



Negotiations Update: Response to EML Strike Authorization

LAKEVILLE, Minn. – On April 28, Education Minnesota Lakeville (EML), the teachers' union, announced its membership voted to authorize a strike. It's important to understand that this vote doesn't automatically mean there will be a strike. It indicates that the union may officially declare their intent to strike with the State Bureau of Mediation Services. If that happens, the District and EML have a 10-day calendar window to continue negotiating to avoid a strike.

If a strike becomes an imminent possibility, the School Board and Administration will work together to determine next steps for the organization's operations, and will ensure that families and staff are informed in advance through official communication channels.

Because of the complexity of contract negotiations, a prolonged process is not unusual for school districts and their employee groups. Currently, there are several other metro school districts, including some neighboring ones, that remain in negotiations with their teachers' unions. The District's discussions with EML have been ongoing since July 2023. After reaching an impasse in December, mediation was sought. Despite reaching a tentative agreement in mediation in February, the agreement was ultimately voted down by union membership. To date, the District and EML have had nine negotiation sessions and three mediation sessions. The next mediation session is scheduled for May 6, 2024, which is the earliest that could be scheduled with the State Bureau of Mediation Services.

Key issues that remain unresolved since the negotiations began revolve around wage increases and assignment language. The latest bargaining proposal is in line with recent increases in general education funding provided by the State. Additionally, the District is proposing new and modest Right of Assignment language to ensure effective staffing support in order to meet student and staffing needs on an annual basis. While full Right of Assignment language is typical for most Minnesota school districts, the District is proposing measures to safeguard staff and limit annual assignment changes to no more than 15 employees annually, which is less than 2 percent of the total workforce, and not a unilateral implementation system-wide. More details regarding these proposals are available on the [negotiations webpage](#). Despite the challenges, the District believes a fair and equitable agreement can be reached between the parties.

Lakeville Area Schools, like many districts across Minnesota, are facing financial challenges. While recent state funding increases have relieved some funding gaps, it's important to note that these funds aren't simply added to the general fund; many are earmarked for specific purposes and new mandates, some of which lack full funding. This exacerbates the

longstanding gap caused by decades of state funding shortages, despite the overall increase. While we anticipate falling short of the school district's fund balance policy by the end of the school year, we remain committed to achieving a balanced budget while working together with EML to secure a contract that supports our employees and sustains our schools. Ensuring the District has financial ability to support our students, teachers and staff is a top priority.

For information about the negotiations process and answers to frequently asked questions, please refer to our negotiations webpage: isd194.org/negotiations.

Thank you for your continued support of Lakeville Area Schools.

About Lakeville Area Schools

At Lakeville Area Schools, student success is our number one goal. So, it's no surprise we're often at the head of the class in academics, at the top of our game in athletics, and an all-star performer in the arts and activities.

First and foremost, we're focused on ensuring success for every child—personally, socially, academically and civically. We do this by setting great expectations for our students, while empowering them with the support and relationships they need to make the most of their individual gifts and unique potential.

We also believe in fostering a sense of community in every classroom, building and team. Our school leaders reinforce this shared commitment. We inspire passion for learning by creating a culture where teachers and staff collaborate, families are engaged and connected, and students support one another. Whether a Cougar or a Panther, everyone is a part of the pride!

That roar of pride can be heard across Lakeville Area's civic and business communities as well. Whether helping in our classrooms, attending our events, cheering in our stands, or investing in our facilities, their active involvement, genuine support, and spirited enthusiasm helps navigate students towards individual and collective successes.

Through this community lens, we will continue to focus on opportunities that raise student achievement, foster their continual growth, and prepare them for a bright future.

Student focused, community connected. | ISD194.ORG