

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN

METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

**METHUEN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION UNIT C
ASSOCIATION**

2025-2028

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ARTICLE 1

RECOGNITION

- 1.1 The Committee hereby recognizes for the purpose of collective bargaining the Association as the sole and exclusive representative for regularly employed persons in the following jobs: Methuen Education Association Unit C and excluding all managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical, confidential employees and all other employees employed regularly, or from time to time, by the Committee.
- 1.2 Any reference to male employee shall include female employee.
- 1.3 The parties to this Agreement shall not discriminate against any employee because of race, creed, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, marital status, physical handicap, or by reason of the employee's membership or non-membership in the Association or by reason of any activity or refraining from any activity in, with and/or for the Association not in contravention of any provision of this Agreement or law.

ARTICLE 2

MANAGEMENT RIGHTS

- 2.1 It is recognized that the Committee reserves and retains, and will continue to do so whether exercised or not, the sole and exclusive rights, powers and authority to control, direct and manage the affairs and operation, in all its aspects, of the public schools of Methuen, Massachusetts. These rights, powers and authority shall not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with the terms and provisions of this Agreement. No action taken by the Committee with respect to the exercise of such rights, powers and authority, other than as there are specific provisions herein elsewhere contained, shall be subject to the grievance and/or arbitration provisions of this Agreement.
- 2.2 Upon five (5) days prior notice, Program Assistant delegates to the MTA may request a day to attend the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The Methuen Education Association shall reimburse the District for the cost of substitutes. No more than one delegate will be allowed for each fifty (50) members of the Unit C bargaining unit.

ARTICLE 3

UNION DUES

INDEMNIFICATION

- 3.1 Union Dues Deductions – From time to time, the employer will deduct union dues from the pay of each employee who has executed and filed the appropriate form with the employers and shall remit the aggregate thereof to the Union Treasurer.
- 3.2 Indemnification – The Association agrees to indemnify and save harmless the Methuen School Committee for any action that the Committee or the Association may take pursuant to this provision, including any claims made against the Committee or Association by any employee or group of employees.

ARTICLE 4

WORK YEAR AND WORK DAY

A. Work Year

The work year for bargaining unit members shall consist of 181 days, which shall occur between the Tuesday before Labor Day and June 30. No school day will be scheduled for the Friday before Labor Day. Each year program assistants will be released for seven (7) half days (released after a ½ day with compensation for the full day). The makeup of these days include the day before Thanksgiving, the day preceding December break, the day preceding either February and April break, the last day of school, and the three half days after January 1 each year for professional development days for teachers. Parent conference days for K-8 members and the first two professional development days for teachers will be used as professional development for all members or to assist partner teachers.

B. Work Day

The defined work day for Program Assistants shall be a six and one half (6.5) hour day which includes a non-paid, continuous duty free period of not less than thirty (30) minutes for lunch per day.

C. Delays and Early Dismissals

In the event that the district determines that school will be delayed in the morning or released early in the afternoon due to inclement weather or other unforeseen events, the program assistant work day will begin no earlier than 30 minutes prior to the official student start and end no later than the 30 minutes after the official student release Administration, not teachers, are responsible for students that arrive before or leave after these times.

ARTICLE 5

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

5.1 For purposes of this Agreement, a grievance is defined as a complaint by an employee that as to him or her there has been a direct violation of the express terms of a specific provision of this Agreement. All grievances must be in writing and signed by the grievant, setting forth in precise detail the exact nature of any and all the facts given rise to the grievance, the contract provision(s) alleged to have been violated and the relief requested. Said grievance must be processed in accordance with the levels, time limits and conditions set forth below in this Article. No grievance may be heard without first having been presented at the lowest level at which the remedy sought can be provided.

5.2 Procedure for Processing a Grievance:

(a) Level One: The grievance shall be presented to the employee's immediate supervisor within fifteen (15) school days or if after June 15, ten (10) business days of the employee knowing of, or should have known of, the act or condition on which the grievance is based. Said supervisor will meet with the grievant within three (3) days of receipt of the grievance and within five (5) days following said meeting shall render his decision in the manner.

(b) Level Two: If the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level One, or no decision is rendered within five (5) business days of the meeting with the grievant, the aggrieved employee may file the grievance in writing with the Superintendent within five (5) business days of receipt of the decision or the allotted time period in which a decision shall be rendered. The Superintendent will render his decision within ten (10) business days of receipt of the grievance.

