

INTERIM REPORT: JOINT TASK FORCE ON STATEWIDE EDUCATOR SALARY SCHEDULES



LPRO
LEGISLATIVE POLICY
AND RESEARCH OFFICE

About this Report

In 2023, [Senate Bill 283](#) created the Joint Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedules. Per subsections (3)(a) and (10)(a) of the bill, the Legislative Policy and Research Office (LPRO) drew from task force discussion to prepare this report on the benefits and challenges of implementing statewide salary schedules for Oregon school personnel.

This report also draws from presentations given to the task force by officials from Oregon and around the country. Presenters included education policy and data science professionals; these presenters are detailed in the “Process” section of this report. Additionally, this report draws on research LPRO conducted regarding states that have statewide minimum salary schedules for school personnel.



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Report:

Interim Report: Joint Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedules

DATE: November 15, 2023

Executive Summary

Oregon's [Senate Bill 283](#) created the [Joint Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedules](#). The purpose of the task force is to explore statewide minimum pay for Oregon's teachers and classified staff, and statewide collective bargaining for school personnel. This interim report reflects task force work and discussion spanning its first five meetings from September 26, 2023 to December 15, 2023.

The task force identified the following benefits and challenges regarding school personnel statewide minimum salaries and collective bargaining:

Benefits

- **Predictability:** Districts would know the minimum amount they would need to pay school personnel, provided that the legislature assured districts of funding to support statewide minimum pay.
- **Shifting responsibility:** Moving the work of pay negotiations—one of the areas of greatest contention in collective bargaining—from districts to the state could benefit both teachers and their employers.
- **Uniformity:** Standardizing classified staff job titles and duties could improve pay parity and benefit the development of statewide minimum pay for classified staff.

Challenges

- **Direct comparisons:** The 24 states that have statewide minimum teacher salaries have varied landscapes in their geography, demographics, costs of living, and other factors that make it difficult to compare states directly.
- **Classified staff minimum pay:** Unlike teachers, classified staff work a variety of hours and days, and may work at multiple job sites.
- **Diverse needs:** Statewide minimum salary schedules must accommodate employees who work more than one school job.
- **Statute or administrative rule:** Determining which to use in implementing statewide minimum salary schedules will be a challenge.
- **Local levies:** The task force faces the challenge of balancing respect for local control and the will of local voters, while increasing pay parity among districts.



- **Regional variation:** Intended to reflect geographic and economic diversity, regional pay variation could increase current pay disparities, unless it also incentivizes employment in small, rural, and poor school communities.



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Terms to know

The following four terms appear throughout this report. Definitions and explanations are included below to provide context for this terminology.

Minimum starting salary

The lowest salary a state allows for a beginning teacher is the minimum starting salary.

In some states, many beginning teachers earn very close to that minimum number; in other states, beginning teachers earn tens of thousands of dollars more than the minimum starting salary.

Minimum salary schedule

A minimum salary for all teachers, also termed minimum salary schedule, is set at the statewide level, almost always by the state legislature.

A few states set their minimum salary as a flat base amount, but most states that have minimum salary schedules include both minimum and maximum numbers. The schedule usually takes the form of a grid, with one axis being the employee's years of experience, and the other axis being the employee's level or type of education.

Some states' minimum salary schedules rely less—or not at all—on education level. Some incorporate other factors, such as specialized skills in teaching math, science, special education, or English language learners; leadership in curriculum development, or mentorship to beginning teachers. The task force and Oregon policymakers have many options and models to consider.

Salary schedule

Salary schedules can be negotiated between a district and the local union. In states where collective bargaining is prohibited, a salary schedule may be negotiated between a district and an individual employee.

School personnel and classified staff

This report uses “school personnel” as an umbrella term to cover all workers employed by public schools. If policy or data applies only to specific workers, and not to school personnel generally, then this report specifies which workers. “Classified staff” refers to non-certified school personnel such as custodians, bus drivers, and food service workers. This report avoids the term “educator” when possible, and instead uses “school personnel,” “classified staff,” or a specific job title such as teacher, principal, or bus driver.



Process

Oregon's [Senate Bill 283 \(2023\)](#) created the [Joint Task Force on Statewide Educator Salary Schedules](#). The task force is exploring statewide minimum pay for Oregon's teachers and classified staff. SB 283 specifies two reports the task force must complete: a report on benefits and challenges due December 2023; and a final report proposing policy changes to that may lead to a statewide salary schedule due September 2024. The bill also named the chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees as co-chairs of the task force.

LPRO staff developed and the co-chairs revised and approved [a draft work plan](#) prior to the commencement of task force meetings. At the task force's first meeting on September 26, 2023, staff reviewed task force operating procedures and the requirements of SB 283, and discussed the draft work plan and potential research agenda.

