

7 Essential Facts About Collective Bargaining

“World Class Education Starts with a Fair Contract”

What is Collective Bargaining?

The New Law

Virginia law now allows public sector employees to negotiate with their employers over the terms of their contracts. The new law allows unions to represent workers in this process to create legally binding contracts.

Is This Normal?

Absolutely. Nation-wide, the vast majority of states allow their educators to participate in the collective bargaining process. It is a **normal** labor practice. The contracts of Virginia educators, however, are not normal. These one page documents are designed by lawyers and bosses, not the people who actually staff our schools.

Will GCPS Participate?

GEA can win the right to collectively bargain through obtaining a resolution from the GCPS School Board. The law in Virginia states that local school boards have the option on whether to bargain or not.

How Can We Win a Resolution?

As GCPS employees, we need to show our overwhelming support for the collective bargaining resolution. Additionally, we need to show the School Board that collective bargaining is a win for the **entire** community.

Learn the Facts!



Truth #1: The collective bargaining process is built on collaboration and compromise

Unfortunately, the current contract process is dangerously one-sided. In the present moment, school boards and their attorneys are able to dictate whatever contract terms they want without even consulting rank and file educators. The result is that educator working conditions (and thus student learning conditions) are significantly compromised. Current contracts marginalize and exploit educators. With collective bargaining, education workers will have a voice and can work **together** with the school board to create a fair contract all parties can agree on.



Truth #2: Unions bargain for the common good

Did you know that educator unions in Los Angeles and Chicago bargained for more social workers, school nurses, and green spaces for their students? If given a seat at the table, educator unions have the ability to negotiate contracts in the best interest of workers AND community members. Nobody interacts with students and parents more than the rank and file educators of a school system. Therefore, educators know what is best for their students and can help craft contracts that allow them to properly serve those students and parents.

Truth #3: Collective bargaining is a standard labor practice across America



Collective bargaining is **not** some sort of "radical" labor policy found only in states like New York, New Jersey, or California. School boards in the vast majority of US states regularly engage in collective bargaining with their public sector employees. Bargaining in public education is prohibited in only seven states.

Collective bargaining has nothing to do with giving educators the right to strike, nor does it have anything to do with Virginia's "right to work" status. Those are two separate laws that Virginia **still has** in place. Allowing collective bargaining to take place does not force workers to join the union (a violation of "right to work") nor does it allow them to go on strike. In fact, bringing workers to the table can help **prevent strikes**.



Truth #4:

Collective bargaining does not give unions the right to negotiate a locality's budget

In Virginia, local boards of supervisors and city/town councils have the ultimate authority in allocating funds to all parts of local government. During the collective bargaining process, the union cannot raise taxes or dictate to local governments how much money they must give the schools. Rather, unions must work within the fiscal realities of their community and negotiate with the school board to determine how to best allocate the amount of money given to them by their local board of supervisors or city/town councils.

Truth #5:

Collective bargaining helps recruit the best educators and allows localities to be competitive.

With over 1,000 teaching positions unfilled across Virginia, localities must take substantive action to keep teachers in their divisions and prevent them from leaving the Commonwealth. Simply put, the best contracts are contracts negotiated by unions, and **the best contracts attract the best educators.**



Truth #6:

Collective bargaining helps prevent educator "burnout."

It's important to understand that negotiating benefits is only one fraction of what occurs at the bargaining table. The rest has to do with workplace climate. Educators who have to worry about their working conditions are simply less effective workers. Because educator working conditions = student learning conditions, contracts must be crafted to ensure employees are not being exploited or marginalized. Sadly, many Virginia educators are marginalized and exploited. Perhaps that is why 22% of Virginia teachers do not return to their school after their first year of teaching. After four years, that number jumps to 50%.

Truth #7:

Collective bargaining helps ensure education workers are fairly compensated

Did you know that despite Virginia being the 12th wealthiest state in America, Virginia teacher pay ranks 32nd nationally? Educators don't expect to become rich, but they also don't expect to have to work several jobs just to pay their bills. They also don't expect to work for free. Sadly, many educators are not compensated for extra duties or forced to work well outside their contract hours. The reason for all of this? Unfair and inadequate contracts. Collective bargaining can help bring fair pay to ***all workers*** within a school district.