(c) Level Three: If the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Two, or no decision is rendered within ten (10) business days of receipt of the grievance, the grievant may elect to submit the grievance to the Committee within five (5) business days of receipt of the decision or the allotted time period in which a decision shall be rendered. Said submission shall be in writing. The Committee shall render its decision within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the grievance.

(d) Level Four: If the grievant is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Level Three, or no decision is rendered within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the grievance, the grievant may elect to submit the grievance to arbitration within five (5) business days of receipt of the decision or the allotted time period in which a decision shall be rendered.

5.3 The Arbitrator shall be selected by mutual agreement of the parties. If the parties fail to appoint an Arbitrator, he shall be selected from a list of Arbitrators supplied by the Massachusetts Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. The costs of said arbitration shall be shared equally by the parties. The decision of the Arbitrator shall be final and binding.

5.4 The Arbitrator shall have the authority only to interpret, apply or determine compliance with the provisions of this Agreement as related to the grievant and specific alleged violation thereof, lack of which will constitute grounds for non-arbitrability of the grievance.

5.5 If a grievance affects more than one (1) person in the bargaining unit, a group grievance can be originated by the unit and started at Level Two.

5.6 The time limits at any level can be lengthened by mutual consent.

ARTICLE 6

VACANCIES/BIDDING PROCESS

6.1 A vacancy exists when:

- (a) A new position is created by the Committee to expand the services in the Methuen School System.
- (b) A new position is created due to a sudden influx of students.
- (c) A resignation, retirement and/or decision not to rehire which is effective at the end of the school year.
- (d) A resignation which occurs during the summer prior to August 15.

A vacancy does not exist when a Program Assistant is on a leave of absence allowed under this agreement.

6.2 Vacancy Over the Summer:

1. Prior to August 20, in the event a bargaining unit position(s) becomes vacant during the summer, the position(s) will be posted for five (5) business days through the district email, the district website and at the Human Resource office. All job postings will be emailed via district email to the Chairperson(s) of the Unit.

Vacancy During the School Year that needs to be filled immediately:

1. After August 20 or during the school year, in the event a bargaining unit position becomes vacant, the District agrees to fill the position first with a Program Assistant on the recall list. If there are no eligible Program Assistants, the position will be filled with a substitute for that school year.
2. In the event no qualified substitute is available, no permanent job transfer will occur unless a job posting has been issued as herein provided except that the Committee may make job reassignments for a limited duration to meet exceptional, emergency, or special situations. No employee will suffer reduction in his/her assigned rate of pay because of such job reassignment and the transferred employee has the right to return to his/her position.

Bidding Process:

1. All open Program Assistant openings will be posted beginning March 1.
2. A Google Form will be created for each open position that becomes available between March 1 and the last day of school. This form will act as the member's internal application.
3. Each posting will be open for 5 business days internally, and if not filled by an internal candidate will be posted for external candidates.
4. At the close of each open position, the most senior member who applied will be notified and must accept or decline the offer in writing to the HR department, because acceptance of the open position may trigger another vacancy.
5. If at the time the position closes there are no internal candidates, external candidates will be considered and the position will be open until filled.
6. In the event a member's position is eliminated (i.e. student who needs a 1:1 no longer needs one or student moves or budget reductions) the member, MEA representatives, the Director of HR, and the Superintendent or his/her designee will meet to determine appropriate placement. This may include filling an open position or HR conducting a facilitated transfer.

6.3 No Program Assistant will be assigned duties without current appropriate training certification or background experience as determined by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

6.4 Job postings, transfers, or personnel changes shall be reported to the Chairperson(s) of the Association as soon as possible. When a new Program Assistant is hired, the Chairperson(s) shall receive the following information:

1. Name
2. Job Description
3. Date of Employment
4. Appointment Date

6.5 In the event of a vacancy in an after school or summer position:

- (a) The position will be posted internally for (5) school days.
- (b) The position will be filled by the senior, most qualified applicant provided he/she has a satisfactory attendance record for the previous year.
- (c) If there is no qualified, internal candidate, the Administration will post the position externally until such time as the position is filled with a qualified candidate.
- (d) Payment for this service will be at the rate of \$25 per hour.
- (e) In the event a Program Assistant is hired by an after school program or summer program as a “teacher” based on his/her credentials (i.e. MA DESE licensure), he/she will be paid at the teacher rate.

