

# Akron Beacon Journal

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## NEWS

# Akron Public Schools teachers back new contract, making three-year deal official

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Members of the Akron Education Association voted Tuesday evening to approve a three-year contract with Akron Public Schools, making the hard-fought deal official.

AEA represents more than 2,700 teachers in the district, who will see raises over the next three years of 4%, 3% and 3.5%. Health care rates will be frozen for the duration of the contract, which is retroactive to July 1, 2022. Teachers had been working under an expired contract since that day. Negotiations started last April.

The union's lawyer confirmed the members voted in support of the deal. The Akron school board had approved it unanimously Monday night, sending it to the union for ratification.

The two sides had reached a tentative agreement at about 7:30 p.m. Sunday, averting a strike that was set to start at 12:01 a.m. Monday if there was no deal.

"Educators and students are happy to be in the classroom," AEA President Pat Shipe said in a statement Tuesday night. "Our members, parents, and community voices were heard on the issues of school safety and the need for fair wages."

## Akron school teachers contract: Some details released

The full contract agreement was not available Tuesday night, but a school district spokesman released a list of key changes from the previous contract.

Union members can now receive increased one-time payments, from \$1,000 to \$2,000, for early notification of retirement. They will also have up to five additional sick days if they test positive for COVID.

In addition to what is new to the contract, the union celebrated what stayed the same: language around the definition of assault on a teacher. The district had proposed narrowing

the definition from "contact" to causing "injury." The union rejected it wholesale, and eventually the administration dropped it.

"By holding the line on the definition of assault, this contract will ensure that teachers, students, and parents will not be forced to tolerate even more violent and disruptive behavior," Shipe said.

Teachers rallied outside of Monday's school board meeting, but didn't have a chance to review full details of the contract until a Tuesday union meeting. With a strike looming over the last week, the union said it was hearing support from teachers and parents in the district but also from people outside of Akron.

"The Akron Education Association is grateful for the groundswell of community, statewide, and national support," Shipe's statement said. "Teachers and parents share the same values and goals, safe and secure schools and high quality educators. We will continue to listen, engage, and speak up so that our voices are heard. Now the hard work continues."

The school board's new leader, President Derrick Hall, said in Monday's meeting the board would continue to build a relationship with AEA and to develop solutions to challenges together.

"Signatures on a contract do not make all of our challenges go away," Hall said. "Rather our agreement represents unity in how we proceed forward together."

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