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Should Teachers Be Paid More?

Sure, But Here's an Idea!

Jim McGrath

Are teachers underpaid? It depends on where one lives. In Virginia, the starting salary ranges from about \$33,000 in the rural divisions to \$50,000 in larger divisions.

Table 1
Starting Teacher Salary by Earned Degree (2011-2012)

School Division	Degree Earned	
	Bachelor's	Master's
Alexandria	\$43,632	\$50,047
Arlington	\$43,910	\$48,412
Fairfax Co.	\$44,440	\$49,928
Harrisonburg	\$39,214	\$41,764
Norfolk	\$38,012	\$41,053
Richmond	\$39,712	\$41,697
Roanoke	\$36,604	\$37,967
Virginia Beach	\$38,597	\$41,097

Though Table 1 shows the initial salary range, the bottom of the salary scale begins to widen after the first 5-10 years. Table 2 shows what the same teacher could expect after 20 years of teaching. Additionally, Table 2 includes the highest possible salary on the teacher scale for a

standard contract.

Considering that eliminating summer school is not an option (to note, teachers can make between \$1500 and \$5000 extra depending on the pay plan – usually \$22-30/hr. – and length of term – four to eight weeks), the question becomes, what steps can be taken to better compensate teachers.

One solution for better compensating teachers is to add 20 mandatory days to the teacher contract. The first ten days would be added to the end of the current school year in June and involve a student remediation session. This could be used for some students to avoid summer school. If a student meets a set number of academic benchmarks, he can stay home. This time can also be used for teacher debriefing and reflection. Under the current contract structure, teachers pack up on the last day and leave without having an opportunity to look back at the past year and determine where ideas went right or wrong. With remediation, it is possible to reduce

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Table 2
Teacher Salary after 20 years by Degree (2011-2012)

School Division	Degree Earned		
	Bachelor's	Master's	Highest Possible Salary
Alexandria	\$75,299	\$92,313	\$99,063 (Master's + 30 credits)
Arlington	\$65,256	\$87,450	\$101,298 (Doctorate)
Fairfax Co.	\$74,396	\$79,884	\$93,015 (Doctorate)
Harrisonburg	\$47,377	\$49,927	\$67,229 (Doctorate)
Norfolk	\$59,854	\$64,642	\$70,460 (Doctorate)
Richmond	\$49,818	\$52,307	\$71,664 (Master's + 30 credits)
Roanoke	\$52,197	\$53,562	\$60,851 (Doctorate)
Virginia Beach	\$54,098	\$56,598	\$70,014 (Doctorate)

the amount of time and resources needed for a summer session.

Two more weeks would be added before the current check-in date in August. This time would be devoted to professional development and school meetings. One complaint from teachers is that they come to school for a week of preparation and spend most of the time in meetings (school-wide, division-wide, grade level, content level, etc.). There is not enough time to plan one's lessons, prepare the classroom and meet the new teachers. This proposal suggests first completing professional development, and then allowing for the 5-8 days to be used strictly for class preparation, the most important element of education. It will lead to a much smoother

transition into the school year and alleviate some of the time teachers have to spend working at home, or the late afternoons or evenings in the school building.

For working these extra days, teachers would be paid based on their current contract, but generally this would result in a 10% salary increase.

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