6.6 Any approved work done beyond the contractual work day will be paid at the rate of \$25.00 per hour.

ARTICLE 7 EMPLOYMENT AND WAGE POLICY

- 7.1 A regular employee is one who is assigned to a permanent position and employed on a regular basis.
- 7.2 Regular basis of employment shall consist of a work day equal in hours to the regular school day as established by the Committee, and a work year of one (1) day more than the number of student days each school year, that being the day before the students.
- (a) There will be a mandatory meeting of all Program Assistants on the first day of the school year. This meeting will be run by the Unit C Chairperson(s). The meeting will follow any meeting or activity scheduled by the Administration
 - a) 7.3. a. Anytime a Program Assistant is asked to cover for a K-12 Unit A teacher, they will be compensated \$18/hr.
 - b) When a Program Assistant is employed as a substitute teacher, that employee shall follow the teacher schedule only and will not be required to perform any other duties.
 - c) When a Program Assistant is asked to cover another Program Assistant due to covering necessary and critical need (i.e. safety and health) they will be compensated \$36 a day in addition to their regular pay.
 - d) When a Program Assistant has been assigned to sub separate classroom where all program assistant position have NOT been filled, the program assistant will be compensated \$18 a day until the unfilled program assistant positions are filled. This includes the following sub separate classrooms, Pathways at the Marsh, Footsteps at the Tenney, Choices at the Timony, Junctions at the CGS, PAVE/SPIN/SP at the MHS as well as all preschool classrooms.
- 7.4 In the event the school building to which an employee is assigned and in which he/she regularly works is closed and the students and teaching staff of said building are excused or released from attendance, said employee shall be released from her assigned duties for said period of closure without loss of pay provided, however, the Committee may make an interim assignment to another school building.

7.5 Seniority status of a Unit C employee will be established from the date of first employment as a Methuen Program Assistant. Seniority will not accrue during any period of unpaid leave of absence of thirty (30) days or more, except in cases of documented medical leave. A Program Assistant who has a break in service for one (1) school year or more will not be credited with any previous service on the seniority list. This does not apply to any Program Assistant on the recall list as outlined in section 8.5.

7.6 In a situation where the Superintendent determines that an employee's actions are unacceptable, progressive discipline will be followed (i.e. oral reprimand, written reprimand, suspension without pay, dismissal); unless the Superintendent determines that the seriousness of the employee's actions warrants discipline beyond an oral reprimand. If the Superintendent and/or his designee dismisses, suspends or disciplines a member of the bargaining unit, said employee may request that he/she be informed in writing about the fact which prompted such action. No employee shall be reprimanded, disciplined, suspended, reduced in rank or compensation or terminated without just cause.

7.7 a. Program Assistants will be paid annual stipends accordingly for the following degree/certificates:

1. SPEDIAC	\$ 400
2. Parapro	\$ 400
3. Associates	\$ 600
4. Bachelor's	\$ 800
5. RBT	\$ 500

b. Should a Program Assistant qualify for a stipend in more than one area of the above listed certificates/degrees, he/she will be able to collect the stipends for each certificate/degree that he/she possesses. Said stipends will be payable prior to the last day of June to those members employed for 91 or more days within that school year.

c. Any Program Assistant performing toileting duties as indicated in the posted job description will receive annual stipend in June of each year of \$1,200. The Program Assistant must be assigned to that role for the entire school year in order to receive the annual stipend.

7.8 No employee shall be required to lift, move, or transport in her own vehicle any equipment, machinery, audio-visuals, or electronics. No unit member will be required to transport students in his/her own vehicle.

7.9 It is expected that each Program Assistant will work with the appropriate teacher(s) to

- assist in keeping students on task
- implement student modifications and/or behavior plans
- provide small-group instruction
- address educational and physical (including feeding and toileting) demands of assigned student(s)

Program Assistants will not provide written assessment (grades) for their groups but will provide academic feedback, if necessary.

Devices will be available and assigned by building administration to be used during the school day as needed.

7.10 Each Program Assistant will be given written notice at his/her respective buildings by his/her Supervising Principal of his/her assignment as early as possible in June, but no later than the last day of school in June. If after this date, there are any necessary changes in said assignments, Program Assistants will be notified in writing as soon as possible.

ARTICLE 8 EVALUATIONS

All observations of the work performance of a Program Assistant shall be conducted by a designated administrator openly and with the full knowledge of the Program Assistant. All employees new to the system shall be evaluated three (3) times within the first year of service (by December 1st, by February 1st, by May 1st); all other employees shall be evaluated once per year prior to June 1st. The evaluation document used by the Methuen School Department for Program Assistants will be part of this contract. Teachers will not evaluate Program Assistants but may provide written input to the administrator upon request by the administrator. The Evaluation Tool will be posted on the website.

