



Teacher Compensation Advisory Committee Dec. 11 Meeting Summary

The following is a summary of what was discussed and considered at the first Teacher Compensation Advisory Committee meeting on Thursday, Dec. 11.

Introductions, Operating Principles & Mission

Each committee member introduced themselves. Superintendent Don Johnson welcomed the group and thanked them in advance for their efforts. A few minutes was spent in pairs talking about questions they might have and what they hoped to accomplish.

Sonja Hungness said she was proud to work in the District and lauded the staff. She is worried about workload, retaining quality staff and worried about younger staff. Preston Rodriguez said he came from New Berlin, where lots of teachers left during this process. Vicki Shaffer wondered why a compensation committee is needed and why does the District need to examine the salary schedule.

Board of Education president Bob Green said it will be a challenge to keep the current salary schedule. He said it takes a 3-4 percent increase in state aid to fund the current salary schedule and the District isn't getting anywhere close to that. The District can't increase revenue limits without going to referendum. "We need a salary schedule that reflects the new reality," he said. "We need one that is realistic."

Johnson pointed out there has been a reduction in state funding since Act 10 was enacted in 2010. He also said the District has very little idea what the next state biennial budget will include, although it doesn't appear promising. "We are trying to figure out what we are doing going forward if we can't live up to steps and lanes," he said.

Johnson told the committee that the Board voted unanimously at its Dec. 8 meeting that no one will see their salary decrease if a new compensation model is enacted. The Board also decided that pay won't be based on student test scores or on evaluations by a principal.

"We think those are bad ideas," he said. "We felt those were some of the hot topics and would pull us away from collaboration."

He also said he is worried that teachers are at or beyond their capacity and doesn't want to pay people extra for more work. His goal would be to provide increases for staff beyond the consumer price index (CPI) if possible.

Overview of Alternative Compensation Systems

Wisconsin Association of School Boards attorney Bob Butler went over a virtual online binder that committee members can use to compare other compensation models.

He emphasized that the plans that succeed are the ones that are developed organically within the district and not just copied from another district. The committee must determine what a successful system will do, such as retain people or reward higher report card scores.

He said there are two types of systems, column or pyramid. In the column approach one size fits all, while a pyramid system means only some can get to the top. He stressed that whatever system is implemented it is vital that everyone can understand how it works.

He said Sun Prairie based their system on lots of professional development, while Ripon based theirs on evaluations because they had been doing that for years. Butler said Sun Prairie has quarterly committee meetings to evaluate how the system is working.

“I hope you hit a home run on the first try but this is really 1.0,” he said.

Butler suggested reading through all of the plans in the virtual binder and decide what are three things you liked and don't like about the plans. He also asked committee members to determine what their salary would be if they moved to that district. He did acknowledge that some districts have kept their salary schedule since Act 10 but there is no pathway for a staff member to get to the top because aren't being moved up on an annual basis.

He then showed some alternative models already in place. Hartland-Lake County has had a pyramid model for about three years and he said staff have to assume more responsibility to move to the top. Beloit Turner has bonuses based on student-learning outcomes and a master's degree. Elmbrook had one student-outcome award but it was building-wide so it was a team award. Fox Point focused on rewarding professional development.

He also warned against using Educator Effectiveness evaluations as a way to hand out bonuses. That kind of system allows the public to see which teachers are the highest-rated. The result is parents will likely request those teachers for their children.

He said any teacher compensation system needs to focus on three basic components: starting pay rates, methods for determining pay increases, and a path from starting pay to veteran pay.

What Presently Exists

Butler said many districts have set up systems that aren't sustainable. Some districts have set up systems where people have made it to the top of a salary schedule so quickly that they had to lay off and class sizes went up.

Butler said he found thousands of systems across the country when Act 10 was being implemented and they were based on one of four categories: knowledge and skills, student-learning outcomes, evaluations, and market factors. Many have been modeled after the Denver system, which he said has been studied more than any other pay system that is non-traditional.

Johnson pointed out there are a variety of additives beyond the base contract and not just for coaching, and he wants staff to understand there is more to consider than just base salary.

Director of Employee Services Director Tabatha Gundrum went over the 2014-15 salary schedule. She pointed out some steps have been eliminated to help get the base salary higher for new hires. She acknowledged some staff members who have been here for a number of years are frustrated that newer hires are making the same or more than they are.

She said Verona's starting pay for a new teacher is \$41,000. She hopes MCPASD can raise the beginning rate up to that level." I don't know how we cannot go there and still be competitive," she said.

Gundrum explained that one-quarter and one-half steps are part of the salary schedule for flexibility and also allows the District to give partial raises, although that hasn't happened so far. Drew White asked if the BA + credits is no longer applicable and pointed out there are conflicting systems because newer teachers don't have to do for get six credits every five years to maintain their teaching license.

Johnson said the District is slightly below the average in Dane County for starting salaries but near the top for teachers at the top of the pay scale. He acknowledged the current salary schedule allows for teachers to make \$80,000 annually, but that doesn't mean the District has a way to get people there.

"It is a dilemma," he said. "We don't want to value one group over another but the schedule does create some issues."

Butler pointed out new reality is if someone doesn't get a pay increase they may decide to get their pay increase by going somewhere else.

Don also said he is expecting health insurance to increase by 10-15 percent next year, which also impacts how much money is available for salaries.

Butler said most districts have put a wall up and taken coaching and other additives out of the base salary schedule. Gundrum said the District spent more than \$29 million on teacher contract pay last school year.

Other payments of note:

- Teacher additives: \$590,000.
- Computer support, hourly pay, extended day: \$273,000.
- Teacher meeting pay: \$75,000.
- Teacher leave pay \$72,000.
- Teacher curriculum: \$45,000.
- Summer school: \$36,000.
- Contracted teacher filling in: \$35,000.

Other benefits provided by the District include health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, the District's portion of Wisconsin Retirement System payments, long-term disability, voluntary early retirement, and the District's portion of social security.

Discussion of Survey Questions

Butler hopes at the next meeting committee members can break into small groups and look more closely at the template of survey questions. What do we want to clarify or add for staff? He asked. He asked everyone to look at examples of salary schedules committee members like or dislike. He would like to launch the survey after the next meeting.

“These districts also went through a process and we can learn from them,” he said.

He stressed the survey is will be a very helpful tool. Responds will receive open-ended questions, which allows them to rank factors but also list strengths and weaknesses of the old system. Staff will have seven days to respond and he expects to hear from 65-75 percent.

A committee member asked if all staff teachers will have access to the online information and Johnson said that would be the case.