

Master Agreement

Between

**Independent School District 877
Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools**

and

Education MN-Buffalo

**Educational Support Professionals, Local #7334
(Paraeducators, COTAs)**

**Affiliated with Education Minnesota,
AFT, NEA, AFL-CIO**

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		<u>Page</u>
ARTICLE I	Recognition of Exclusive Representative and Employee Rights	2-3
ARTICLE II	Managerial Rights	3-4
ARTICLE III	Definitions	4
ARTICLE IV	Employee Benefits	4-7
ARTICLE V	Quality Earnings Program	7-8
ARTICLE VI	Normal Duty Day and Additional Duty Pay	8
ARTICLE VII	Leaves	8-15
ARTICLE VIII	Probation	15
ARTICLE IX	Performance Expectations Discipline and Discharge	16
ARTICLE X	Seniority Rights	16-17
ARTICLE XI	Transfer Policies	18
ARTICLE XII	Severance Pay	18-19
ARTICLE XIII	Grievance and Arbitration	19-23
ARTICLE XIV	Duration	23
SCHEDULE A	Salary and Insurance Benefits	25-26

**2025-26 MASTER AGREEMENT
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 877
AND
EDUCATION MINNESOTA-BUFFALO ESP, Local #7334**

PREAMBLE

Independent School District 877 and the Education Minnesota-Buffalo ESP have a common responsibility beyond their collective bargaining relationship; to provide the best possible educational opportunities and to continually strive to expand and improve these opportunities for our students, shall be our common goal.

AGREEMENT

Agreement made and entered into as of July 1, 2025 by and between Independent School District 877 hereinafter called the Board and the Education Minnesota Buffalo Educational Support Professionals, Local #7334, hereinafter called the Union and shall continue in effect through June 30, 2026.

Witnesseth:

Whereas, the Board and the Union hereby declare their intent to work together toward the common aims of education, excellence, and to provide the best possible educational opportunities for those children of school age.

Therefore, the parties agree as follows:

**ARTICLE I
RECOGNITION OF EXCLUSIVE REPRESENTATIVE & EMPLOYEE RIGHTS**

Section 1. Recognition: In accordance with the P.E.L.R.A., the School District recognizes the Education Minnesota Buffalo ESP as the exclusive representative, shall have those rights and duties as prescribed by the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (P.E.L.R.A.) and as described in the provisions of this Agreement.

Section 2. Appropriate Unit: The exclusive representative shall represent all such employees of the district contained in the appropriate unit as defined in Article III, Section 1, of this Agreement and the P.E.L.R.A. and the certification by the Commissioner of Mediation Services, if any.

Section 3. Request for Dues Check Off: Educational support professionals shall have the right to request dues check off. Upon receipt of a properly executed authorization card of the educational support professionals involved, on or before November 15, the school district will deduct from the educational support professional's

paycheck beginning November 30 and continuing for twelve (12) subsequent checks (total of 13). Authorization cards received after the November 15 cut-off date will be deducted from the remaining dues check-off schedule. The school district will remit monthly, all collected dues to the appropriate local educational support professional organization.

Section 4. Personnel Files: Each educational support professional shall have the right upon request, to review the content of their own personnel file within two working days following said request. A representative of the educational support professional's choice may, at the educational support professional's request, accompany the educational support professional through this review. A copy of any formal evaluation will be given to the educational support professional at the time the evaluation is completed. An educational support professional shall have the right to reproduce any of the contents of their file at the educational support professional's expense and to submit for inclusion in the file written information in response to any material contained therein.

ARTICLE II MANAGERIAL RIGHTS

Section 1. Inherent Managerial Rights: The exclusive representative recognizes that the school board is not required to meet and negotiate on matters of inherent managerial policy, which include, but are not limited to, such areas of discretion or policy as the functions and programs of the employer, its overall budget, utilization of technology, the organizational structure and selection and direction and number of personnel.

Section 2. Management Responsibilities: The exclusive representative recognizes the right and obligation of this school board to efficiently manage and conduct the operation of the school district within its legal limitations and with its primary obligation to provide educational opportunity for the students of the school district.

Section 3. Effect of Laws, Rules and Regulations: The exclusive representative recognizes that all employees covered by the Agreement shall perform the services and duties prescribed by the school board and shall be governed by the laws of the State of Minnesota, and by school board rules, regulations, directives and orders, issued by properly designated officials of the school district. The exclusive representative also recognizes the right, obligation and duty of the school board and its duly designated officials to promulgate rules, regulations, directives, and recognizes that the provisions of this Agreement are subject to the laws of the State. Any provision of this Agreement found to be in violation of any such laws, rules, regulations, directives or orders shall be null and void and without force and effect.

Section 4. Reservation of Managerial Rights: The foregoing enumeration of rights and duties shall not be deemed to exclude other inherent management rights and management functions not expressly reserved herein, and all management rights and management functions not expressly delegated in this Agreement are reserved to the school district.

Section 5. Notification of Employment: The District shall notify educational support professionals of any reduction in hours of work for the subsequent school year as soon as possible. The District shall attempt to notify educational support professional of changes in building and/or assignment for the subsequent school year before August 1. Written notification from the District will be provided to employees indicating tentative placement, assignment, hours, and wages according to the schedule by August 15th prior to the start of the school year.

District 877 reserves the right to make any modifications or adjustments in their assignments during the school year. The hours of educational support professionals are subject to change due to the potential changing needs of students which include; their becoming more or less independent, building or transportation scheduling changes or a possible combination of students which could result in either fewer educational support professional or fewer hours that educational support professionals would work.

ARTICLE III DEFINITIONS

Section 1. Description of Appropriate Unit: For purpose of this Agreement, the term Educational Support Professional shall mean all persons in the appropriate unit employed by the school district in such classifications excluding the following: confidential employees, supervisory employees, essential employees, part-time employees whose service does not exceed the lesser of 14 hours per week or 35 percent of the normal work week in the employee's appropriate unit; employees whose positions are basically temporary or seasonal in character and are not for more than 67 working days in any calendar year; employees excluded from the definition of "public employee" contained in Minn. Stat. #179A.03, Subd. 14. A normal work week will be determined by taking the average hours of all hours worked by ESPs on October 1 of each year.

Section 2. Employment Period: The term of service of employees, including the hours of service, shall be recommended by the building principals and/or Director of Special Education. Final determination of annual hours will be determined by the superintendent's office designee.

Section 3. Part-Time Employees: The school district reserves the right to employ such part-time personnel as deemed necessary and desirable.

ARTICLE IV EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Section 1. Wages and Group Insurance: The wages and salary reflected in Schedule A attached hereto, shall be part of the agreement for the period commencing July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. The parties agree that employees 30 hours or more per week shall be eligible for group insurance benefits to the extent provided for by existing insurance contracts. Employees on District insurance whose hours are reduced below 30 hours per week by management shall remain eligible for the full insurance contribution.

Section 2. Claims Against the School District: The parties agree that any description of insurance benefits contained in this Article is intended to be information only, and the eligibility of any employee for benefits shall be governed by the terms of the insurance policy purchased by the school district pursuant to this Article. It is further understood that the school district's only obligation is to purchase an insurance policy and pay such amounts agreed to herein, and no claim shall be made against the school district as a result of denial of insurance benefits by any insurance carrier.

Section 3. Selection of Carrier: The selection of the insurance carriers and policies shall be made by the school district.

Section 4. Health and Hospitalization Insurance: The school board will provide health and hospitalization insurance for employees according to the following plans:

Subd. 1. Eligibility: Employees must work 30 or more hours per week to be eligible for health insurance.

Subd. 2. Premium Payments: Employees hired after July 1, 2005, who may not have adequate income to cover the employee share of the health insurance premium, the district will deduct as much of the employee's share of the premium with pretax dollars first, and shall bill the employee separately for the remaining balance of the deduct that was due at that time. Any overpayment by an employee or under-collection by the district shall be corrected by the end of the current school year.

Subd. 3. Individual Coverage: The school board shall contribute the sum listed in Schedule A, attached hereto, toward the premium for individual coverage for employees employed by the school district who are not enrolled for dependent coverage in the district group health and hospitalization plan. Employees desiring coverage must so indicate to the Business Office.

Subd. 4. Dependent Coverage: The school board shall contribute the sum listed in Schedule A, attached hereto, toward the premium for dependent coverage. Employees desiring dependent coverage must so indicate to the Business Office.

Section 5. Term Life Insurance: The school board shall contribute the sum listed in Schedule A, attached hereto, toward term life insurance for employees on qualified employment and wishing to be covered. Eligibility for coverage will be determined by the insurance policy.

Subd. 1. Eligibility: Employees must work 30 or more hours per week to be eligible for life insurance.

Section 6. Income Protection Insurance: The school board shall contribute the sum listed in Schedule A, attached hereto, toward income protection or disability insurance for each employee on qualified employment. Eligibility for coverage will be

determined by insurance policy, which currently has a requirement of 30 hours per week to qualify.

Section 7. Dental Insurance: Beginning October 1, 2021 the district will allow benefit eligible ESP members to voluntarily participate in the district sponsored group dental during the benefit open enrollment period or upon a qualifying life event, whichever were to occur first.

Cost of participation will be borne by the ESP member through payroll deduction. Upon first time enrollment in the district's group dental plan, should an employee elect to disenroll after their initial year of coverage, the employee will not be eligible to re-enroll into the district's group dental plan until a period of no less than 24 months.

Section 8. Duration of Insurance Contribution: An employee is eligible for school district contribution as provided in this Article as long as the employee is employed by the school district. Upon termination of employment, all district contributions shall cease.

Section 9. Mileage Reimbursement: Educational support professionals who may be required to use their own automobiles in the performance of their duties and educational support professionals who are assigned to more than one (1) school per day shall be reimbursed for all such travel at the prevailing district mileage rate for all driving done between arrival at the first location at the beginning of their workday and the location of the educational support professionals at the end of the workday.

Section 10. Reimbursement for Damage/Replacement of Prescription Eye Glasses: Upon submission of a receipt from an eye clinic, the School District agrees to reimburse an employee up to a maximum of \$200.00 for damage or replacement of prescription eye glasses. The damage to the prescription eye glasses must be a result of a student-related incident which occurs during the employee's duty day. The damage must be examined by an administrator on the date the damage occurred. Final approval of the reimbursement will be determined by the Director of Human Resources and is not subject to the grievance procedure.

Section 11. IRS 125 Plan: The School District shall provide a Section 125 Plan under the Internal Revenue Code for eligible Educational Support Professionals in the District, to be utilized at the employee's option. Eligibility is determined according to the District's Section 125 Flexible Spending Plan.

Subd. 1. Description: The Section 125 Plan (Flexible Spending Plan) offered by the School District is a plan established to provide a way to save money on costs for medical and dependent care expenses. The accounts allow payment for certain out-of-pocket health care expenses and dependent care expenses with pre-tax dollars. It is a salary reduction plan permitting participants to choose among more than one benefit. It is classified as a "Cafeteria Plan" for federal income tax purposes.

The two components to the plan are:

1. Dependent care reimbursement account.

2. Medical expense reimbursement account.

Section 12. Matching 403(b) Contribution: Effective July 1, 2025, employees working 30 hours or more per week may contribute to a 403(b) plan and will receive a matching contribution from the District based on their completed years of service within the Educational Support Professional unit. The maximum amount of the District's annual matching contribution is stated in the schedule below. One year of service is defined as the completion of twelve continuous months of service. Employees hired prior to January 1 of a school year will be granted a year of service credit for that year. Employees hired after January 1 will not be granted a year of service credit for that year.