ARTICLE 9 SALARIES

All Program Assistants will be paid in twenty-six (26) biweekly installments payable on Thursdays, beginning with the second Thursday of the work year. The final five installments will be paid no later than the last Thursday in June. If a holiday occurs on a Thursday, Program Assistants will be paid on the last working day prior to the holiday, when possible

ARTICLE 10 JOB ASSIGNMENT

10.1 A regular employee shall be notified by the Superintendent, if possible, by June 1st of each school year as to his/her reappointment to or release from said employment.

10.2 The Superintendent reserves the right to make assignments of Program Assistants as it deems to be in the best interest of the Methuen Public Schools. No such assignments and/or reassignments shall be made without a five (5) business day written notice of intent to reassign the Program Assistant. The Program Assistant will have five (5) business days from the receipt of the assignment change to request a meeting with the Superintendent or his/her designee to discuss the transfer. All assignments will be made on a fair and equitable basis.

10.3 From November 1 through March 15 of the school year, no outside duty will be for more than twenty (20) consecutive minutes whenever possible, but never more than thirty (30) minutes in any sixty (60) minute period.

10.4 Reduction in Force:

(a) At the end of the school year: In the event the Superintendent deems it necessary to reduce the number of Program Assistants at the end of the school year, the order of reduction shall be based on seniority in the district. The position which the Program Assistant holds may or may not be eliminated as part of this reduction in force. Notification of reduction in force will be given by June 1st.

(b) During the school year: In the event the Superintendent deems it necessary to eliminate a Program Assistant's position for non-financial reasons during the school year (i.e. student leaves the district in a one-to-one situation), every effort will be made to retain the displaced Program Assistant with equivalent hours in another position or temporary position for the remainder of the year. The displaced Program Assistant may bump a long term substitute in this situation.

(c) Any Program Assistant whose position was eliminated and then reinstated within one calendar year, will have the option to return to their original position without going through the bidding process. The Program Assistant will be given a 5 work day notice to accept or decline such an offer.

10.5 Program Assistants laid off pursuant to Section 8.4 shall have a right of recall for a period of twenty-eight (28) months following the date of layoff notification. A Program Assistant may refuse one (1) recall assignment and remain on place on the seniority list.

(a) In the event that a position for a laid-off Program Assistant (See Article 6.2) occurs in the bargaining unit during the twenty-eight (28) month recall period and the School Committee decides to fill that vacancy, laid off employees will be recalled in order of their seniority. A Program Assistant must notify the Superintendent and/or his designee of his/her current address. A laid off Program Assistant will be given written notice of a vacancy arising under the terms of this paragraph. A laid off Program Assistant will have one (1) week from the postmark date of written notice to contact the Superintendent and/or his designee to verbally accept a posted position. Said Program Assistant must then follow up in writing with his/her intention to accept the position. Such letter should be received within two (2) weeks of the postmark date of the original written notice. Failure of a laid off Program Assistant to accept a second offered position, except for medical reasons verified by a doctor's certificate and/or to inform the Superintendent and/or his designee of his/her current address, shall terminate the employee's recall rights. Those Program Assistants who are not interested in being placed on the recall list shall inform the Superintendent and/or his designee and shall not be placed on the recall list.

(b) The recall period during which a Program Assistant was laid off and subject to recall shall not count towards years of service in the school system. However, in the event a Program Assistant is recalled, he/she shall be credited with the seniority which he/she possessed on the last working day prior to layoff. Program Assistants recalled pursuant to this section shall carry over only the sick leave which was credited to them at the time of their last day of work prior to being laid off.

ARTICLE 11

SICK LEAVE

11.1 A permanent employee shall be granted sick leave with pay for non-work connected illness or injury under the following terms and conditions:

a. Each Program Assistant will receive one and one half days per month accumulated sick leave to be added to his/her accrual balance on the first paycheck of each month. Effective in the 2022-2023 school year, for their first three (3) years of service, each Program Assistant will accrue six (6) sick leave days in the month of September, and one (1) day a month for the remainder of the

school year beginning in October. Upon the start of their fourth year of service, Program Assistants will be credited with fifteen (15) sick leave days at the beginning of the school year.

(b) Sick Leave days shall be accumulated to maximum of two hundred twenty (220) sick leave days. Program Assistants who have reached the maximum accumulated sick leave days shall be entitled to retain such greater accumulation until the end of the school year.

