

Dear Colleagues:

On April 22, and again on April 29, your DTA negotiations team met with the USD 232 administrative team to review each side's negotiations letter and for DTA to present initial language to help the District prepare an initial proposal. We appreciate all those members of the bargaining unit who watched the proceedings in person or on the YouTube link.

The following is a summary of the issues presented:

**Compensation:** Both sides acknowledged that salaries need to increase on both the salary schedule and the supplemental salary schedule and that a lack of funding from the state creates a challenge in finding additional money to do so. DTA reminded the District that inflation is persistently high – 3.4% in March – and that a pay increase of any less would effectively constitute a pay cut. DTA also pointed out that insurance premiums for spouses and children have increased at a much higher rate – approximately 17% last year – thereby erasing any raises some employees thought they received. DTA recommended that any new money be placed equitably on the salary schedule by increasing each cell by an equal percentage and that the District adopt the recommendations of the Supplemental Salary Committee (which were not detailed).

DISTRICT ISSUES:

**Health Insurance Premiums:** The District proposed amending the District's obligation to provide "a single health and dental membership" to a specific monetary contribution. DTA argued that by moving from an obligation to provide insurance to a specific monetary contribution would push any increase in premiums beyond the specified amount back on the employee.

**Job-Sharing:** The District expressed that it would like to change the timeline for employees to apply for job sharing for greater clarity for both parties. The District has not yet provided specific dates or changes.

**Association Leadership Leave:** While the District has traditionally provided limited professional leave to DTA leaders to address personnel issues, there is no formal policy acknowledging that obligation. The District expressed its intent to incorporate current practices formally into the Professional Negotiated Agreement.

**Retirement Sick Leave Payout:** The District proposed changing language under Sick Leave Pay Out to correct an error in characterizing the 403(b) account and adding 457(b) since that is currently an option under our benefits package. DTA acknowledged that the intent is simply to fix language errors and not change anything substantively.

**Retirement Incentive:** The District proposed striking the entire section providing up to a \$23,000 lump sum payment for retirees who had 30 years of service prior to 2012. The last person eligible for the bonus is retiring at the end of the 2025-26 school year, so the language is no longer necessary. DTA agreed with the District's logic and said that the language has

confused retirees for many years who believed they were eligible for the benefit but had not accrued 30 years of service prior to 2012.

#### ASSOCIATION ISSUES:

**Health Insurance Premiums for Spouses and Dependents:** DTA proposed setting a maximum percentage by which insurance premiums for spouses and dependents could increase annually. Any increase above that percentage would be paid by the District. DTA again pointed out that premiums for spouses and dependents increased 17% last year and erased raises for employees insuring their families. DTA did not propose a specific percentage cap, as it was gathering more information.

**JCPRD Benefits:** DTA originally noticed the possibility of providing discounts or preferred enrollment for employees who use the before and after school care programs housed in our District buildings. Recognizing that it would be difficult to amend existing agreements with JCPRD, DTA declined to offer language but asked the District to investigate such benefits on behalf of its employees.

**Notification of Docking Pay:** DTA introduced language to require the District payroll department to provide employees with timely notice, including the reason for the pay dock, before docking an employee's pay. The District asked whether or not this was a regular occurrence, and DTA provided multiple specific examples of when it had happened. DTA shared that its intent was to provide employees the opportunity to fix technical mistakes before their pay was docked and that providing notice was simply the right thing to do in treating employees with dignity.

**SPED Paperwork Days:** DTA initially proposed helping SPED teachers responsible for creating and maintaining Individual Education Plans (IEP) by either providing a stipend or professional leave specifically for completing necessary paperwork, such as writing or modifying IEPs. DTA specifically proposed providing each IEP caseworker with up to 32 hours of professional leave per year to complete paperwork. The District indicated it would need to calculate the cost of the proposal and suggested prorating the number of hours based on the size of the caseload.

**Third Night:** DTA asked the District to reduce the number of required activities outside the school day from three to two, totaling no more than five hours. DTA noted that over 60% of members surveyed in the bargaining unit said it was important or very important to reduce those events to two. The District expressed that it had provided compensation to increase the number of events to three and asked if the survey data had been broken down by school or grade level. DTA provided the District with its requested analysis.

**Reducing the Number of School Days:** DTA proposed reducing the number of school days from 187 to 185 by exchanging four professional development days for two additional student contact days. Each reduced day would increase an employee's daily compensation by approximately 0.5%. The District expressed concern the professional development was important for maintaining quality instruction. DTA did not yet present a specific proposal for

amending the 2026-27 calendar or specific language. DTA also proposed setting a maximum number of professional development days and a minimum number of workdays to protect student contact time and teacher workdays.

**Flexible Location Workdays:** DTA proposed eliminating sunset language to make permanent the policy of allowing flexible location on four workdays throughout the year for a minimum of 16 hours. The proposal would simply make permanent the flexible workdays that staff enjoyed during the 2025-26 school year.

**Notice of Blockout Decisions:** DTA noted that there have been inconsistencies in the process of notifying staff as to whether their blockout requests have been approved prior to taking leave. The District said that there are many steps in the process, and sometimes Human Resources needed to contact employees for additional information. Additionally, DTA stated that Skyward is not especially user-friendly in communications. DTA presented language that would require the district to provide a blockout decision within ten days of submission.

**Grievance Procedure:** DTA presented language that would streamline the grievance procedure by initiating the grievance process at the first level in which the arbiter was not the respondent or subordinate to the respondent.

**Right to Representation:** DTA expressed concern that the District had broken with past practice in not recognizing that certified staff members should have representation in a meeting where a staff member could be placed on administrative leave or notified that the District was initiating an investigation of a potential disciplinary matter. DTA declined to present specific language, but reserved the right to do so in the future, in order to provide the opportunity for an alternative resolution.

We would also like to thank our DTA members for their membership. The right to collective bargaining is only guaranteed by law if a majority of our certified employees are members of the De Soto Teachers' Association. Simply put, without your membership, there would be no negotiations process, and we would be forced to accept whatever terms the Board of Education would choose to offer.

Thank you for your support and interest in the negotiations process!

Sincerely,

DTA Negotiations Team