



STRIKE FAQs

What is a strike?

- A strike is a withholding of our services to create pressure for a potentially favorable contract settlement.
- A strike is legal once we have completed bargaining, mediation, arbitration, and bargained at least one time after the arbitrator renders a report. MSEA has completed all of these steps.
- The length of a strike is not predictable. In the USA over the past 20 years, the shortest teachers' strike was about half a day, and the longest was just over 50 days.
- (FYI - Kenai voted to strike, notified the district of the strike vote, and were hours from walking the picket line when the bargaining teams came to an agreement at the table in the middle of the night. This was technically not a strike because no work stoppage happened.)

What are we fighting for?

- We heard loud and clear that you do not want a gap year in the contract (don't skip FY20!) and no bonuses! Money needs to be on the salary schedule. (We lose too much over our career/lifetime when bonuses are given instead of percentages on the salary schedule.) Bonuses are the reason MSBSD's pay scale has not kept up with inflation nor with Anchorage and Fairbanks. Although our proposal and the district's proposal are not far off monetarily, the biggest difference is your ability to earn career gains in salary by taking a pay raise instead of a bonus. (Putting money on the pay scale, instead of accepting bonuses, allows compounding to occur.)
- If we allow this contract to begin in 2021 instead of 2020, we are incentivizing the district to stall every time we bargain so they can merely skip over a year. CEA lost 929 days of potential compounding on the pay scale because the School Board delayed and delayed.
- Our deal is MORE than fair. It is in line with what the arbitrator said is fair. Our proposal still puts us behind Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and Juneau. For years, we have taken bonuses instead of putting percentages on the pay scale because we

trusted the Board when they said over and over again that they didn't have the funds. We can't continue to let ourselves be taken advantage of.

Can the district afford this?

- Yes. The amount needed to settle for FY20 was already in the preliminary budget. This year's preliminary budget looks very close to the same. Every year in the preliminary budget, the district predicts they will lose millions of dollars. From FY12-FY19 they predicted they would lose \$65 million, in the end they were able to put over \$18 million in savings--and this was during years they insisted over and over again that they could not afford the Association's proposals. Therefore, we capitulated and took bonuses instead of percentages on the pay scale. Our attempts over the years to work with the Board has resulted in our detriment. We are now 5th among the Big Five Alaska districts.

When would a strike begin?

- If a strike authorization is approved by a vote of the entire bargaining unit, MSEA will finalize strike plans. The Bargaining Team will then decide whether or not to call a strike if they determine it is needed, based upon progress (or lack thereof) at the table. When strike plans are complete, we will give a 72-hour notice to the district of when the strike will commence.
- MSEA strike plans include having in place strike captains in each building (call 373-5240 to become a strike captain or to find out what it entails.). Captains will be supported by zone coordinators. The most important support will come from our members. A strike happens with the entire body of the bargaining unit, not an individual.

Will we get paid if we go on strike?

- Many strikes are relatively short in duration and do not affect payroll in the long run if days are made up at the end of the year. This is part of the negotiation process at the table. (The bargaining team will be working towards a settlement agreement while the strike is in progress.)
- A longer strike might interfere with payroll, in which case a process would be set up for MSEA members to access interest-free loans in cases of financial hardship.

Will we make up the days we miss?

- State law requires districts to complete the full 180-student day school year unless a waiver is sought. It is uncommon for a district to seek a waiver of days because of a

strike, so you can expect to make up strike days at the end of the year which will allow you to earn your full year's salary.

What about a strike fund?

- Because we can make up lost time and recover our full pay, most associations do not have strike funds. MSEA does not have a dedicated strike fund.

What will happen to our benefits?

- Our health insurance benefits are paid on the first of the month. Therefore, we would plan a strike after the first. Benefits would run until the first of the following month. If we are out on strike the first of any given month, insurance would not be paid.
- If insurance lapses, you could sign up for COBRA and pay the full premium to maintain insurance for that month. (You have 30 days from the day insurance was lost to sign up for the COBRA plan.) In most strike cases, the insurance companies have allowed for back payment of fees and have covered medical bills that have occurred during the strike.