<u>Completed Years of Service</u>	<u>District Yearly Match</u>
5-9	Up to \$150
10-14	Up to \$200
15 and above	Up to \$250

Subd. 2. Election Period: To participate in the 403(b) matching program, an eligible employee must submit a written authorization to the District no later than July 1st. The written authorization must contain all information required by the plan vendor, it must specify the amount to be deposited into the employee's 403(b) account, and it must authorize the District to make the deduction and deposit through payroll deduction. The amount to be deposited in the 403(b) plan will be deducted in roughly equal amounts from the employee's paychecks throughout the year. An employee's participation, including the matching amount, will continue from year to year at the specified amount unless the employee notifies the District, in writing, that the employee is changing the amount. Any notice of a change in the amount of the employee's contribution must be submitted to the District by July 1st preceding the effective date of the change of September 30.

Subd. 3. Maximum District Contribution: The maximum amount of the matching contribution that the District makes for any employee during the employee's lifetime will not exceed \$20,000.

ARTICLE V QUALITY EARNINGS PROGRAM

Section 1. QEP Required Hours: Educational support professionals employed 1-2 years will complete twelve (12) QEP hours per year. If employed 3-4 years, they will complete ten (10) hours per year. If employed 5 or more years, they will complete six (6) hours per year.

Section 2. Requirements for Step Advancement: QEP hours must be met in order to move to the next step of the salary schedule. If an employee at the top of the salary schedule does not complete the required QEP hours by the day after the last student day of the school year, their salary shall be frozen at their last rate. An employee can begin earning QEP hours for the upcoming school year following the QEP submission deadline for the previous school year.

Section 3. QEP Advisory Committee: An ongoing labor-management committee consisting of up to four members appointed by the President of the Union, the Union representative of Education Minnesota, and up to four members appointed by the School District, will meet a minimum of one (1) time per year. The committee shall make recommendations for changes/improvements to the QEP.

ARTICLE VI NORMAL DUTY DAY AND ADDITIONAL DUTY PAY

Section 1. School Closings: Hours of employment may vary according to the needs of a specific building. In the event school is closed for any reason and the employees are not required to perform services, employee compensation shall be reduced accordingly. In the event school is closed and employees are on the job, employees will be compensated for their time on the job or a minimum of two (2) hours or be allowed to work their full day, with the approval of his/her principal. In the event school is cancelled two (2) days or less in a fiscal year due to inclement weather, an educational support professional may be permitted to make up any missed hours with the approval of his/her principal or may use vacation hours for the time missed. In the event school is cancelled more than two (2) days in a fiscal year due to inclement weather, an educational support professional will be permitted to make up any missed hours in the following manner and order: 1) The School District may schedule a required makeup day on a non-student day for all employees. Employees will be notified of the district makeup day at least five (5) working days in advance. 2) If the School District does not schedule a required makeup day for all employees, principals will schedule the makeup work hours and determine the work assignment.

Section 2. Lunch Period: Educational support professionals are entitled to an unpaid duty-free lunch period if they are employed a minimum of 6 hours per day. This clause can be modified by mutual agreement between employee and the building principal or ESP supervisor.

Section 3. Unusual Situation: In the event of an unusual or emergency situation that requires the loss of lunch period, the educational support professional and the principal shall mutually remedy the lost time situation; (i.e. exchange time, early dismissal, payment of wages for lost time, etc.).

Section 4. Overtime: Hours worked in more than one educational support professional assignment over 40 hours per week will be considered overtime, paid at a wage of one and one-half times the individual rate.

Section 5. Notification of Work on Non-Student Contact Days: Educational support professionals work on days students are in school. Exceptions may exist, pending principal approval. An attempt shall be made to notify the educational support professionals one (1) week in advance if the educational support professional is to work on a non-student contact day.

ARTICLE VII LEAVES

Section 1. Sick Leave:

Subd. 1. Earned Sick Leave: A regular employee shall earn sick leave at the rate of one (1) day for each month in the employ of the School District for a total of ten (10) days per year for those employed for the full school year. Sick leave shall accrue on the first workday of each month of employment. A day for the purposes of this Article shall be equivalent to the number of hours per day that the employee is regularly employed at the time when said day of sick leave accrues. Routine medical/dental appointments should be scheduled outside of regular work hours whenever possible. The school district may require an employee to furnish a medical or dental verification that the employee could not schedule the routine appointment outside of the employee's regular work hours.

Subd. 2. Maximum Accrual: Unused sick leave days may accumulate to a maximum credit of one hundred (100) days of sick leave per employee.

Subd. 3. Medical Certification: The school district may require an employee to furnish a medical certificate from a qualified physician as evidence of illness or when sick leave trends or patterns occur, indicating that such absence was due to illness, in order to qualify for sick leave pay. However, the final determination as to eligibility of an employee for sick leave is reserved to the school district. In the event that a medical certificate will be required for an absence or future absences, the employee will be so advised.

Subd. 4. Deduction: Sick leave allowed shall be deducted from the accrued sick leave days earned by the employee and must be taken in increments of at least one hour, ½ day, or full day.

Subd. 5. Approval: Sick leave pay shall be approved only upon submission of a signed request on the authorized sick leave pay request form available at the office.

Subd. 6. Total Sick Leave Compensation: In no event shall additional compensation paid to the employee by virtue of sick leave pay result in the payment of the total daily, weekly, or monthly compensation that exceeds the normal compensation of the employee.

Subd. 7. Use of Sick Leave for Family Members

- a. **For Employees Eligible to Use Sick Leave for the Care of Relatives Per MN Statute 181.9413:** The use of accumulated sick leave to care for an ill or injured family member is governed by Minnesota law.

b. For Employees Not Eligible to Use Sick Leave for the Care of Relatives Per MN Statute 181.941: An employee may use up to two (2) days per year of accumulated sick leave to attend to medical necessities of an ill spouse, parent, or adult child (not otherwise covered under state statute) including any step or foster relative in the same relationship with the employee. Each instance of usage under this provision may require the written statement of a health professional documenting the need for the attendance. Except in case of emergency, these days must have the prior approval of the Director of Human Resources. After the utilization of the above two (2) days, an employee may utilize additional accumulated sick leave for this purpose at the rate of two (2) days for each day used. No more than ten (10) days of total inclusive sick leave for this purpose may be taken per year by an employee unless approved by the Board of Education.

