

# Career Salary Advancement

## What Do Teachers Want?

Many districts have been signaling that they want to implement “new” salary structures in the next school year. In response, teachers from locals throughout the Milwaukee metropolitan area have been meeting regularly to discuss what they think a system for salary advancement should look like.

Teachers generally agree that any new salary system for career advancement should be:

### 1) **Objective**

Teachers will only have faith in a salary system if the pay raises are based on clear, objective criteria. Salary systems where the pay raises are based on administrator evaluations are extremely problematic, given concerns about bias and the effectiveness of existing systems for evaluating employees. Still worse is basing pay raises on student test scores. Ample research has shown that there is no valid, reliable way to measure teacher performance by the performance of their students on tests, even using growth models. Using test scores to determine pay raises would be unfair and demoralizing.

### 2) **Predictable**

Teachers need to know what salary they can expect in future years if they are to remain with their district. A system in which there is significant doubt about whether career salary increases will be granted, such as basing salary increases on administrator evaluations or assignment of extra duties, will greatly reduce the retention of quality teachers. Moreover, any system for career salary advancement should not include the possibility that people are moved backwards in salary in future years, or be based on one-time bonuses that do not continue into the future.

### 3) **Attainable**

Any printed salary structure should include salaries that all staff can actually attain. Merit pay systems have been tried for over a hundred years and have consistently failed to improve teacher performance or student outcomes. They also create a competitive environment that greatly reduces the cooperation essential for great teaching. Teachers should not have significant doubt that they can achieve the top rates on a salary schedule.

### 4) **Professional**

Career salary increases should be based on factors associated with the highest quality, professional teaching. Foremost, these factors should include experience and education. Criteria for salary increases should not be chosen based on the flawed premise that the only purpose of an education is to increase test scores. Teachers enrich their students’ lives as they become more experienced and gain deeper knowledge of their subject matters and pedagogy in general.

Every child deserves an experienced, skilled, professional teacher. Therefore, the primary purpose of a career salary system should be to attract and retain the best staff. Schools do better with experienced teams of teachers who choose to spend their entire career at a district. An objective,

predictable, attainable and professional system for career salary advancement is necessary to achieve this goal.