Can we be fired?

- The National Labor Relations Act protects employees for lawful strikes. MSEA has followed all steps for this to be a lawful strike. It is not legal for the district to fire individual members during a lawful strike. It is theoretically possible to fire the entire bargaining unit, but then they would have to replace everyone.
- Individual non-tenured are at risk if they are vocal. They could be non-retained at the end of the school year for any reason, and they do not need to be told why. If they were told they were non-retained because of the strike, that would be against the law. It would be absurd if they non-retained all non-tenured employees, and it would show a lack of concern for education which we would publicize. It is important that tenured members step up to volunteer.
- No teacher has been fired for going on strike, tenured or non tenured. MSEA would vigorously challenge any attempt by the district to fire employees. The district must treat all employees equitably so highly visible participants are protected in all strike activities.

If we're on strike can I go back into my classroom?

- No. You should arrange to get any personal items you may need from your classroom before the strike begins. As soon as a strike authorization vote passes,

and there is no Tentative Agreement, plan to have anything you absolutely need out of the building by 5:00 PM that day. (Remember the classroom animals.)

What if we are on strike and someone is not happy about it?

- The key to success in a strike is unity. But strikes also are difficult emotionally because of the inherent conflict and uncertainty. You can help shorten the strike by boosting morale of a colleague who is struggling and by letting others help you when you need it, so that our overall unity prevails.

Can we get more money – like 3% for all three years or higher?

- No. We can only ask for the money equivalent of our last proposal. If we ask for more, it is considered backwards bargaining and subject to an Unfair Labor Practice.

Can I go work in another district? Can I get out of my contract?

- No. You cannot work under two contracts at the same time. You would need to be released (by mutual consent) from your MSBSD contract before you could accept another contract. If you violate this provision of the Code of Ethics, MSBSD could submit your certificate to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission for possible suspension of your Alaska teaching certificate and/or fines to be paid before you can use your certificate again.
- Some teachers do take unrelated jobs, such as the night shift as a grocery checker, for example, if they begin to struggle financially.

What about sport practices? Games?

- MSEA bargaining unit members who are also coaches may not continue in those roles, as those positions are part of our bargaining unit.

What about our students and their families? How will this impact them?

- We will work on our community support toward achievement of a fair contract. That said, we know that a strike, if necessary, would impact families. MSEA will reach out to community leaders and will do all we can to ensure families have available options. We will notify daycare centers and Boys and Girls Club and other entities in the community that help with child care, so they can prepare to be staffed at maximum if a strike occurs.

What is it like to be on strike?

- For many of us it will be scary, but the energy of all members being together creates powerful unity and shared strength. We will not know how long it will last, nor what the exact outcome will be. Even in the most successful strikes, some compromise occurs on the issues.
- Each day we will show up at our assigned sites and picket for all or part of the day. You will never be asked to picket alone. There will be a variety of activities and picket location assignments, but you will always be with colleagues from your work site.
- Each day a strike newsletter will be distributed on the picket line, and each day rumors will float around. Strikes are high profile. Anxiety will be the norm, but also a renewed sense of collective power and pride in our cause. Our visible strength will connect and unify our association.

What do we do all day if we go on strike? Do I have to picket 8 hours a day?

- Our strength comes from our unity and our visibility in the community. Your picket captains will work with you on picket assignments and logistics. Part of your job will be to walk the picket line, to read updates from MSEA, and to remain a visible presence for the public of the School Board's resistance to settling the contract.

How do strikes end?

- Strikes end when we vote to go back to work. Ordinarily, they end when our bargaining team brings us a tentative agreement they believe is acceptable to the membership. As a group, we vote on it and, if accepted, the strike ends, and we go back to work.
- Part of the settlement will be a revised calendar that allows a full school year for students. It will likely result in a later ending date for school, but that is a small price to pay for a strong contract.

What happens to special ed paperwork /legal timelines during a strike? Is the district responsible for meeting those services and deadlines? Could we be held liable if those aren't met?

