



**Strike Vote: Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**Lowell High School 4-7:30pm**  
**1101 Eucalyptus Drive**

## Going on Strike FAQs

### **Q. What is a strike?**

**A:** A strike, according to labor law, is any concerted effort to stop, slow down, or otherwise interrupt our “usual duties” at work. This it could include anything from a 5-minute walkout to a strike of all SFUSD educators for an indefinite length of time. A strike calls upon union members to withhold the very thing that makes them most important to their bosses: their labor. Strikes are thus the ultimate tool against management, and the weapon of last resort.

### **Q: Are we voting to strike on November 8th?**

**A:** UESF bylaws call for a two-step voting process before we go out on strike. The November 8<sup>th</sup> strike vote meeting will be the first of two votes needed to officially authorize a strike.

### **Q: What is the risk for a probationary teacher or paraeducator to cast a strike vote?**

**A:** The vote is done by secret ballot and no one will ever know how individual members have voted unless they choose to say. We need all members to vote, including probationary/non-tenured teachers and paraeducators because EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

Note that it is illegal for employers to retaliate against employees for participating in union activities. The best protection against such retaliation is for probationary/non-tenured members to show up in large numbers alongside their permanent/tenured co-workers.

### **Q: How does a strike work?**

**A:** Being on strike is a serious commitment. We all must work together to achieve a better contract and to get back to work as soon as possible. As educators, we all care very deeply about the quality of education, and our decision to withhold our labor from our students is not something anyone takes for granted. By showing up on the picket line, we are redirecting our work efforts to the strike to ensure that we have the best chance of winning a contract that will protect us and our students in the long run. Being on strike is not a vacation. All members must participate in walking picket lines in order for a stike to be successful.

### **Q: Is a strike inevitable?**

**A:** No, a strike is not inevitable. But sometimes, a strike is necessary if all other efforts to maintain our district as a place where we want to work have been exhausted. At every step along the negotiatons process, we have considered and implemented actions designed to bring us nearer to our goal, and now, we must prepare for a strike, while fully hoping that it will not be necessary. A successful strike takes many forms. But there are basic tenets to consider as we move forward:

- Striking is often the most powerful—and most disruptive—form of job action available to a union; as such, it should only be used as a last resort.
- Striking requires a great deal of organizing, effort, and dedication.

**Q: When would we actually go on strike?**

**A:** There is no easy or definitive answer for this. After completing the two-step strike vote process, UESF can call for an Unfair Labor Practice strike. Otherwise, if UESF and SFUSD are unable to reach an agreement at the bargaining table, the parties will go to impasse and mediation. If mediation fails, we will go to fact-finding. Following that, we will be strike-legal. Both of these options will be discussed on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Q: Is there financial support available to members during a strike?**

**A:** Some unions set aside a portion of their dues or set up a special assessment for a strike fund. UESF does not have a strike fund. The Bay Area Educators Credit Union offers interest-free loans for striking educators. Information is available at [www.sfbayedcu.org](http://www.sfbayedcu.org). Additionally, the AFT has a special strike loan program. A cornerstone of AFT's ongoing efforts to develop and support autonomous local unions is the guarantee of interest-free loans under the AFT Strike Loan Policy. With this guarantee to protect the immediate economic needs of the members, a local may bargain hard and strike with the knowledge the AFT Militancy Fund will provide assistance to strikers. If we go on strike, UESF will work with AFT to set up these Strike Loans and to inform all members of the procedure for receiving them.

**Q: Will I be paid during the strike? Can I use paid sick leave or personal leave? Can I use vacation time?**

**A:** No, you don't get paid when you strike. The Public Employee Relations Act forbids public employees from receiving compensation for any period during which they participate in a strike. You will get paid what the employer owes you prior to striking when you would typically be paid. You also cannot use sick leave, personal leave, or vacation time.

**Q: Do we get to make up missed working days?**

**A:** Making up the days missed while being on strike is an issue that can be negotiated in the agreement that gets us back to work. However, you should not count on being able to make up the days as it is not guaranteed.

**Q: What about my retirement?**

**A:** Retirement contributions and retirement benefits are both based upon the money you earn. A strike will affect both. However, educators who are members of STRS and/or Social Security are likely to lose only pennies per strike-day per month in retirement, depending on age, length of service, and the age at which they retire.

**Q: Can the School Board cancel our fringe benefits if we strike?**

**A:** No. COBRA, a federal law, prohibits the district from canceling benefits without 30-day notice. In addition, if they do cancel them, COBRA requires you be given the opportunity to pay the premium yourself. In addition, most companies providing such benefits also require a 30-day cancellation notice. We are unaware of any California school district ever having cancelled benefits during a strike.

**Q: Can my probationary period be extended if we go on strike?**

**A:** Yes. Your probationary period may be extended by the length of the strike.

**Q: What happens if we are on strike and I have IEPs that are due – legal deadlines? Are there compliance issues that can cause me to be fired and lose my job?**

**A:** You are not obligated to prepare or meet about IEPs during a strike. The district either has to do it without you or get a postponement. The district is ultimately responsible for compliance issues.

**Q: Why should we picket?**

**A:** Legally, you are not required to picket. However, the picket line is one of the most critical elements affecting the outcome of a strike. The number of pickets and their effect on all parts of the school district operation being picketed cannot be overlooked by the public, administration, and any possible non-strikers (scabs). Our decision to strike is a disruption to the operation of the district, and that creates our leverage at the bargaining table. This disruption is greatly supported by the existence of picket lines.

**Q: Why can't the voting be in multiple locations?**

**A:** It is in our constitution and bylaws that a strike can only be called by a two-thirds vote of a general membership meeting. These meetings take place in one location, not spread out across multiple sites. Meeting altogether in one place is also a good way to build relationships with one another beyond those at our individual school sites, and it also serves as a test of our own commitment.

**Q: If I am approached by the media, what should I do?**

**A:** UESF's President, Executive Vice President, and Communications Director, act as official spokespersons for the Union. Comments made in behalf of the Union can affect bargaining. With that in mind, members can speak as individuals and express their personal position. If you choose to speak with the media, we ask that you clearly state to the reporter that you are not a spokesperson and that you are speaking on behalf of yourself and your feelings, experiences, concerns, etc. It is especially important that the public knows how the issues for which we are fighting affect our students, and us as members and educators.

If you are approached by the media and do not wish to comment, you can always send requests for comments to our President, Executive Vice President, or Communications Director.

**If you have questions, please contact:** your building reps, a union officer, or the UESF office.

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