprehensive 12-week paid parental leave package and an increase in the paraprofessional starting annual salary to \$35,000. The School Committee will take up a vote and is expected to approve the agreement at their Regular School Committee Meeting on Monday, June 27th.

“This is a landmark agreement- the result of seven months of creative and innovative thinking by both parties, and a lot of hard work and long hours by many people in the school district, the school committee, and the SEU dedicated to bringing this proposal to fruition,” stated School Committee Chair, Andre Green. “From the beginning, we approached this process with equity-focused goals in mind and maintained that focus throughout. All sides were committed to an outcome that would reflect our values as a District and a community. Everyone should be incredibly proud of this work and excited about an agreement that will rightly be seen as setting a new standard for its forward-thinking and compassionate approach.”

"As educators, we are all working toward a common goal – to provide every student in the Somerville Public Schools with a positive learning experience, one that fosters their curiosity and a love of learning," commented Schools Superintendent, Mary Skipper. "We believe this is an outstanding contract that aligns with that common goal, keeps equity at the center, and creates a more supportive and sustainable teaching and learning environment that will ultimately lead to better outcomes for all of our students. Thanks to the SEU for their shared commitment and for their partnership in this work."

The following goals guided the Somerville Public Schools negotiating team’s approach to the negotiation process:

- Create an environment that best supports the recruitment, retention, and development of highly qualified, diverse educators and advancement for paraprofessionals, to positively impact student learning;
- Provide continuity and stabilization of staffing, particularly for our most vulnerable students;
- Align schedules, calendars, and practices to best meet the needs of all students and staff while maximizing collaborative time for educators and administrators to learn, develop, and innovate together; and
- Make our teaching and learning environments sustainable and supportive for staff and students.



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An historic investment in education in FY2022-23 by Mayor Katjana Ballantyne and the Somerville City Council was critical to supporting the bold advancements in the new agreement, further demonstrating the city's commitment to our students.

“Our schools will always be a priority for me and my administration, and I was proud to put forth a historic investment in Somerville Public Schools this year to ensure that our students have the academic, social-emotional, and mental health supports they need to thrive,” said Mayor Ballantyne. “This agreement delivers on our equity goals as a city and provides critical support for our teachers, paraprofessionals, and ultimately, our students. I’m grateful to all those who worked diligently to reach this deal on behalf of our community.”

“We are so grateful for the city’s continued generous investment in our schools,” added Superintendent Skipper. “This historic investment in education allowed us, through the budgeting process, to look at ways that we can better serve all of our students, but particularly our most vulnerable students, through additional staffing that addresses the growing social-emotional and mental health needs of our students and by reducing case manager loads in special education.”

The new proposed agreement includes a 12-week paid parental leave package that reflects our commitment to providing better work-life balance, a starting paraprofessional annual salary of \$35,000 that further advances our equity goals, an increase in professional development hours to support district priorities, alignment of teacher and paraprofessional schedules to better support students, adjustments to special education discretionary time to better support direct service to students, the use of student feedback to inform instructional decisions, and other adjustments. The contract also gives Somerville teachers (Unit A) a 3.0% salary increase in Year 1 and provides for a 3.0% increase for both Units in Year 2 and a 2.75% increase for both Units in Year 3.

The parties also set the stage for further collaboration by agreeing to establish several committees and Resolutions to address our commitment to safe and healthy teaching and learning environments.

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