- The days will be treated like an emergency leave – the time may need to be made up. When we had the schools closed for the time after the earthquake, some services had to either have a waiver or be doubled up, so all services were received within a timely manner. The same thing could happen here; days could be counted as non-school days and rescheduled and there would be no issues

Could voting to strike bring us an offer that is worse than the offer that is currently in front of us?

- No. The district cannot propose less than their last, best, final offer, nor can we demand more than our last, best offer.

Does the Board have to impose their last, best offer, or can they keep us in dynamic status quo which we are in now? (That means that the language of the contract is still in effect and people can move on the pay scale with years and education credits, but no additional money is added to the cells of the pay scale.)

- The board can impose their last best offer, but there is no timeline to which they must adhere. However, that is only if we do nothing. If we go on strike, the outcome will be either something better than what the school board is offering or their last best offer.

Should I set up my classroom so my students can remote learn more effectively without me?

- No. You should not do anything in your classrooms even if remote. To do so helps prolong the strike.
- Pressure is what ends a strike. The parties that experience the least amount of pressure are least likely to wish to settle.
- The district will most likely close schools and not hold classes while we are on strike - but that decision is up to the district.

Can I check in remotely with my students?

- No. Teachers are always concerned about their students, as they should be. However, if we continue to teach our students, it will prolong the strike because the school board will be able to provide services to the community, except now without cost! Although it is difficult to ignore our students, the end result is that it will help shorten the strike. The students will be able to make up the time lost at the end of the year, if that's what the district decides or the teams negotiate.

Do I have to provide sub plans if there is a strike?

- No, you should not provide sub plans. You will not be getting paid, so you are not expected to work.
- Remote classes will also not take place.
- Continuing to work helps prolong a strike

Won't the community hate us because we are all having to deal with COVID as well and the financial problems that it has created?

- It is not easy to go on strike, and MSEA will work to see that the community understands our position through messaging. However, there will be people who do not understand or support our effort. The School Board needs to understand that teachers are dealing with COVID and are on the frontlines! Teachers should not also have to deal with a School Board that insists on chaos.

Will my retirement be affected if we go on strike?

- If the days are made up, there will be no change. We will negotiate to have the calendar adjusted so that strike days are added as student contact days at the end of the school year.
- If the days are not made up: Note the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits calculates Membership service credit table below. Teachers can work 172 days and still earn a full year of service credit. We have a contract for 185 days so there is room.

Days Worked	Service Credit in years		Days Worked	Service Credit in years
0 to 8	none		100 to 117	0.6
9 to 26	0.1		118 to 135	0.7
27 to 44	0.2		136 to 153	0.8
45 to 62	0.3		154 to 171	0.9
63 to 80	0.4		≥172	1.0
81 to 99	0.5			

What if I don't want to strike?

- There will be a strike vote taken. If the membership decides to strike, everyone will be on strike. If you choose not to participate, you will need to answer to your peers who are taking the stand for the bargaining process and fighting for your best interest.

I'm not a member - what does that mean?

- Non-members will not be able to vote on accepting an offer or not.
- Non-members will be included in a strike vote action.
- Non-members will not receive the communications from the bargaining team or be involved in discussions on guidance to the bargaining team.
- Non-members should walk the picket line with us and honor the strike.

What's the timeline for a strike?

- There are still many moving parts that need to be put in place including having at least one picket captain/point person at each location who will be the point person for the building. A strike would not happen before the beginning of October, but no date has been set yet.

Can the State force us to end a strike?

- Not generally, but a state mandate re:COVID could limit any gatherings or displays of action.

Can we all meet in one location and rally and take a strike vote?

- Normally, yes, we would do that. However, in our current pandemic, we do not feel it is smart or safe to bring all 1200+ educators together in one location.

How many (or what percent) have to say yes to go out on strike?

- There is no guideline on numbers, but we would not have the support needed to be successful if our numbers are not high. We will see if a vote is taken and determine next steps based on outcome. (80% or higher is ideal.)