- Day 1 = 1 sick leave day
- Day 2 = 1 sick leave day
- Day 3 = 2 sick leave days
- Day 4 = 2 sick leave days
- Day 5 = 2 sick leave days
- Day 6 = 2 sick leave days
- Total = 10 days of sick leave

Subd. 8. Use of Sick Leave for Child: Employees may use sick leave for absences due to illness or injury to the employee's child. For purposes of this subdivision, "child" means an individual under 18 years of age or an individual under age 20 who is still attending secondary school.

Section 2. Worker's Compensation: Pursuant to M.S. 176, an employee injured on the job in the service of the school district and collecting workers compensation insurance, may draw sick leave and receive full salary from the school district, their salary to be reduced by an amount equal to the insurance payments and only that fraction of the days not covered by insurance will be deducted from their accrued sick leave.

Section 3. Paid Holidays:

Subd. 1. Paid Holidays: Employees shall be granted the following eight (8) paid holidays: Thanksgiving Day, day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, President's Day, Friday during Spring Break and Memorial Day.

Subd. 2. School in Session: The school district reserves the right, if school is in session, to cancel any of the above holidays and establish another holiday in lieu thereof.

Subd. 3. Weekends: Holidays falling on a weekend will be observed on a day established by the school district.

Section 4. Court and Jury Leaves: An employee shall be allowed to be absent from work if subpoenaed for any court appearance or if required to serve on jury duty. During said absence the employee shall be paid their regular salary less any compensation received as a result of said court appearance. Prior to receipt of salary, the employee shall endorse the court payment check to the school district or provide the district with other verification acceptable by the district.

Section 5. Bereavement Leave: In the event of the death of wife, husband, father, mother, son or daughter, including any step or foster relative in the same relationship with the employee, each regularly employed educational support professional will have in each case up to five (5) school days per year, non-accumulative and may include non-consecutive day(s), without salary deductions. In the event of death of brother, sister, mother-in-law, or father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent or grandchild, including any step or foster relative in the same relationship with the employee, the number of days without salary deduction shall be three (3) days in each case per year, non-accumulative and may include non-consecutive day(s). Non-consecutive day(s) are subject to the written prior approval of the District Human Resources Director and are not subject to the grievance procedure. Non-consecutive day(s) may not carryover to the next "school" year. Bereavement leave may not be used for intermittent grieving not related to the time of death or memorial service(s). Bereavement leave shall not be impacted by paid leaves of absence, weekends, or holidays during active employment as long as it follows the provisions above.

Upon the approval of the Director of Human Resources, whose decision is final and binding and not subject to the grievance procedure, further necessary time beyond that already provided above or bereavement time off for the funeral of other relatives or close friends may be allowed from the educational support professional's sick leave accumulation.

Educational support professionals who were regularly employed during the previous school year and assigned to work for extended time during the subsequent summer will be granted access to bereavement leave.

Section 6. Emergency Leave: (For Employees with less than four (4) continuous years of service only) A maximum of one (1) paid day per year usage of leaves may be taken in two-hour increments and shall be granted at the discretion of the Director of Human Resources. Emergency leave days will be charged against the employee's accumulated sick leave. The following situations will be considered appropriate requests for emergency leave provided they cannot be accommodated outside of the employee's normal duty day.

1. Closing for sale or purchase of a principal residence.
2. Court proceeding involving an adoption, juvenile delinquency or divorce, when a party to the proceedings.
3. Wedding in the immediate family.
4. Emergency causing serious physical damage to principal residence.

A request for emergency leave must be made in writing to the Director of Human Resources at least 3 days in advance, except in the case of an emergency.

Section 7. Vacation Leave:

Subd. 1. Requests: Reasons for vacation leave need not be disclosed, however requests must be made in writing to the Director of Human Resources at least three (3) working days in advance, except in the case of an emergency. No more than ten (10) educational support professionals district wide shall take vacation leave on any given day.

Subd. 2. Accrual-Minimum of four (4) Years Service: Educational support professionals with a minimum of four (4) years of service to the District will be granted one (1) day annually of vacation leave. Educational support professionals employed prior to January 1 in a school year will be granted a year of service credit for that year. Educational support professionals employed after January 1 will not be granted a year of service credit for that year.

Subd. 3. Accrual-Minimum of nine (9) Years Service: Educational support professionals with nine (9) or more years of service to the District will be granted two (2) days annually of vacation leave. Educational support professionals employed prior to January 1 in a school year will be granted a year of service credit for that year. Educational support professionals employed after January 1 will not be granted a year of service credit for that year.

Subd. 4. Incentive Vacation Day: As of July 1 of each year, an educational support professional utilizing three (3) days or less of sick (ESST)/emergency/vacation/short-term/bereavement/unpaid leave during the previous school year, shall be granted one (1) additional day of vacation leave for the subsequent school year. Eligibility for the incentive day begins with the first year of service. Education support professionals hired after October 1 will not be eligible for a year of service for incentive day purposes.

Subd. 5. Vacation Parameters: Vacation leave shall not generally be granted in the first ten (10) days or the final ten (10) days of each school year, unless specifically approved by the Director of Human Resources.

Subd. 6. Maximum Accrual and Usage: Educational support professionals may accumulate and carry over up to seven (7) days of vacation leave and/or incentive vacation days. Vacation leave allowed shall be deducted from the accrued vacation leave days earned by the employee and must be taken in one-half (1/2) or full day increments.

Subd. 7. Resignation and Termination of Employment: Educational support professionals who give at least fourteen (14) calendar days notice shall be eligible to be paid for earned but unused vacation. An ESP may elect a lump sum payment for accrued vacation following the fourteen (14) days or may extend the resignation date by the number of their accrued

vacation days. An educational support professional who does not give fourteen (14) calendar days notice shall not be paid for earned but unused vacation. An educational support professional who is discharged for just cause, will not be eligible to be paid for earned but unused vacation. In order to be eligible for holiday pay, an employee must work their regularly scheduled work day the day after the holiday unless they are on an approved paid leave.