(c) Accumulated sick leave is available for use in the following manner:

1. When it is established that a person is incapacitated for performance of his regular duties
2. For medical, dental or optical examination or treatment
3. To care for a "family member" as defined by the Family Medical Leave Act

(d) The Superintendent may require a medical certificate for each absence in excess of five (5) consecutive days or eight (8) medically undocumented cumulative days in a work year. The Superintendent, may at her discretion, require an examination by a physician elected by the Superintendent at the Committee's expense for each absence in excess of five (5) consecutive days or ten (10) cumulative days in a work year. Said medical certificate must be any medical provider.

(f) As of September 1, 1988, those employees presently having accrued more unused sick days than the above stated maximum, shall retain the total number of days earned, but additional sick days accrued shall not be credited to the employee until the number of sick days accrued has been reduced by use to a number below that of the maximum allowed. Then, additional sick days shall be credited as earned but not to exceed the maximum total allowed.

(g) Any Program Assistant who uses three or fewer sick/family illness days per year (excluding personal days, bereavement days, jury duty, and/or professional/Association days) and has been employed in the Methuen Public Schools as a full time program assistant for two consecutive years, will receive a pay incentive of \$500 by the last day of school. A Program Assistant must be hired by September 1st of said year to be eligible.

11.2 Sick Leave Pool

The Methuen School Committee and the Program Assistants' Association (Unit C) agree to maintain a Sick Leave Pool for the members of the bargaining unit, which will be administered by the Association according to the following guidelines:

- (a) Each Program Assistant must become a member of the Sick Leave Pool for Program Assistants.
- (b) If the number of days in the Program Assistant sick leave pool is more than 30% of the number of members in the Unit, Program Assistants will not have to donate a day to the pool. If the number of days drops below 30%, Program Assistants will donate one day on the first day of school in September.
- (c) The Sick Leave Pool Committee will be established yearly by the Unit C Chairperson(s) and will consist of at least 4 (four) members of Unit C. Selection of committee members will be completed and names will be submitted to the Superintendent within the first full week of school. Decisions requiring use of the sick leave pool will rest solely with the Sick Leave Pool Committee.

- (d) The following procedures and criteria will be used to determine eligibility for benefits and the number of days to be granted:
1. The employee has exhausted his/her sick leave.
 2. The employee has completed two (2) or more years of service in the Methuen Public Schools.
 3. The employee, or in the event of incapacity, his/her representative, must obtain a Sick Leave Pool application form from a Sick Leave Pool Committee member. The application must be accompanied by an original, dated letter/note from a state certified medical doctor or nurse practitioner. This documentation must include the nature of the illness (diagnosis), a statement indicating that the member is unable to work in any capacity, as well as the anticipated date of return to work.
 4. The Sick Leave Pool Committee may not award more than ten (10) sick days upon the initial application if substantiated by all the required documentation outlined on the MEA Sick Leave Pool application. Application must be made for additional benefits which may be awarded in increments of 30 days up to a total of 90 days. It is understood that it is not automatic that an employee will be covered for the entire illness and there is no guarantee that paychecks will not be interrupted. Leave taken pursuant to this Article will be deducted from the employee's statutory leave entitlement under the Family and Medical Leave Act, if any.
 5. The sex or marital status of the employee will have no basis in the decision to allow or deny sick leave bank benefits.
 6. In the event of death, no sick leave granted by this committee will be paid to the employee's estate, nor shall sick leave be paid to an employee who has been terminated, or resigned from his/her position.
 7. Sick leave days drawn from the bank will be actual workdays in which school was in session excluding weekends, holidays, school closing and vacation periods.
 8. All policies and procedures should be kept by all Unit C members as a reference. The policies and procedures will be strictly adhered to in all respects.
- (e) Actions taken by the Sick Leave Pool Committee on sick leave pool requests will be forwarded to the Superintendent for his/her approval.
- (f) No decision of the Sick Leave Pool Committee will be subject to the grievance and arbitration provisions of this Agreement. Any appeal will be limited to an appeal to the Sick Pool Committee itself.
- (g) The existence of the sick leave pool is a privilege rather than a convenience; therefore, days will be granted from the pool only in cases of serious injury or illness verified by a physician's certificate which demonstrates genuine disability and includes clarification of what the patient can do, in relation to assigned duties.
- (h) Upon return from extended sick leave during which benefits were received through the Sick Leave Pool, the recipient shall be entitled to commence a new accumulation of individual sick leave on the same basis as other employees.
- (i) Unused sick leave days of a Program Assistant who retires and/or resigns will be added to the sick leave pool.

