

**Teacher Compensation**  
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**Factors that affect the Teacher Shortage**

**Teacher Compensation, work load and Societies lack of respect/negative perception for the profession**

Over 1/3 of districts in MS are classified as critical shortage districts.

- Loan forgiveness programs are not working so well for these districts. Teachers only stay the minimum number of years required and then leave. District invest a lot of training in the teacher for them to move on to another district. Long term assistance and development in the district is not there.

**Teacher Compensation/workload**

MS average starting pay is approximately \$37K, SE average is approximately \$43K. SE average teacher pay at 15 years is approximately \$56K. Average salary of any general profession with Bachelor's is \$66K.

2yr nursing degree graduates start out at approximately \$50K, clock out and are on their own time. Teachers start at approximately \$37K, work tireless hours off the clock, and have a possible 6 figure debt when they graduate.

We are well below the starting salary of other neighboring states. Teacher specific financial aid is almost non-existent now. Young passionate beginner teachers say money isn't everything but as they age and take on more responsibility, they see that money matters more than they realized.

- How many leave the profession for this reason?
- How does this relate to the 5- year average in the field for the new teachers?
- How do we compete with this?

**Suggestions:**

Put a plan in action that is not a shock to the public as far as numbers. \$3K per year sounds like a lot to the public, but insurance increased so teachers realized around \$160 per month of that. It is a stepping stone, not the answer.

- Suggested example: \$1200 per year over 10 years. Larger starting pay with small increase steps.

Where does that leave those already in the profession that haven't reached that starting pay benchmark after years of service?

- Suggested example: Larger milestone increases at 5, 10, 15, and 20- year marks. Small increment increases cannot keep up with cost of living increases.

Consider paying based on merit and accomplishment, not on years of service. How many professions in the private sector pay the exact same to everyone regardless of their accomplishments? Most Educators seem to agree with this thought. What would it look like in the real world?

### **Loan Forgiveness:**

Kent McCarty (Legislator) discussed William Winter Loan Forgiveness Program and funds available. Several districts are interested in participating in the cohorts. Average teacher debt at graduation in MS is approximately \$45K. Average includes those with 0 debt.

How does the idea of total loan forgiveness affect those who worked hard to pay their way through college instead of taking loans? Are we punishing those who work the hardest and have the best work ethic?

- Suggestion: Free Education to all teachers in the state.
- Teacher Academy Student perspective: She would rather have more pay and pay her student loans that to have a free education and struggle with low pay the rest of her life.

### **Retention: Why do they leave?**

Student Teachers are placed with the best of the best for student teaching, then there is a lack of support in their own classroom. There is pressure to “teach to the state benchmark tests”. Benchmarks are good but is this the right way to go about it? The workload on teachers is overwhelming and they have no time of their own.

Pressure from students lack of discipline and student focus on technology.

School culture being futile

Lack of Leadership support in the school

Lack of career growth potential in the school

### **Lack of Respect/Negative perception of the profession:**

We have years of trained teachers that themselves discourage students from going into the profession due to their experiences. It takes a strong calling just to overcome this battle before even getting to the issue of money.

### **There is public misconception on teachers’ contract of 10 months. Do they really have the summer off? The misconception needs to be addressed to the public to get salary increase support publicly.**

- Suggestions: Do 12- month contract completing professional development in the summer
- Do we lose interest if we change the message to a 12- month contract? How many enter the profession for the flexible schedule? Although we know they already work all summer, does stating that in a contract change their outlook?

### **Respected professions in society:**

Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, etc. Why has our society tied compensation to noble professions? The respect for the teaching profession has diminished although without the teaching profession there would be no doctor, lawyer or engineer.

Capitalism dictates the salaries of other professions and administrative pay in schools. State dictates teacher pay so there is little/no room for negotiation with a good teacher.

We should look at other 4- year degrees and how we can compete on salary. Do we track what students leave other programs and recruit them to teaching? Example: Accounting student decides accounting is not for them. They may make a great math teacher. The majority seem to agree that loss of respect for the teacher is largely due to our general society and overall lack of respect for others. We have created a society without work ethic or respect.