Section 8. Other Leaves: Application for leaves of absence may be considered by the Board of Education or the Director of Human Resources individually upon their merit. Educational support professionals on leaves will be granted a temporary leave of absence and shall retain all benefits accrued prior to their leave and shall retain all seniority accrued during their leave. No credit shall accrue, or district contribution for benefits shall be paid for the period of time when an employee is on an unpaid board-approved leave, not including short-term or FMLA leave. The school board shall not, in any event, be required to grant any leave more than twelve (12) months in duration. Example of unpaid leave: family leave, long term medical, public office leave and other leaves not provided in the agreement but considered worthy of consideration by the Board of Education or the Director of Human Resources.

Short-term Leave: Educational Support Professionals may take short-term leave without pay up to two (2) days per year, non-accumulative that may be taken non-consecutively. Short-term leave shall not generally be granted the first ten (10) days of school nor the last ten (10) days of school unless specifically approved by the Director of Human Resources, whose decision is final and binding and not subject to the grievance procedure. Requests for short-term leave will be made ten (10) days in advance except in the case of emergencies. Any such usage of short-term leave must include the provision that the ESP must have used (or been pre-approved for usage of) all available vacation days.

Section 9. Disability Leave for Pregnancy:

Subd. 1. Maternity Leave: If the reason for the family leave is occasioned by pregnancy, the educational support professional shall provide at the time of the leave application, a statement from her physician indicating the expected date of delivery. If a educational support professional who has requested and been granted family leave because of pregnancy delivers prior to the scheduled beginning date of her family leave, she shall be eligible for sick leave in accordance with the provisions of Section 1 until the scheduled beginning date of her family leave. An educational support professional is not, however, eligible for sick leave benefits after the effective date of the family leave.

Subd. 2. Leave Adjustment: The school district may adjust the proposed beginning or ending date of a family leave so that the dates of the leave are coincident with some natural break in the school year; i.e. winter vacation, spring vacation, semester break or quarter break, end of a grading period, end of the school year, or the like.

Subd. 3. Leave Restrictions: In making a determination concerning the commencement and duration of a family leave, the school board shall not, in any event, be required to:

- a. Grant any leave more than twelve (12) months in duration.
- b. Permit the educational support professional to return to his or her employment prior to the date designated in the request for family leave.

An educational support professional shall, however, if the request for family leave is occasioned by the educational support professional's pregnancy, be entitled to a family leave of at least one (1) year, subject to adjusting the ending date of the leave pursuant to Subd. 2 above.

Subd. 4. Failure to Return: Failure of the educational support professional to return pursuant to the date determined under this section shall constitute grounds for termination unless the school district and the educational support professional mutually agree to an extension in the leave.

Subd. 5. Probationary Periods: The parties agree that the applicable periods of probation are intended to mean the periods of actual service enabling the school district to have opportunity to evaluate a educational support professional's performance. The parties agree therefore, that periods of time for which the educational support professional is on family leave shall not be counted in determining the completion of the probationary period.

Subd. 6. Experience Credit and Leave Time Accumulated: An educational support professional who returns from family leave within the provisions of this Section shall retain all previous experience credit and any unused leave time accumulated under the provisions of this Agreement at the commencement of the beginning of the leave. The educational support professional shall not accrue additional experience credit or leave time during the period of absence for disability leave.

Section 10. Union Leave: Education Minnesota – Buffalo ESP shall be granted up to twelve (12) days of paid leave during the term of this agreement to conduct the business of the union. The twelve (12) days will be with full reimbursement to the School District for the salary of the substitute. Thereafter, any Education Minnesota – Buffalo ESP leave shall be without pay. The union president will designate these days and in no instance will any one individual be granted more than three (3) days per year. Absences for union leave must be taken in increments of at least one hour, ½ day, or full day. Requests for such leave will be made to the Director of Human Resources at least three (3) days in advance by the union president. The request for three (3) days can be waived in the event of an emergency or special circumstance as determined by the Director of Human Resources.

Section 11. Continuation of Insurance: Any employee receiving an approved leave of absence from the Board may continue in the group insurance plan for the duration of the leave of absence by paying their own premium to the district in advance of each month. The provision of the respective insurance policy will supersede this clause.

Section 12. School Conference and Activity Leave: The District shall grant an employee an unpaid leave of up to a total of sixteen (16) hours during any 12 (twelve)-month period to attend school conferences or school related activities related to the employee's child(ren) who are under 18 years of age or under age 20 who still attend secondary school, provided the conferences or school-related activities cannot be scheduled during non-work hours. The Educational Support Professional may use accrued vacation. When the leave cannot be scheduled during non-work hours and the need for the leave is foreseeable, the employee must provide reasonable prior notice of the leave and make a reasonable effort to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operation of the school. This Subd. is in accord with M.S. 181.9412, School Conference and Activities Leave.

Section 13. Leave Increments: Leave outlined in ARTICLE VII may be taken in increments outlined in this agreement or other increment if required under statute.

ARTICLE VIII PROBATION

Section 1.

Subd. 1. Probation: Any new educational support professional employed under the provisions of this Agreement shall serve a probationary period of one school year. ESPs hired after the start of a school year shall serve a probationary period of nine (9) working months. The school district shall have the right to suspend without pay or discharge such employee during this probationary period. Each probationary educational support professional shall receive periodic feedback concerning his/her performance from his/her supervisor during this period.

Subd. 2. Change of Educational Support Professional Assignment: In addition to the initial probationary period, a non-probationary employee transferred to a different assignment shall serve a new probationary period of three (3) calendar work months in any such new assignment. During this three (3) work month probationary period, if it is determined by the school district that the employee's performance in the new assignment is unsatisfactory, the school district shall have the right to reassign the employee to his/her former assignment. This subdivision does not imply loss of seniority as per Article X.

