



Compensation Strategies to Attract and Retain a Multilingual and Multicultural K-12 Workforce

Washington Association of School Administrators
Washington Association of School Business Officials
Washington School Personnel Association

Overview

We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the committee's request for comments on the first rebasing of K–12 compensation since the McCleary decision was fully implemented.

Our comments will cover the legislation passed in 2021, recommendations that support recruiting and retaining a multicultural and multilingual workforce. We are also submitting comments we feel will improve the current system created by the legislature and implemented as part of the McCleary decision and codified in RCW 28A.150.412.

Items 1–5 represent the areas defined in RCW 28A.150.412. This includes a review of compensation data, regionalization factors, appropriate inflationary measures, and an analysis of workforce needs.

Items 6–7 are the additional areas of consideration that were added last year in ESSB 5092, with the goal of improving diversity in the workforce and creating a multilingual, multicultural workforce better prepared to meet the needs of students in our schools.

Accordingly, we will attempt to organize our comments under the following sections:

1. Compensation updates to the K–12 basic education salaries based on comparable wage data analysis.
2. Updates to regionalization data.
3. Address differences in recruiting and retention and mitigate boundary effects of regionalization policies.
4. Adjustments to inflationary factors used in state budgeting.
5. Analysis of workforce needs, including identification of hard-to-recruit and -retain positions, and strategies to address those workforce needs.
6. Compensation adjustments to support equity considerations, which could include additional compensation to attract and retain educators in school districts with fewer resources.

7. Additional compensation to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce, in addition to recognizing educators serving multiple committees and assuming mentor responsibilities of new educators and students.

Comments:

1. Compensation updates to the K–12 basic education salaries based on comparable wage data analysis.

The most common frustration from our membership is the slow pace of McCleary enhancements. When HB 2242 changed the way school district funding and levies were calculated and distributed, the changes were intended to be revenue neutral to the previous system. There was an understanding that more still needed to be done, particularly with the prototypical school funding model.

Accelerate fully updating and funding the prototypical school funding:

- The legislature, in EHB 2242 (2017), signaled their “intent” to fund additional FTE by directing OSPI to create a workgroup to provide recommendations on phasing in staffing allocation updates to achieve the ratios adopted in Initiative 1351 (2014). We support the [recommendations of the 2019 Staffing Enrichment Workgroup](#). With the ending of the COVID pandemic, it is time to make good on these promises.

Meaningful updates to the prototypical school model are necessary:

- Increased allocation for 4–12 CIS, CTE, and lab science positions.
- Increased allocation for special education, including updates for school psychologists, OT/PT, audiologists, social workers, school nurses, librarians, and counselors.
- Recognition of mental health therapists.
- Increased support for technology personnel. Needs have exploded and they cannot be hired for the classified salary allocation.
- Recognition of classified staffing needs in the formula for para-educators.
- Recognition and support of higher custodial and trades salaries.
- Recognition of classified administrative positions.
- Increased support for certificated substitutes.
- Recognition and support for classified substitutes. No current funding is received.
- Increased support for SEBB costs. The SEBB allocation was updated to consider part-time staff, but no funding was allocated for substitutes reaching the eligibility threshold.

Due to these deficiencies, school districts continue to find it necessary to use local levy resources for positions that most everyone seems to understand should be included in the prototypical school model.

It is difficult to talk honestly about attracting and retaining high-demand staff, while adding requirements of multicultural and multilingual competency, when the current district funding model is not adequate. There is a feeling that if the legislature were more proactive in following through with improvements to the prototypical model, there would be sufficient local resources to support other program areas at the local district's discretion. The inadequacy of staffing allocations in the prototypical school model is an issue of statewide concern.

Comparable wage work models need updating:

- The implementation of the new funding model used a statewide average teacher salary with regional variations updated annually by IPD. Since implementation of this model, remote work and work-from-home arrangements have changed dramatically. It is now possible for many personnel to maintain a high salary, while living in a lower-cost area. Most K–12 positions will require living near the work site. For some, this has made K–12 positions less flexible, and therefore less desirable.
- Our organization members are reporting difficulty hiring staff in virtually all areas of K–12. These shortages also include lack of both certificated and classified substitutes. Shortages are particularly difficult to address in our rural districts where pay is less. We encourage a thorough review of comparable wages, recognizing that other work arrangements are now potentially more attractive than the K–12 model.

2. Updates to regionalization data.

Regionalization elicited the strongest responses from our membership. Within our membership, opinions are split on this subject. For those districts receiving regionalization, regionalization is seen as long past-due because of the cost-of-living in an area. For district's receiving regionalization that is less than their neighbors, or not receiving regionalization at all, it is seen as a tremendous disparity in funding and a huge disadvantage when it comes to paying staff competitively. These districts feel that they must still compete for talented staff, but the additional pay is forced to come from the local levy. The inability to pay higher wages is also seen as contributing to staff and substitute shortages. Staff and substitutes tend to go to nearby districts that can pay more. Under the old system, the difference between have and have not districts was the ability to pass a full levy. Now the difference is whether you receive regionalization or not.