- (j) Decisions relating to the granting of sick days from the pool will not affect the District's right to make determinations regarding any employee relations matter, including the determination regarding the appropriateness of any employee's use of sick time.

ARTICLE 12 BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Employees covered by this agreement will be allowed time off without loss of pay for up to **five (5)** working days following a death in the immediate family. The immediate family for this article shall be defined as husband, wife, domestic partner, son, daughter, mother, father, brother, sister, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law grandparents and grandchildren.

Bereavement Leave of two (2) days may be taken for the death of a relative of an employee who is the employee's aunt, uncle, great-grandparent, niece or nephew. Said bereavement day shall be the day of the funeral and the time so granted for the purpose of attending said funeral.

At the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools, this leave may be extended.

ARTICLE 13 LEAVE OF ABSENCE / PERSONAL DAYS

13.1 Each Program Assistant will be credited with three (3) personal leave days at the beginning of the school year. Personal leave days may be taken in quarter, half and full day increments. A quarter day is 1.5 hours, half day is defined as either the first 3 hours of the workday or the last 3 hours of the workday. Personal days may also be used in 1.5 hour increments. The reasons for personal days are personal and confidential. However, a reason must be presented and approved by the Superintendent for the following usage: first and last day of school year or the day preceding or following a holiday or vacation. Requests will not be unreasonably denied by the Superintendent. If the request is denied and the unit member still takes the days, progressive disciplinary action may be taken. Request for personal leave days will be made 72 hours in advance whenever possible. Unused personal days at the end of the year will be converted to sick days.

13.2 Professional Leave for the purpose of attending meetings or conferences of an educational nature will be allowed upon the recommendation of the Program Assistant's Principal and approval of the Superintendent.

13.3 Time necessary for legal proceedings, which are not personal but are directly related to the delivery of services to the children and other staff members in the conduct of expected duties of a Program Assistant, will be allowed, with pay, if attendance is required by law.

13.4 The Superintendent may grant temporary leaves of absence with pay for good reason.

13.5 The Committee in its sole discretion may grant an extended leave of absence without pay to those bargaining unit members who, as a result of personal illness, have exhausted all accumulated sick leave. Said leave, if granted by the Committee, shall not constitute a break in service for purposes of computing seniority status.

13.6 A leave of absence shall be granted to an employee selected and ordered to perform jury duty. The employee shall be paid the difference between his/her assigned regular rate of pay and the pay which he/she receives from the court for such services. In order to effectuate this, the employee will turn over the pay received from the court and the verification of jury service within three (3) weeks after the completion of his/her jury service.

13.7 Leave days cited in 11.3, 11.4 and 11.7 are not included in the three (3) leave days cited in 11.1 and should be professional leave days with as many given as recommended by the Program Assistant's principal.

13.8 Employees should be aware of the benefits of the Family Leave Medical Act.

13.9 Any Program Assistant who is on a leave of absence (paid, without pay or parental leave) for one school year or less, will be able to return to his/her position. If his/her position has been eliminated, he/she may choose to return to any open position. If his/her position has been eliminated, he/she will follow the process in the Job Assignment Article of this Agreement.

ARTICLE 14 PARENTAL LEAVE

14.1 All full-time members who have completed three (3) months of service in the Methuen Public Schools may be eligible for up to twelve (12) weeks of parental leave per child, for:

- a. the purpose of preparing to give birth, giving birth and/or bonding with a newborn child; or
- b. the placement of a child under the age of 18, or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled, for adoption with the member who is adopting or intending to adopt the child.
- c. Any two (2) members of the District shall each be entitled to the parental leave provided for in this Article for the birth or adoption of the same child.

14.2 Parameters on Parental Leave

- a. Such leave from work must be consecutive work days and must start within nine months of the date of birth/adoption of the child.
- b. The member's parental leave of absence shall be completed within one year of either the birth or placement of a child.
- c. Parental leave taken pursuant to this Article shall run concurrently with leave taken pursuant to the Massachusetts Parental Leave Act and Family Medical Leave Act, or any other applicable state or federal law, and will be deducted from the employee's statutory leave entitlement.