**ARTICLE IX
PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS, DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE**

Section 1.

Subd. 1. Performance Expectations: An administrator may provide expectations with an employee through a non-disciplinary letter of expectations. This letter will not be included in the employee's district personnel file, and will be documented at the employee's site. It is not subject to the grievance process. The employee may request to review the letter annually, but it will be reviewed with the employee at their performance evaluation. If improvements have been made, a letter documenting the improvements will be included with the letter.

Subd. 2. Discharge or Suspension: An employee who has completed the probationary period may be suspended without pay, discharged or disciplined only for just cause. An employee who has completed the probationary period and is suspended without pay, discharged or otherwise disciplined shall have access to the grievance procedure.

Subd. 3. Progressive Discipline: The School District recognizes the concept of progressive discipline consisting of: 1) oral reprimand; 2) written reprimand; 3) suspension without pay; and 4) discharge. Notwithstanding this concept, the School District reserves, in its sole discretion, the right to impose discipline at any level.

Section 2. Resignations: Employees shall give two (2) weeks written notice before terminating employment.

Section 3. Initial Employment and Level Changes: The Board of Education reserves the right to place new employees at steps higher than the first. Training and number of qualified applicants will be used to establish starting rates.

Section 4. Failure to Report to Work: An employee who does not report to work for three (3) consecutive days and also does not report their absence for these days shall be deemed to have resigned from their position.

**ARTICLE X
SENIORITY RIGHTS**

Section 1. Seniority: Seniority shall be based on the length of continuous service in District 877 as an educational support professional from date of last employment in the district. Seniority shall continue for all approved leaves of absence.

Section 2. Layoff and Recall: The Board recognizes that the purpose of seniority is to provide a declared policy as to the order of layoff and recall of employees. The Union recognizes that consideration must be given to special skills; such as those associated with special education support professionals, Title I, clerical, etc.; and the number of hours

of employment. Subject to consideration of special skills and number of hours of employment, the last educational support professional hired shall be the first educational support professional laid off.

Any educational support professional who has been laid off, or whose position has been terminated, shall be placed on recall and retain recall rights for twelve (12) months. An educational support professional on recall shall not be required to accept another position with fewer hours than previously held. Educational support professionals on recall shall be entitled to be notified of all District educational support professional job postings, unless a educational support professional on recall has failed to accept two (2) equivalent position offers from the District, after which the District's responsibility for notification of the recalled educational support professional shall cease. It is the responsibility of each educational support professional on recall to keep the District informed of his/her current mailing address and home phone number.

An employee who is properly discharged or resigns shall forfeit seniority and in the event of re-employment, seniority rights shall begin as of the date of re-employment.

Section 3. Seniority Date: Employees shall acquire seniority upon completion of the probationary period as defined in this Agreement and upon acquiring seniority, the seniority date shall relate back to the first date of service. If more than one employee commences work on the same date, seniority ranking for such employee shall be determined by granting the higher seniority ranking to the employee with the higher numerical last four digits of his/her social security number.

Section 4. Publication of Seniority List: On or before January 15 of each year, the School District shall prepare a seniority list of all educational support professionals covered by this Agreement. The seniority list shall establish seniority by name and seniority date with the educational support professional with greatest seniority listed first. This seniority list shall be provided to the exclusive representative and posted by the School District in the appropriate area for educational support professionals at each worksite. Educational support professionals shall have twenty (20) days after the posting date to challenge their rank or status on the seniority list, and absence of such challenge shall constitute full agreement by the employee.

Section 5. Notice of Layoff: In the event of a lay-off, the School District shall notify the Union and affected employee(s) at the earliest opportunity.

Section 6. Layoff Process: In the event of a layoff, the District agrees to meet and confer with the exclusive representative to discuss recommendations prior to carrying out the layoff process. A layoff will be defined as discontinuance or reduction of position due to: loss of federal or state funding, lack of pupils, deficit in budget projections, change of program, change in responsibilities, cross disabilities per assignment, consolidation or merger of classes and programs, and program effectiveness. A reduction of an individual educational support professional's hours of forty-five (45) minutes or less or sixty (60) minutes or less of special education transportation minutes for those whose primary assignment is not transportation per day will not constitute a layoff.

ARTICLE XI TRANSFER POLICIES

Section 1. Vacancies: All educational support professional are entitled to have knowledge of educational support professional vacancies.

Section 2. Postings: New positions or vacancies of more than thirty (30) working days shall be posted on the district's website and a district e-mail notice sent to staff. Postings during the school year shall be for a period of three (3) working days and five (5) working days during the summer.

Section 3. Written Request to Transfer: An employee may at any time request a transfer to any posted vacancy. An online internal transfer request application shall be submitted to Director of Human Resources. All timely applications from members of the bargaining unit will receive consideration; however, granting of such requests is not mandatory but at the discretion of the Administrator. Internal candidates who apply using the online internal transfer request application form will be notified when the position is filled.

Section 4. Additional Hours of Employment and Filling Vacancies: Administration will attempt to offer additional hours of employment to currently employed educational support professionals when openings occur. When additional hours occur or vacancies are filled, the following criteria ranked in order of importance will be used:

- a. qualifications
- b. coinciding schedules
- c. seniority

Section 5. Temporary Assignments: An educational support professional may be temporarily assigned by mutual agreement to another task for up to thirty (30) consecutive working days.

Section 6. Mutually Agreed Upon Transfer: By mutual agreement of the union, acting on behalf of its member, the School District and affected supervisor(s) may transfer an employee to a position for which he/she is qualified. Such transfers shall not be used as a disciplinary tool or be the result of disciplinary action.

ARTICLE XII SEVERANCE PAY

Section 1. Eligibility: Educational support professionals who have been continuously employed in the school district at least fifteen (15) years and are at least 55 years of age, shall be eligible for severance pay upon submission of written resignation accepted by the school district.

Section 2. Calculation: An educational support professional shall be eligible to receive as severance pay, the amount obtained by multiplying 75% of the employee's unused number of accumulated sick days times the employee's regular daily rate of pay.

