

UNITER

A Publication of the United School Employees of Pasco

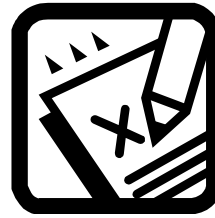


USEP

September 2026

HELP Save the Contract!

Every year, Florida public sector unions (other than police and fire unions) are required to turn in registration paperwork that shows membership density greater than 60%. Any union that fails to meet the 60% threshold must then attempt to win a Public Employee Relations Commission (PERC) Election. USEP has successfully done this the last two years. However, in 2026, Tallahassee politicians changed the rules for these elections. The new law, Senate Bill 1296, states that PERC elections only count if voter turnout for that election is at least 50% of the bargaining unit. Reaching 50% voter turnout is a significant challenge. The PERC vote is done through the mail, and some say that the envelope very much resembles junk mail. Our voter turnout in the most recent PERC elections was under 40%. To further illustrate the challenge of reaching 50% voter turnout, consider that the turnout in Pasco County August Primary Election was only 21.52%. If we lose our PERC election by not having enough employees vote, then we immediately lose our status as the bargaining agent and the Master Contract immediately goes away. The good news is that a PERC Election can be avoided by having our membership density above 60%.



What's At Risk?

Your contract is full of rights and protections that have been negotiated between USEP and the District over the years. If USEP loses our status as the official bargaining agent, then the contract would immediately no longer be in effect. The best way to protect the contract is to make sure membership density is over 60% to avoid having to go through a PERC election.

Longer Work Day?

If the contract goes away, so do your defined work hours. Right now most instructional employees work a 7.5 hour day. Instructional employees cannot be required to stay and work a longer day, but again, that's only because the contract says so. Teachers are actually exempt salaried employees under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Under federal law there is no maximum cap on how many hours the employer (the District) can make a teacher work. So, if the union goes away, then the contract goes away. Without the contract, employees could be directed to come in earlier or stay later. Employees could be directed to attend after-school events. Employees could be directed to attend PD at night after a long day teaching. Again, without a contract, there is no limit to how many hours employees could be directed to work.

Additional Work Days?

By contract, most teachers work 196 days. This includes student contact days, planning days, and paid holidays. However, without a contract, you could be

directed to work more days. District could decide to add a day or two, or even more, to the school or work year. The District could require you to attend PD during the summer. Again, without a contract, they could add more days and it would be up to them if they want to pay you more for those additional days or not.

Eat Lunch With Students?

If the contract goes away, so does your protected duty free lunch. Right now, you cannot be assigned any work during your lunch break. And that lunch break must be a minimum of 30 minutes. If the contract goes away, so does the contractually guaranteed duty free lunch. Are schools ever short-handed? Will schools start directing people to watch students during lunch time? Will employees be directed to eat lunch with students to provide supervision? This is already the norm in some places that don't have this contractual protection.

Protected Planning Time

Our contract calls for protected planning time for Instructional Employees. If the contract goes away, so does protected planning. Among other things, this could mean secondary teachers being directed to teach a 6-of-6 class period schedule or even a 7-of-7 class period schedule and/or lose any before or after school planning time. Elementary teachers could be assigned supervision duties during specials and/or lose their before or after school planning time.

USEP Lowers Dues!

Life is better with a union. However, some eligible employees have not joined USEP. We wondered why some people aren't members, so we asked. During the 2025-2026 school year, we surveyed people that were not members of USEP and learned that cost of dues was by far the number one reason provided for not joining. To address this concern, the USEP Executive Board and Representative Council voted to lower dues starting with the 2026-2027 school year.

Instructional dues are now only \$25.84 per pay period; this equals 1.4% of a starting teacher's salary. SRP dues are now only 1.4% of the SRP's straight time pay. Dues are not collected from Referendum Salary Supplements. In order to make it easier for members, dues can be paid via ACH transaction, credit card, check or cash. Utilize the QR code in the bottom-right of this page or call the USEP office at 813-996-2119 to join today and help us in our push to 60%!

Recruiter Incentive

USEP members can help protect their contract by recruiting new members. Every time a new member joins and lists a "recruiter" on their new membership form, the recruiter receives a \$100 incentive. All members are eligible for the recruiter incentive program; you do not need to be a Building Rep. USEP members are also not limited by bargaining unit or worksite. SRP members can recruit new Instructional members and Instructional members can recruit new SRP members. USEP members can also recruit employees from other worksites to join.

New members can join by scanning the QR code below or by visiting useponline.org.

Communicate with your Building Rep or the USEP office if you have any questions about the recruiter incentive program.

Join Today!

The best way to help protect your contract and career is by joining USEP. Ask your Building Rep about the new member incentive (\$\$) we are currently offering. Call the USEP office at 813-996-2119 with any questions. Use the below QR code to join:

