

Q&A on the Contract For Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists

Question 1: Issues Related to Conversion to a 10-Month School Year: Accrued Sick and Vacation Days, Personal Days, Part-Timers; Personal Time; Religious Observance Days

What will happen with accrued sick and vacation days? Will we be able to save them for maternity leave? What happens if I have to take off more than three personal days? Since part-time employees are technically hourly, will they get paid if they don't work summers? What about their benefits if they don't work? What happens to personal time that I am using now (with permission from the COIB)? Do we have religious observance days now like teachers since we cannot use vacation or self-treat?

The Memorandum of Agreement recognizes that there are a variety of issues that will need to be addressed in the change from a 12-month to a 10-month year. The issues raised in the questions above that are related to the conversion of the work year will be addressed in meetings the union will hold with the DOE. Specifically, the MOA states, "The parties will also meet to discuss any issues related to the change of nurses and therapists from a 12-month to a 10-month work year."

Question 2: Last Two Years Summer Work

Will we get overtime retro pay for the last two summers we worked since the contract goes back two years?

The Memorandum of Agreement states that the 10-month work year for therapists is effective for the 2005-2006 school year. Therefore, there is no overtime retroactive pay for the last two summers.

Question 3: Continuing Education Requirements

How will we fulfill our continuing education requirements? Can we still go to courses? Teachers are able to attend courses and conferences at the discretion of their principal; is this how it will work for us?

Continuing education requirements for occupational and physical therapists were not addressed in the negotiations for this contract. Conference days are not contractual. The MOA does not change the manner in which the DOE handles these issues.

Question 4: Pay for Summer Work

What is the exact rate of pay for working the summers? Is it 15% or 17% of what we earn during the school year? And will it be the same rate for everyone whether you are in regional or district schools?

The summer rate of pay is pro rata hourly pay and depends on your annual salary at the time. It is calculated by taking $1/1213^{\text{th}}$ of your annual pay. In order to determine how much you can expect to make for the summer, add your base salary and any experience and longevity differentials that you are entitled to, divide by 1213, and multiply by the number of hours that you will work in the summer. That will give you your projected summer earnings.

The “denominator” of the equation used to calculate your hourly rate was substantially improved during the negotiations to reflect the new 10 month work year. The summer rate for therapists is not structured the same as the Chapter 683 program so it is not possible to express your projected earnings as a percentage of your annual pay.

Question 5: Summer Work Assignments

How will it be decided who works during the summer program? What happens if there are not enough people who volunteer for the summer program?

Priority is given to volunteers, first with the district, then from outside the district. If there are not enough volunteers, therapists will be assigned in reverse seniority order only from the district that is running the program on a rotating basis.

Question 6: Summer Pay Credited Towards Pension

If you are on a 10-month schedule and you work over the summer, is the money you make over the summer pensionable?

Yes.

Question 7: Work Schedules

I work in a single-schedule elementary school from 8:20 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. What will be my work hours if this contract passes?

The agreement extends the work day for therapists, like that of teachers, by 10 minutes. This means that effective February 2006 the regular workday of therapists will be six hours and twenty-five minutes per day exclusive of an unpaid lunch period of thirty minutes.

For teachers, the manner in which the additional time is allocated over the course of the week differs depending on whether the teacher is in a single-session school, a multi-session school or a District 75 building or self-contained class. Further discussions are necessary to determine how the additional time will be allocated for therapists.

Question 8: Additional Time After School Dismissal

I understand that the additional time after school will be used by teachers for small group instruction, tutoring and test preparation. How are we to use it? We do not want this to be used by principals to add another treatment session.

Additional discussions with the DOE are needed to determine how Occupational and Physical Therapists will use the additional time. Your chapter will be represented at these meetings.

Question 9: Yearly Breakdown of Increase in Wages

While we are getting an increase of 11.5% over the life of the contract, how does that break down by year?

You will receive 2% on 12/1/03, 3.5% on 12/1/04, 2.3% on 11/1/05 and 3.25% on 10/1/06. When you compound these increases, your total pay increase is 11.5% over the life of the agreement.

Question 10: Long Term Prospects for Parity

Will this contract deal help us with our long-term goal of eventual parity with other DOE professionals of similar education levels?

With this contract we have gained something we've been trying to achieve for 25 years – a school year schedule that is the same as that of teachers! This is a huge first step towards achieving parity with other DOE professionals. We will meet with the DOE to take up the issues that arise from the change to a 10-month work year. All therapists should raise issues with Chapter Leader Leslie McDonnell that they would like to see addressed in those meetings.