If at the time of retirement, an educational support professional started the year with the maximum sick leave accrual and used sick leave during the year of retirement, at the discretion of the Director of Human Resources, up to ten (10) days may be added back in the severance pay calculation. In no event will the accumulated sick days exceed the maximum accrual in ARTICLE VII, LEAVES, Subd. 2. This provision is not subject to the grievance procedure.

Section 3. Hourly Rate and Days Worked: In applying these provisions, a day shall be equivalent to the average number of hours per day that the employee was regularly employed in their last five (5) years of employment prior to resignation. The rate of pay shall be that hourly rate being paid to the educational support professional at the end of the school year.

Section 4. Payment Date: All severance payments of eligible participants shall be contributed into the district sponsored Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) on behalf of the qualifying participant. Payment shall be made in one lump sum on January 15th following retirement.

Section 5. Severance Cap: This amount will not exceed \$15,000.

Section 6. Exclusion: Sections 1-5 shall apply only to educational support professionals whose service began prior to July 1, 2011. For educational support professionals whose employment began after this date, the provisions of Sections 1-5 will not be applicable.

Section 7. Health Insurance Continuation: Employees who retire and do not meet the severance eligibility criteria in Section 1. and are enrolled in the district group health and hospitalization plan prior to retirement may elect to continue participation in the plan, at the employee's expense, until the employee reaches the age of Medicare eligibility if they are receiving a disability benefit or an annuity from a MN public pension plan as outlined in Minnesota Statute § 471.61.

ARTICLE XIII GRIEVANCE AND ARBITRATION

Section 1. Grievance Definition: A "grievance" shall mean an allegation by an educational support professional resulting in a dispute or disagreement between the educational support professional employee and the school district as to the interpretation or application of terms and conditions of employment insofar as such matters are contained in this Agreement. A grievance shall occur when it should be reasonably recognized that it has occurred.

Section 2. Representatives: The educational support professional, administrator, or school board may be represented during any step of the procedure by any person or agent designated by such party to act in their behalf.

Section 3. Definitions and Interpretations:

Subd. 1. Extension: Time limits specified in this Agreement may be extended by mutual agreement.

Subd. 2. Days: Reference to days regarding time periods in this procedure shall refer to working days. A working day is defined according to the school calendar for ESP unit members except during summer break when all week days not designated as holidays by state law are work days.

Subd. 3. Computation of Time: In computing any period of time prescribed or allowed by procedures herein, the date of the act, event, or default for which the designated period of time begins to run shall not be included.

The last day of the period so computed shall be counted, unless it is a Saturday, a Sunday, or a legal holiday, in that event the period runs until the end of the next day which is not a Saturday, a Sunday or a legal holiday.

Subd. 4. Filing and Postmark: The filing or service of any notice or document herein shall be timely if it bears a post mark of the United States Postal Service within the time period or if verifiable through other means.

Subd. 5. Waivers of Steps: Provided both parties agree in writing, Level I (one) and/or II (two) of the grievance procedures may be bypassed and the grievance brought directly to the next level.

Section 4. Time Limitations and Waiver: Grievances shall not be valid for consideration unless the grievance is submitted in writing to the principal, setting forth the facts and the specific provision of the Agreement allegedly violated and the particular relief sought within twenty (20) days after the date of the event giving rise to the grievance occurred. Failure to appeal a grievance from one level to another within the time periods hereafter provided shall constitute a waiver of the grievance informally between the educational support professional's and the school board's designee.

If an educational support professional feels there is a grievance, the educational support professional should first discuss the matter with the building principal, site administrator, or designated administrative supervisor to whom the educational support professional is directly responsible, in an effort to resolve the problem informally.

If, after such discussion, the educational support professional is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, the educational support professional shall have the right to have a Union Representative assist in further efforts to resolve the problem informally with the building principal, site administrator or designated administrative supervisor.

Section 5. Adjustment of Grievance: Any written grievance submitted will be with the consent of Education Minnesota – Buffalo ESP. An ESP unit member filing a written grievance without the consent of EM-B ESP will bear all costs of the grievance. Any decision on any grievance at any level without the presence of EM-B ESP will have no bearing on this Agreement, or on any future grievance so filed with the consent of EM-

B ESP. The School Board, the ESP unit member, and EM-B ESP will attempt to adjust grievances which may arise during the course of employment of any ESP unit member within the School District in the following manner:

Subd. 1. Level I: If the grievance is not resolved through informal discussion, the building principal, site administrator, or designated administrative supervisor shall give a written decision on the grievance to the parties involved within five (5) days after receipt of the written grievance.

Subd. 2. Level II: In the event the grievance is not resolved in Level I, the decision rendered may be appealed to the superintendent of schools, provided such appeal is made in writing within five (5) days after receipt of the decision in Level I. If a grievance is properly appealed to the superintendent, the superintendent or designee shall set a time to meet regarding the grievance within ten (10) days after receipt of the appeal. Within five (5) days after the meeting, the superintendent or designee shall issue a decision in writing to the parties involved.

Subd. 3. Level III: In the event the grievance is not resolved in Level II, the decision rendered may be appealed to representatives of the school board, provided such appeal is made in writing within five (5) days after receipt of the decision in Level II. If a grievance is appealed to the school board, the school board shall set a time to hear the grievance within ten (10) days after receipt of the appeal. Within ten (10) days after the meeting, the school board shall issue its decision in writing to the parties involved.

Section 6. Denial of Grievance: Failure by the building principal, site administrator, or designated administrative supervisor, superintendent, school board or its representative to issue a decision within the time periods provided herein shall constitute a denial of the grievance and the educational support professional may appeal it to the next level.

Section 7. Rights of Educational Support Professionals to Participate: No reprisal of any kind shall be taken by either party or by any member of the administration against any party in interest, any Union Representative, any member of the Committee or any other participant in the grievance procedure by reason of such participation.

