



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians

From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent

Date: April 26, 2024

In the bustling hallways and behind the scenes of Bay District Schools, heroes walk among us. The steadfast support staff, some of our most seasoned veterans, have dedicated decades to our mission, and their commitment fuels the heart of our educational community. In my estimation, they are the quiet professionals supporting our schools, our teachers and most importantly, our students. Yet, behind their unwavering dedication lies a stark reality: many struggle to make ends meet on wages that don't meet the needs of families today.

The need to adequately compensate our employees is the reason why we recently contracted with a company called Evergreen. These professionals, who are experts in their field, have conducted a top-to-bottom review of our salary structure, our pay grades and our job descriptions. They've heard from hundreds of employees about their concerns and compiled their initial findings into a new report we shared with the School Board this week. The most pressing issue identified by the study is the fact that nearly 70 percent of our support employees are only making \$15 per hour, regardless of their invaluable contributions or years of service. Some of our seasoned veterans, who are mission-critical to our operation, earn just \$15.85 an hour after three decades of selfless dedication.

This isn't just about numbers on a paycheck; it's about honoring the backbone of our school system. We must pay competitive wages in order to continue to recruit and retain the very best employees. Fortunately, the Evergreen study doesn't just highlight the problem; it offers a roadmap to solutions. But, as with any journey, the path forward is riddled with challenges.

Evergreen's findings underscore the importance of rectifying this situation promptly. They have provided a one-year, two-year and three-year implementation approach with different funding levels suggested as well. Obviously, we would all like to increase salaries to reflect the commitment of our staff significantly, but we must also function within a stringent budget and requirements from the state. Implementing Evergreen's report will pose significant challenges, but we must move forward together to overcome inevitable obstacles if we are to continue to achieve and grow as a district. The School Board must carefully weigh the options before them, understanding that raising salaries in one area may necessitate cuts elsewhere due to our limited financial resources.

The study also highlights the need for adjustments in administrative pay. We cannot ignore the fact that we are losing talented principals and assistant principals to other districts and industries due to salary disparities. It's imperative that we retain our best leaders by ensuring competitive compensation for them

as well. We also need to provide teachers with a logical path forward into administration, for those who want to pursue this field, where the salaries are commensurate with the additional education and responsibilities required of administrators. Currently, there's little to no financial incentive for a veteran teacher to move into administration, and some teachers would get paid LESS if they moved into school-based leadership roles.

Our Bay District Schools Team of Teams is an exceptional group of individuals who work tirelessly to support our students and community. They deserve to be fairly compensated for their dedication and hard work. Over the past few years, we've made strides in improving teacher salaries, thanks to funding from Governor DeSantis. Beginning salaries have increased from \$36,000 to \$48,500, and this year's negotiations have resulted in significant raises for veteran teachers, with some receiving as much as \$9,000 in raises. However, we recognize that there's still more to be done.

I want to express my gratitude to the community for your ongoing support. Your commitment to our schools is invaluable, and together, we will navigate these challenges and ensure that every member of our Bay District Schools family receives the fair compensation they deserve. Thank you for your continued partnership.