- Regional calculations are not transparent and the basis for adjustments was unclear.

RCW 28A.150.412 indicates regionalization is based on the single-family residential values in each school district compared to the statewide median residential value. It is unclear whether the single-family values are from recent

sales, county assessors, some sort of calculation, or if the data is consistent from county to county. The Department of Revenue is charged with collecting this data, but is not scheduled to release it until November of 2022, making it difficult to review.

- Regionalization should be on a wider geographic area:

Many of our members believe that regionalization should be considered on a wider geographic area, perhaps a county wide basis. The current district by district regionalization pits districts within the same county (labor market) against one another in terms of resources and ability to compete on wages. Most local labor markets are county-wide but can also encompass several counties, depending on commuting distances. For most districts, staff members can easily commute from another district. We therefore think the district-by-district approach should be reconsidered.

Data used to calculate regionalization must be current:

- It is our understanding the calculation for regionalization comes from County Assessors offices. During the past several years, housing values have risen dramatically across the state. Updating County Assessors data often lags a few years. [A review of the median housing values published on OFM's website](#) indicates that the statewide median home value for the fourth quarter of 2021 was \$572,700. Only four counties have median home values that exceeded the statewide average: King, Snohomish, Jefferson, and San Juan.
- There should be a robust appeals process. Missing out on funding during a rebasing will be detrimental to a district for years.
- Finally, once regionalization funding is received, consideration should be given to some form of step down or grandfathering until IPD increases beyond the previously funded salary amount. Current collectively bargained contracts are based on this additional revenue; loss of that funding due to rebasing will result in budget shortfalls.

3. Address differences in recruiting and retention and mitigate boundary effects of regionalization policies.

School districts in areas that do not receive regionalization must raise salaries to compete in recruiting and retaining staff despite not having similar resources. In addition, rural districts are at an even greater disadvantage since they do not have (regionalization) resources to compete and often do not have significant local levy resources. In addition, staff must often commute significant distances if they cannot find housing options within the district.

- Consider a region to include a broader area, not just a county, but bordering districts in other counties as well—such as Wenatchee and East Wenatchee, which fall in different counties—or for districts that are in multiple counties.

- Add a rural incentive or increase the remote and necessary formula to assist the very small districts.
- Consider housing allowances (non-bargainable).
- Consider commuting allowances (non-bargainable). Many rural districts may not have housing available.

4. Adjust inflationary factors used in state budgeting.

- Our recommendation is to replace the IPD indicator with the CPI for Seattle as approved by I-732. The concern is that the IPD does not reflect consumer purchasing inflation and was selected to minimize wage increases.
- It is also important to mention that without improvements to the prototypical school model in terms of the number of positions and base salaries, the COLA adjustments will continue to fund only 60–70% of the actual COLA for all staff.

5. Analysis of workforce needs, including identification of hard-to-recruit and -retain positions, and strategies to address those workforce needs.

Under the current system, most of the suggestions for additional compensation (in items 5–7) are for payments that would be considered time, responsibility, and incentive (TRI) contracts and would be considered local funds. That is not necessarily the intent of our recommendation, as that would increase the current structural inequities between districts, but currently seems like the only option. If these forms of payments are state-funded, it is very important they are used for their intended purpose and not subject to the collective bargaining process.

- Consider signing bonuses.
- CDL bonus for bus drivers.
- Relocation assistance for out of state candidates or recent college graduates.
- Student loan forgiveness program.
- Teachers of color scholarship program.
- Incentive payments for Special Education. Additional incentive to retain.
- Paid internships for para-educators to become teachers.
- Increase substitute funding for both certificated and classified staff.
- Funding is insufficient for all full-time classified positions.

6. Compensation adjustments to support equity consideration which could include additional compensation to attract and retain educators in school districts with fewer resources.

We are generally supportive of compensation adjustments to attract and retain educators.

- A program such as the "High Poverty Schools" bonus under the National Board Certification is a good example. This program is based on low-income status of the students but likely correlates well with the lack of school resources. We can also see where a program like this, to match a diverse school with diverse teacher workforce, could improve outcomes for the students.
- A multilingual bonus is another example that could be funded with appropriate criteria.

7. Additional compensation to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce and to recognize the work of educators serving multiple committees and assuming mentor responsibilities of new educators and students.

Mentoring programs are important elements of job satisfaction.

- New teachers, especially teachers of color, need a robust induction program. Increases in funding to the BEST program would be helpful—not only to increase time with a mentor teacher, but to alleviate the isolation new teachers may feel.
- Committee work varies from district to district and is best handled at the local level.

The challenges of recruiting and retaining highly qualified multicultural and multilingual candidates into the teaching profession requires a long-term commitment of resources and energy. We believe this effort to recruit students into the education profession needs to start early in high school. Once recruited, a seamless transition and program needs to be available at our higher education institutions. Currently, many of the students we would be trying to attract would come from underserved populations in Washington State. Students may not have a family history of college attendance or the financial means to complete a four-year degree. Therefore, robust programs need to be in place to encourage and support them.