

## What's News Noelle?

# Pay our teachers

Noelle Harff, *Editor in Chief*



I did the math. We need to pay our teachers. It's not a surprise that it's hard to become a millionaire in the classroom. Still, every day teachers work long hours to ensure our education. "Teaching is different," said Deborah Lynch, social studies teacher. "I have worked in the business world. It is easier to have an off day. It isn't the same as being a teacher. Every day you have to be excited to teach, or your students won't be excited to learn."

The Pew Research Center predicts that the average teacher works about 11 hours a day (that isn't including coaching or sponsoring a club) compared to the average American's eight-hour work days. Despite these long hours, a teacher at Highlands Ranch High School, with upwards of 20 years of experience (in and out of district) and a masters degree, could make less than \$60,000 a year due to complications with how the payscale works.

Ask any of your teachers, and they will tell you it's not about the money. But, money makes a difference. "For me, my pay raise was instrumental in our livelihood. Bills, daycare costs, etc. continue to rise, and in order to pay for these things, my paycheck has to cover it. Was it hard to leave HRHS after 15 years? For sure. I was leaving some amazing kids and wonderful teachers," said Katie Taylor, former HR social studies teacher. "But the opportunity to work in Cherry Creek School District and at Smoky Hill was a great move for me and my family."

Most schools use a salary schedule based off of years and level of education training. The more years, or hours toward a master's or doctorate's degree, the more a teacher will make. If I have been teaching for 12 years with an MA degree, I will

earn a salary of \$74,255 in CCSD with an earning potential of \$84,493 considering I do not continue my education. Compare that to the max salary of \$76,000 for a general teacher at DCSD.

Despite the wealth in Douglas County, teachers aren't being fairly compensated. It started in 2009 with a school board "business model" that ran up a deficit and left a messy system that the current board is still trying to fix. This performance pay system claimed to be more efficient and fair. In reality, there wasn't enough funding to pay teachers what they were promised, and after a couple of years, central administration budgets began to bloat while a pay freeze made it so teachers weren't getting what they were initially promised.

"I think a competitive school district means hiring the very best teachers and creating an environment where they can work hard. Teachers need to feel valued, respected, heard and compensated," said Taylor.

President of the current DCSD school board, David Ray, has been working diligently to fix the compensation crisis. Strategic Theme Six of the school board plan discusses the importance of pay and retention. This objective should lead to phase one of Ray's school board solution: "Develop a predictable compensation schedule for all employee groups that acknowledges experience, knowledge, and performance."

Your teacher is going to continue to show up for you. They will continue to teach. In turn, we need to use this knowledge to preserve our national right to education by fairly compensating our teachers. Use what your teachers taught you and vote in upcoming elections, understand the issues, and talk to your parents and neighbors.



Photo by Noelle Harff. Infographic by Jack Stilwell. Sources: DCSD and CCSD