14.3 Parental Leave Compensation:

Effective beginning the 2024-2025 School Year, the Employer shall pay one hundred percent (100%) of base wages and contractually agreed member benefits during the first four (4) weeks of the parental leave of absence. Thereafter, a Member shall be eligible to utilize up to four (4) weeks of accrued paid sick leave without a doctor's note to the extent available pursuant to Article 11. A Member utilizing their FMLA entitlement may extend their parental leave for an

additional four (4) weeks (twelve total weeks) and utilize their own accrued sick time consistent with District policy.

14.4 Notice to District

- a. A Member intending to take a parenting leave of absence shall notify the Superintendent in writing of their anticipated date of departure and intention to return preferably three (3) months prior to, but in no event less than two (2) weeks prior to, their anticipated date of departure. Members are urged to give earlier notification thus providing the Administration with additional time to secure a replacement and ensure continuity of instruction. In the event of an unanticipated date of departure due to circumstances outside the Member's control, the Member shall notify the Superintendent in writing as soon as reasonably possible of their new departure date.
- b. The pregnant Member may continue in their assigned position as long as their physical condition and ability to perform their assigned duties allow.

14.5 Return from Leave

- a. Upon completion of parental leave, the Member shall be restored to the position the employee held when the parental leave commenced or a substantially equivalent position.
- b. A member shall be placed on the next step of the salary schedule on the year of their return if they completed at least-ninety-two days of service during the academic year of their leave.

ARTICLE 15 INSURANCE

The Methuen Education Association has ratified their health insurance agreement through the Methuen Public Employee Committee with the City of Methuen under M.G.L. ch 32B section 19.

ARTICLE 16 NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS CHILDREN OF NON-RESIDENT PROGRAM ASSISANTS

Any Unit C members who are not residents of Methuen, and who begin employment in the Methuen Public Schools on or before ratification of this 2009-2011 Agreement, may enroll their children in the Methuen Public Schools as long as:

1. There is an available slot.
2. The parent/unit member provides for the transportation of the students to and from Methuen Public Schools.
3. He or she is and does not become a discipline problem.
4. He or she does not require any special services, programs, or otherwise cause Methuen Public Schools to incur any expense.

5. If any of the conditions in paragraph 1 and/or 2 are not met, and/or the conditions in paragraph 3 and/or 4 exist, any obligation of the Committee under this article shall cease.

Requests under this Article must be renewed each year in writing to the Superintendent on or before May 15th.

The requirement above that the employee begin employment on or before July 1, 2009 may be waived at the sole discretion of the Superintendent.

Decisions of the School Committee in regard to the terms of this article shall neither be grievable or arbitrable.

ARTICLE 17

NO STRIKE – NO LOCK OUT

17.1 The Association agrees that there shall be no strike, work stoppage, slowdown, or any other interference with the usual and customary conduct of the educational and business affairs and activities of the Methuen Public Schools or any of its employees by the Association, nor will any of its agents or members initiate, condone, sanction or participate in any of the foregoing acts.

17.2 The Committee agrees that there shall be no lockout of its employees from their employment during the term of this Agreement provided the employees continue in the faithful performance of their assigned and directed duties and responsibilities.

ARTICLE 18

EFFECT OF AGREEMENT

18.1 This instrument constitutes the entire Agreement of the Committee and the Association arrived as a result of collective bargaining negotiations.

18.2 The parties acknowledge that during the negotiations which resulted in this Agreement each had the unlimited right and opportunity to make demands with respect to any subject matter not removed by law from the area of collective bargaining and that the understanding and agreements arrived at by the parties after the exercise of that right and opportunity are set forth in this Agreement. Therefore, the Committee and the Association for the life of this Agreement shall not be obligated to bargain collectively with respect to any subject matter referred to or covered by this Agreement.

ARTICLE 19

SEVERABILITY

19.1 If any provision of this Agreement or any application of the Agreement to any employee or group of employees shall be found contrary to law, then such provision or application shall not be deemed valid and shall be without force and effect except to the intent permitted by law; but all other provisions or applications of this Agreement shall continue in full force and effect.

ARTICLE 20

SICK LEAVE BUY BACK

Effective on the first day of the contract, a Program Assistant shall submit a written notice to the Superintendent by September 1 of the school year in which he/she intends to retire. The retiring Program Assistant shall will be compensated a sum of money equal to \$35 per day for each unused sick leave day up to a maximum of one hundred (100) days, and a sum equal to \$50 per day for each unused sick leave day beyond 100 up to a maximum of two hundred twenty (220) days. The sum shall be paid no later than July 31 after the school year in which the Program Assistant retires. In order to receive this compensation, the Program Assistant cannot have been absent more than ten (10) sick leave days during the school year of his/her retirement. However, the Superintendent at his/her discretion may grant an exception to this ten (10) day limitation for physician documented serious illness extending ten (10) or more days in length, i.e. extensive surgery or hospitalization.

