



Metro Regional Bargaining Council Update

We are working together – across the Denver Metro area through our Metro Regional Bargaining Council – to ensure that all our members are on the same page as we face not only a difficult legislative session, but challenging bargaining as well. No local association is an island – all of us are stronger than any of us alone.

School districts are already planning for “cuts” and, in many districts, school boards and administrators are making decisions about the budget before they really know the full financial picture from the Legislature. We believe it’s important for Association members to (1) understand what districts are saying and (2) NOT believe everything the district says or take everything at face value. In the next few weeks, we will send you a series of informational emails that explain what districts are saying and what their “solutions” could mean to school employees. Today we are addressing the “salary schedule” and how – by not implementing it – your career earnings and retirement benefits will be affected.

What is the Single Salary Schedule

We use the “single salary schedule” as the structure for paying our members because of several factors:

§ It’s easy to understand and administer. It’s based on objective criteria that teachers see as fair and equitable (years of service and attainment of advanced professional education applicable to one’s field).

§ Members can easily analyze their salary schedule when comparing their earnings to those of members in other districts.

§ It is predictable and oriented toward “career earnings” – one can see how to advance on the schedule, vertically and horizontally, and can predict what his or her career earnings will be.

As we bargain this year in tough economic times, we must pay attention to what the district may propose about our salary schedule. We can’t take our eyes off the idea that one’s career earnings have a direct impact on PERA – every dollar lost today has a cumulative effect on one’s pension. We must be careful not to agree to something that harms teacher career earnings.

1. Reducing the number of steps in the schedule gets members to their top steps in a shorter time, while maximizing the number of years at the top salaries and boosting their career earnings (and PERA). Creating equity between steps is a low-cost change that will also pay off in the future.

2. We need to watch out for offers of bonuses (lump sums instead of step advancement) unless the bonus becomes part of the salary schedule.

3. We expect districts to propose freezing the salary schedule or abandoning it altogether. We should avoid agreeing to these proposals if at all possible, knowing that a dollar lost today is never fully regained. Even phasing in salary increases throughout the year is better than freezing steps and lanes, as is negotiating a specific guarantee for a salary increase in the event district revenues increase.

Yes, these are tough times. But protecting our salary schedules should be of paramount importance to us.

This is third in a series of informational flyers for members of the 14 local associations that comprise the Metro Regional Bargaining Council.