Section 8. Arbitration Procedures: In the event the educational support professional and the school board are unable to resolve any grievance, the grievance may be submitted to arbitration as defined herein:

Subd. 1. Request: A request to submit a grievance to arbitration must be in writing signed by the aggrieved party and representative if desired, and such request must be filed in the office of the superintendent within ten (10) days following the decision in Level III of the grievance procedure.

Subd. 2. Prior Procedure Required: No grievance shall be considered by the arbitrator, which has not been first duly processed in accordance with the grievance procedure and appeal provisions.

Subd. 3. Selection of Arbitrator: Upon the proper submission of a grievance under the terms of this procedure, the parties shall, within **ten (10) days** after the request to arbitrate, attempt to agree upon the selection of the arbitrator. If no agreement on an arbitrator is reached, either party may request the Bureau of Mediation Services (B.M.S.) to appoint an arbitrator, pursuant to M.S. 179.70, Subd. 4, providing such request is made within **fifteen (15) days** after the receipt of said request. Failure to agree upon an arbitrator or the failure to request an arbitrator from the B.M.S. within the time periods provided herein shall constitute a waiver of the grievance.

Subd. 4. Hearing: The grievance shall be heard by a single arbitrator and both parties may be represented by such person or persons as they may choose and designate, and the parties shall have the right to a hearing at which time both parties will have the opportunity to submit evidence, offer testimony, and make oral or written arguments relating to the issues before the arbitrator. The proceedings before the arbitrator shall be a hearing de novo.

Subd. 5. Decision: The decision by the arbitrator shall be rendered after the close of the hearing. Decisions by the arbitrator in cases properly before him/her shall be final and binding upon the parties, as provided in M.S. 179.70, Subd. 5.

Subd. 6. Expenses: Each party shall bear its own expenses in connection with arbitration including expenses relating to the party's representatives, witnesses, and any other expenses, which the party incurs in connection with presenting its case in arbitration. A transcript or recording shall be made of the hearing at the request of either party. The parties shall share equally fees and expenses of the arbitrator, the cost of the transcript of recording if requested by both parties, and any other expenses, which the parties mutually agree are necessary for the conduct of the arbitration.

Subd. 7. Jurisdiction: The arbitrator shall have jurisdiction over disputes or disagreements relating to grievances properly before the arbitrator pursuant to the terms of the procedure. The jurisdiction of the arbitrator shall not extend to proposed changes in terms and conditions of employment as defined herein and contained in this written agreement; nor shall an arbitrator have jurisdiction over any grievance which has not been submitted to arbitration in compliance with the terms of the grievance and arbitration procedure as outlined herein; nor shall the jurisdiction of the arbitrator extend to matters of inherent managerial policy, which shall include but are not limited to such areas of discretion or policy as the functions and programs of the employer, its overall budget, utilization of technology, the organizational structure, and selection and direction and

number of personnel. In considering any issue in dispute, in its order the arbitrator shall give due consideration to the statutory rights and obligations of the public school boards to efficiently manage and conduct its operation within the legal limitations surrounding the financing of such operations.

ARTICLE XIV DURATION

Section 1. Term and Reopening Negotiations: This Agreement shall remain in full force and effect for a period commencing on its date of execution, through June 30, 2026, and thereafter until modifications are made pursuant to the P.E.L.R.A. During the duration of this Agreement advancement on any salary schedule shall be subject to the terms of this Agreement. In the event a successor Agreement is not entered into prior to the expiration of this Agreement, an employee shall be compensated according to his/her current rate until a successor Agreement is entered into. If either party desires to modify or amend this Agreement commencing at this expiration, it shall give written notice of such intent no later than 90 days prior to said expiration. Unless otherwise mutually agreed, the parties shall commence negotiations within 30 days of filing the intent to negotiate.

Section 2. Effect: This Agreement constitutes the full and complete Agreement between the school district and the exclusive representative representing the employees. The provisions herein relating to terms and conditions of employment supersede any and all prior Agreements, resolutions, practices, school district policies, rules or regulations concerning terms and conditions of employment inconsistent with these provisions.

Section 3. Finality: Any matters relating to the terms and conditions of employment, whether or not referred to in this Agreement, shall not be open for negotiation during the term of this Agreement, unless mutually agreed.

Section 4. Severability: The provisions of this Agreement shall be severable, and if any provision thereof or the application of any such provision under any circumstances is held invalid, it shall not affect any other provisions of this Agreement or the application of any provision thereof.

Section 5. Retroactive Pay: Retroactive pay will be received by employees working under an expired contract except those employees who voluntarily terminated their employment or employees whose employment was terminated by the District. Employees (at least 55 years old with 15 years of service) who voluntarily retire with at least two weeks notice or employees who resign effective at the end of the contract year will receive retro payment.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The parties have executed this Agreement as follows:

Education MN – Buffalo Educational Support Professionals

214 1st Avenue NE, Buffalo, MN
Address



President


Chief Employee Negotiator


Negotiations Secretary

Independent School District 877

214 1st Avenue NE, Buffalo, MN
Address


Chairperson


Clerk


Chief Board Negotiator

Dated this 24th day of February, 2025.

Dated this 24th day of February, 2025.

Schedule A

Salary Schedules

2025-26

Step	1	2	3	4
	\$18.55	\$19.25	\$20.51	\$23.00

Longevity:

7 Years	\$.46
10 years	\$1.04
15 years	\$1.97
20 years	\$2.73 (Not Accumulative)

Longevity Increment: Educational support professionals will receive a longevity increment commencing at the beginning of their respective year of continuous service to the District.

Increment movements will only take place on July 1 of each year. Those employed before January 1 of that year shall move on July 1, those employed after January 1 will move the following year.

COTAs shall receive \$3.00 per hour in addition to their hourly step rate.

Insurance Benefits

2025-26

Income Protection	\$.49
Health	
*Family Coverage	\$17,845
*Single Coverage	\$10,749
	<i>*Not to exceed 100% of the premium and deductible</i>
Life Insurance	\$60.60