ARTICLE 21

MUTUAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE

The Superintendent and the Association agree to re-establish a Mutual Concerns Committee that will meet bi-monthly. The purpose of the Committee is not to replace collective bargaining or the grievance procedure, but to establish an on-going forum for discussion between the parties. Both parties will determine the composition of their Mutual Concerns Committee. Potential items for discussion by this committee will include, but not be limited to: health and safety, utilization of sick leave; training.

ARTICLE 22

SUBCONTRACTING

1. If an existing Program Assistant position becomes vacant, and the District intends to fill the vacancy, the position will be posted both internally and externally in accordance with Article 6 of the collective bargaining agreement. If the District is not able to find a qualified candidate, The District may offer additional work to existing bargaining unit members if available, at an additional work rate set forth in the contract (see Article 7), while it continues to post and search for a qualified candidate.

2. The District shall have the right to subcontract out this work temporarily while it continues to post and search for a qualified candidate, in order to provide services to students. Parties will discuss these needs during the monthly mutual concerns meeting.

**ARTICLE 23
DURATION**

20.1 This Agreement will be in full force from July 1, 2025 until June 30, 2028 .

METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

METHUEN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Jami D. Le
K. W. White
Neil P. Brannigan
May Beth Anderson
John J. G. G. G.

Kara Blatt
Chantel Lucas
Michelle Hall
Sarah Calla
K. K. K.
Emily Kelley

Sharon A. LaPlante
M. D. D.
Katherine L. L.
Susan LaPlante
Correen R. Miller
Michelle McLernash
M. S. S.
Joan Joan Guay
K. K. K.
Tracy Swirianski

APPENDIX A

WAGE SCHEDULE

Wages paid to members of this bargaining unit will be on a salaried basis payable in either 21 or 26 bi-weekly installments as follows:

STEPS	BASE SALARY FY26	BASE SALARY FY27	BASE SALARY FY28
1	\$30,985	\$32,632	\$34,283
2	\$31,605	\$33,285	\$34,970
3	\$32,237	\$33,951	\$35,669
4	\$32,882	\$34,629	\$36,381
5	\$33,540	\$35,323	\$37,111
6	\$36,000	\$38,000	\$40,000

Steps in the salary schedule are experience steps as a Program Assistant in the Methuen Public Schools. Any Program Assistant hired after November 24, 1992 without prior experience as a Program Assistant in the Methuen Public Schools, will be placed on step 0.

- A.1 During the first 30 days of employment, the employee shall be considered to be on probation. Release of such employee from his employment during this probationary period shall be at the discretion of the Committee and not subject to the grievance and arbitration provisions of this Agreement.
- A.2 Program Assistants who retired from the union and return as substitute program assistants will be paid at a rate of \$85 per day.

Time and one half shall be paid in each hour in excess of the employee's regularly scheduled daily work hours (6 hours) with a minimum of one hour. The Program Assistant's supervisor must specifically assign all overtime.

APPENDIX B

LONGEVITY SCHEDULE

During the period of this contract, any bargaining unit member who completes a period of continuous full-time employment within the Methuen Public Schools in accordance with the following schedule shall receive a lump sum payment annually of the corresponding amount, provided, however, that the employee has completed 60 days continuous full time employment within the Methuen Public Schools by December 15 of the current school year. For purposes of this section only, continuous full time employment will not include leaves of absences without pay in excess of 90 school days.

5 years	\$500
10 years	\$1,000
15 years	\$2,000
20 years	\$3,000
25 years	\$4,000
30 years	\$5,000

Any member hired on or after July 1, 2025 will not be eligible for longevity under the current collective bargaining agreement.

MEMORANDUM

The Methuen Education Association Unit C' Association and the Methuen School Committee agree to establish a committee consisting of the Superintendent or his/her designee, a member of the School Committee, and a minimum of three (3) Program Assistants to be chosen by members of the bargaining committee whose sole purpose is to develop updated job descriptions, as well as an instrument/language for the supervision and evaluation of Program Assistants. No later than 30 days after the ratification of this contract, the chairs of Unit C will sit with the Superintendent and his/her designees to identify the evaluation committee and set dates to develop the evaluation tool. The process is to be completed within three months from the initial meeting.