

Overview of Public School Teacher Pay and Benefits

Increases in teacher pay from 2006 to 2013

By Liv Finne, WPC Education Director

January 2014

Executives at Washington's public education teachers' union (WEA) recently announced that their top lobbying goal for the 2014 legislative session is to increase pay for their members. To support their case, the WEA's "Our Voice" newsletter states,

"Educators have gone six straight years without a COLA."¹

By citing one kind of pay increase, the state-funded Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), the statement creates the impression that public school teachers have received no pay increases in six years. Actually, public school teachers, like other public employees, receive several kinds of pay increase, some of which provide large pay raises in some years and small or no raises in other years.

People in Washington want school teachers to be well paid, and they are generous in paying taxes to provide public money for all school district employees. The public can only understand how well teachers are being paid by looking at all of the kinds of taxpayer-provided compensation these public employees receive.

Teachers receive a level of base pay from the state, including automatic yearly pay increases, known as step increases. Step increases are paid separately from COLAs.

In addition, local school districts provide teachers annual pay increases through supplemental contracts, called time, responsibility and incentive (TRI) pay. Local school districts further increase teacher pay through per diem, hourly and stipend rules.

Depending on how they are counted, teachers can receive seven different kinds of pay, some or all of which can be increased in any particular year. For example, the base pay state taxpayers provide to public school teachers has increased by about 9% over six years.²

- Teacher base pay average in 2006-07: \$47,890
- Teacher base pay average in 2012-13: \$52,256
- Amount of increase: \$4,366 (+9.1%)

Over the same period, local taxpayers have provided additional pay increases to public school teachers through supplemental, per diem, hourly and stipend pay, resulting in a total average increase of about 16%. Here are the total averages.³

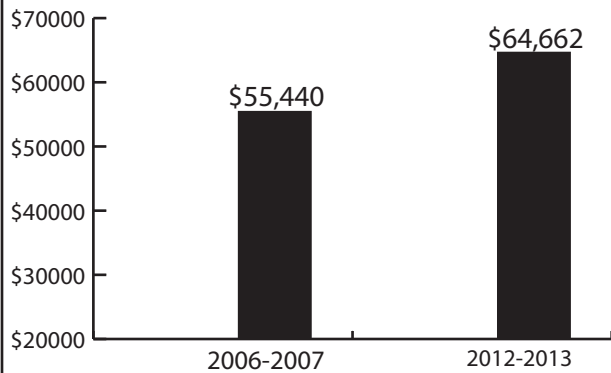
- State and local teacher pay average in 2006-07: \$55,440
- State and local teacher pay average in 2012-13: \$64,662
- Amount of increase (state and local): \$9,222 (+16.6%)

1 "Educator pay and benefits," Our Voice, Washington Education Association, November 2013, at ourvoicewashingtonnea.org/issues/healthcare/.

2 "Table 19: Certificated Teacher, Duty Roots 31, 32, 33, School District Personnel Summary Profiles –2006-07 and 2012-13, Final, School Apportionment and Financial Services," Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, at k12.wa.us/safs/PUB/PER/0607/tbl19.pdf.

3 Ibid.

Rise in total average public school teacher pay, state and local funding, 2006-07 to 2012-13



Average annual public school teacher pay has increased by more than \$9,000 since 2006

To show how the teacher compensation system works, below are examples of pay increases from the union's collective bargaining agreement with Seattle Public Schools.⁴ Collective bargaining agreements are negotiated in secret, but their final terms are later made public.

Kinds of Seattle Public School Teacher Pay

1. State base pay - basic contract of 180 days, including annual step increases, \$34,048 to \$65,759, depending on level of training.⁵
2. Local district supplemental contracts – in addition to pay received from the state, \$9,472 to \$18,965, depending on level of training.⁶ Local district supplemental contracts – in addition to pay received from the state, \$9,472 to \$18,965, depending on level of training.⁷
3. Per diem pay – teachers receive additional pay for taking on additional daily tasks. Examples include \$34.69 per hour for teaching in-service classes, designing or writing new curricula, and

\$25.73 per hour for serving on curriculum revision committee, running a coaching clinic or similar work.

4. Hourly pay – teachers receive additional pay for taking on extra work hours. Examples include \$16.71 per hour for participating in designated “voluntary” in-service work, and \$36.07 per hour for attending meetings at the request of district administrators.
5. Stipend pay – teachers can receive additional pay for taking on one or more of up to 121 different kinds of work assignments, such as soccer coach, band leader or other activity. Annual stipends range from \$659 to \$10,582 a year.

Teacher Benefit Package

In addition to increases in base pay, state taxpayers provide public school teachers a generous benefits package, compared to what their private sector peers typically receive. The standard health care benefit is \$9,216 a year, or \$768 a month. The standard benefits contribution is 18.6 % of salary, including FICA and other benefits.⁸

Local school districts can provide benefits in addition to what state taxpayers provide. For example, the Seattle School District gives teachers the following benefits:

- Seven options for health care coverage;
- Dental and vision coverage for family members;
- Life insurance;
- Long-term disability insurance;
- Sick leave and personal leave, up to 12 days;
- Sick leave cash-out, retiring employees can receive cash for unused sick days;
- Public salaries and benefits for union executives.⁹

4 “Collective Bargaining Agreement between Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Education Association, Certificated Non-Supervisory Employees 2013-15,” Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Education Association, at www.seattlewea.org/static_content/cbcert13-15.pdf.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 “1191 Sum, Estimated Funding Report (State Summary), Apportionment for November 27, 2013,” Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, at www.k12.wa.us/safs/rep/app/1314/00000app.pdf.

9 “Collective Bargaining Agreement between Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Education Association, Certificated Non-Supervisory Employees 2013-15,” Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Education Association, accessible at: www.seattlewea.org/static_content/cbcert13-15.pdf.

Conclusion

Executives at the teachers' union have announced that gaining access to greater increases in pay is their primary lobbying goal in the 2014 legislative session. To support this message they argue that teachers have not received a state-funded COLA for six years.

Some proponents argue this means teachers have either not received a pay increase or received a pay cut, because teacher pay has not gone up as much as they think it should have. This view ignores the numerous ways in which state lawmakers and local school boards increase teacher pay on an annual basis.

The assertion that public school teachers have not received a state-funded COLA also ignores the growing value of the benefits package teachers receive, compared to the typical benefits package their peers in the private sector receive.

To argue that public school teachers are chronically underpaid makes union executives appear ungrateful, as if they do not recognize the real sacrifices working people in Washington make to fund the public schools.

Parents are deeply concerned that their children receive a high-quality public education, and taxpayers, both state and local, are generous in providing money for public school budgets, salaries and benefits, including adding an additional \$1.6 billion in new education funding in 2013.

Overall, public school teacher pay and the value of benefits package has increased in the last six years. The numbers show there has been no "cut" in teacher pay, even though one kind of pay, the COLAs, has not been increased.

As the question of teacher COLAs, pay increases and benefits are debated, policymakers and the broader public need a full and accurate view of all sources of teacher pay, rather than focusing on only one form of pay provided by the state.