

## Understanding the Logistics of Salary Scales

With the salary and healthcare portions of the Franklin Regional teachers' contract set to expire this August, the Franklin Regional Education Association (FREA) believes confusion regarding the funding of salary scales has led to unfortunate and unnecessary tensions in labor negotiations.

The expectation of Franklin Regional teachers is straightforward. FREA believes that in order for employees not to lose ground, the district must be willing to increase its total spending on teachers by at least the rate of inflation.

Representatives of the Franklin Regional School Board have voiced a hesitancy to do so. The Board believes that our community is incapable of understanding the philosophy behind salary scales and will misinterpret the percentage raises required to simply maintain the salary scale. FREA believes that our community can appreciate how salary scales function if their underlying philosophy and history are explained.

In most professions, employees are hired at established rates commensurate with their occupations. While it is not unusual for such employees to receive only cost of living increases (or, regrettably, less from time to time), they begin their careers at acceptable salary levels and earn higher wages through promotions, performance incentives, and bonuses.

Teacher compensation, on the other hand, is tied exclusively to movement through a salary scale. Opportunities for promotions, performance incentives, and bonuses do not exist. Consequently, a teacher's livelihood is dependent on proper maintenance of the salary scale.

Teacher wages are patterned after the apprentice model of guild professions, like plumbers and craftsmen. Teachers at Franklin Regional begin their careers at apprentice wages (\$36,900 with a Master's Degree). With each year of experience, teachers gain greater mastery of their craft and therefore progress through the salary scale, moving closer each year to the wages of a master craftsman (\$77,900 with a Master's Degree).

In order for teaching wages to increase by the rate of inflation, the steps of the scale must increase by the cost of living; else, first year teachers will always receive \$36,900 and master teachers will always receive \$77,900.

For example, a Franklin Regional teacher with a Master's Degree on step 10 this year earns \$44,500 (lower than all bordering districts). Next year, the value of step 10 must increase by the rate of inflation. If anything less than a cost of living adjustment is added to the step, next year's step 10 employees will be worse off than this year's step 10 employees.

Thus, the total raise for any individual teacher must be the combination of the amount he/she receives for progressing to the next step of the scale plus the yearly adjustment

given to the value of his/her new step. The former increase is not so much a raise as an acknowledgement that the teacher should earn wages closer to those of a master craftsman. The latter is the actual raise itself, which maintains the value of the scale with respect to inflation. Teachers at the top of the salary scale only receive the latter because they have progressed through the entire scale and are being paid the established rate of the profession.

Under current conditions, an average raise of 2.88% is required to simply move all teachers from one step on the scale to the next. In other words, an overall raise of 2.88% would not add any new money to the value of steps on the scale. Step 9 employees would be able to become step 10 employees, but the rate of step 10 would remain at the current amount of \$44,500. Thus, the step would not only fail to grow in value, it would decrease in value with respect to inflation. The only way to maintain the integrity of the salary scale is for current teachers to receive average raises of 2.88% (which moves them through the scale, closer to the master rate) plus cost of living increases (which are applied to the steps themselves).

FREA believes that teachers on all steps should fare just as well as their predecessors. This has not been the recent practice of the Franklin Regional School Board. FREA cannot continue to accept settlements that refuse to fund the salary scale at the rate of inflation because this practice will ultimately erode the value of our profession. We are concerned that decisions to inadequately fund the salary scale will ultimately undermine the levels of educational excellence that have come to characterize our district. The district's budget shows ample money to properly fund the scale without significant tax increases. Within recent years, however, the school board has chosen to allocate its economic surplus toward other expenditures.

More information, including visual aides, detailed illustrations, and the history of Franklin Regional's salary scale as it compares to other school districts, may be found at [www.frteachers.org](http://www.frteachers.org).