

# Fresno Unified, teachers union head toward fact-finding in contract talks

BY BRIANNA VACCARI

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<http://www.fresnobee.com/2014/04/14/3877688/fresno-unified-teachers-union.html?sp=/99/217/&ihp=1>

Fresno Unified School District Superintendent Michael Hanson said Monday that the district and the Fresno Teachers Association have agreed on a third-party mediator to move forward with the fact-finding process for contract negotiations.

"We think we have an agreed-upon person," Hanson said, referring to the mediator on the fact-finding panel. Hanson did not reveal the name of the mediator, but the district hopes to receive official notice on the certified parties early next week.

The fact-finding process would involve a three-person panel: one person from the district, one from the teachers association and the mediator.

Fresno Unified and FTA completed the last of four mediation efforts Friday, but came to no official agreement over wages and benefits. Hanson said the two sides have reached tentative agreements on evaluations, shared decision making, early childhood education and working conditions, but salary and benefits are issues where the two sides have not been able to "bridge very significant gaps."

During the fact-finding process, both parties will present their case at a hearing. The fact-finding panel will issue its findings and recommendations in a report to motivate each party to agree on a settlement. Both sides will receive the report before it is available to the public 10 days later.

If the district and FTA fail to reach an agreement, the district will implement its proposal and the union will have the opportunity to strike.

Hanson said a date or timeline for the fact-finding process will be determined based on the third-party mediator's availability.

The most recent offer from the district includes an 8.2% raise over three years, dating to the start of the 2013-14 school year. It would extend the duty day at all campuses, and teachers who participate in a school improvement program at 40 elementary and middle schools will get an additional 10% pay increase. Class sizes will be reduced in some elementary grades.

The union wants raises amounting to 15.5% over two years, in addition to a 2.7% hike going back to 2012-13. The association also wants lower class sizes in all grades.

*The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6279 or [bvaccari@fresnobee.com](mailto:bvacari@fresnobee.com).*