
State Minimum Salary Schedule for Fiscal Year 2016-17

The Background:

The FY 17 Budget includes approximately \$105 million in improvements for teacher salaries. This improvement represents an increase in the Basic Education Program (BEP) instructional salary component and results in a significant amount of additional resources for school districts. Because the BEP is a funding plan and not a spending plan, each district will utilize its salary component funding increase to meet its unique compensation needs. Districts are not forced to provide across-the-board pay increases based solely on seniority or educational attainment but rather have the ability and flexibility to determine areas of need and adjust compensation structures accordingly.

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-3-306, the Commissioner of Education is required to annually present and submit to the State Board of Education, for approval, a state salary schedule for licensed personnel. The salary schedule must include a base salary for licensed personnel with a bachelor's degree and zero years of experience. Licensed personnel with more training and experience must receive higher salaries than the established base salary.

The current state minimum salary schedule includes a base salary of \$31,500 with additional funding amounts required for advanced degrees and at years 1 (bachelor's degree), 6 and 11. The proposed schedule for the 2015-16 school year increases the base salary to \$32,445.

One hundred percent of the \$105 million improvement for salaries must be spent on teacher compensation – salary or insurance benefits, regardless of any action on the state minimum salary schedule. In addition, any district below the statewide weighted average salary must utilize the funds strictly for salaries with exceptions made for unfunded growth or loss of instructional funding due to decreased enrollment. The salary schedule and any adopted adjustments represent only the minimum salary that a district must pay to individual teachers. The overwhelming majority of school districts currently exceed the state minimums identified on the schedule and will continue to do so at the proposed increase.

In 2013, the State Board of Education revised the structure of the state minimum salary schedule to provide additional compensation flexibility to school districts while maintaining a commitment to salary improvements, especially for teachers at or near the state minimum. The proposed 2016-17 schedule addresses these two policy goals.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

The large majority of school districts in the state meets or exceeds the salary levels identified in the proposed 2016-17 salary schedule. An estimated total of 29 school districts will be required to make increases to at least one level of their local salary schedule resulting in a specific and earmarked salary expenses. For these districts, the increase in state funds through the BEP salary component provides the necessary funding to meet the required expense.

For all 141 of the state's school districts, the new funds earned through the BEP salary component must be utilized for teacher compensation, regardless of any earmarks required through the adjustments to the salary schedule.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.