Staff presented information on statewide teacher minimum salary schedules across the country at the task force's first meeting; [presentation slides are available online](#). At the task force's second meeting, staff reviewed the presentation on teacher minimum salaries in other states and provided new information on Delaware and West Virginia statewide minimum pay for classified staff. Task force member feedback at the first two meetings informed staff revisions and additions to a separate [report on statewide minimum teacher salaries in other states](#).

Education officials from three states that have minimum salary schedules spoke to the task force. SB 283 directed the task force to study statewide minimum pay for classified staff and regional variation in statewide minimum pay to reflect varied costs of living in Oregon. With those directives in mind, staff invited officials from Delaware and West Virginia, both of which have minimum pay requirements for classified staff, spoke to the task force. Washington state officials addressed the task force because Washington is the only state that uses regional variation in its statewide minimum teacher salaries.

T.J. Kelly, Chief Financial Officer of Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), [presented to the task force](#) October 11. Mr. Kelly returned on October 25 to present on [funding for school personnel benefits in Washington](#). Also on October 25, the task force heard from Kimberly Klein, Associate Secretary of Operations Support at the Delaware Department of Education, and Uriah Cummings, Director of School Finance at the West Virginia Department of Education. Mr. Cummings provided [written materials regarding minimum salaries and school finance in West Virginia](#).

The task force also heard from data scientists and a labor economist. Ben Tate, of the Oregon Longitudinal Data Collaborative, presented at the October task force meetings. Mr. Tate's [October 11 presentation](#) reviewed available Oregon education workforce data. On October 25, Mr. Tate presented on the [Oregon Educator Public Employment Report](#). At the November 15 meeting, labor economist Dan Goldhaber of the University



of Washington and the American Institutes for Research presented to the task force on teacher job postings and the teacher labor market.

For the November 15 meeting, the co-chairs requested presentations from four task force members regarding their constituents' views of the Delaware, West Virginia, and Washington systems of school personnel pay. These members provided the task force perspectives from school boards, administrators, teachers, and classified staff.

Also at the November 15 meeting, officials from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) gave a [presentation](#) on statewide collective bargaining for Oregon state employees. Although Oregon school personnel would remain district employees under a system of statewide collective bargaining, the DAS presentation provided background information for the task force to consider in making its recommendations.

Meetings included time devoted to discussion among task force members. They provided perspectives and feedback from stakeholder groups, as well as their own observations and concerns. The October discussions focused on the benefits and challenges of statewide minimum salaries and statewide collective bargaining. On November 15, task force members discussed the draft of this report and contributed to its recommendations. At the December 15, 2023 meeting, the task force adopted this report.



Benefits and challenges of statewide education salary schedules and collective bargaining

The benefits and challenges listed below were identified by task force members during discussions on October 11 and October 25.

Benefits

Predictability of district spending and state appropriations

Currently, the Oregon legislative appropriation process may not align with budgeting timelines in school districts across the state. Districts may learn their allocation of state funds within weeks of the date by which district officials must budget for the coming school year. Statewide minimum school personnel salary schedules would help districts proactively budget salaries and wages for their respective numbers of school personnel. For these minimums to provide predictability, however, the legislature would need to assure districts of funding to support the statewide minimum pay.

Pay negotiations: Shifting responsibility from school boards to the state

Task force members noted pay negotiations as some of the most contentious aspects of school personnel collective bargaining. They expressed that shifting the responsibility of negotiating pay from districts to the state could benefit both teachers and their employers. Statewide collective bargaining could be limited to the subject of employee salaries and wages, or it could address other aspects of the job and workplace.

Uniform job titles and classifications

Task force members posited that Oregon may benefit from greater uniformity in job titles and duties for classified positions. Currently, comparisons of classified staff salaries can be difficult because districts vary their job titles and responsibilities. Duties may be similar for bus drivers, food service workers, and custodians across the state, but classified staff who assist Oregon students with academic, behavioral, and medical needs have varying titles and responsibilities from district to district. Task force members representing classified staff advised that standardizing classified staff job titles and duties could have benefits.

Challenges

Difficulty of making direct comparisons between states

Twenty-four states have statewide minimum salaries for teachers. These 24 states differ in their costs of living, geographic and demographic makeup, and K-12 school funding models, as well as in the amount and structure of their salary schedules, and any state-mandated supplementary pay for specializations such as special education or teaching English language learners.



Task force members expressed the desire to compare teacher salary systems with charts or data visualizations, but differing environments from state to state mean that direct comparisons can be a challenge.

Varied employment structures for classified staff

Task force members noted that statewide minimum pay for classified staff must account for the fact that, unlike teachers, classified staff work a variety of hours and days, and may work at multiple job sites. Delaware and West Virginia have statewide minimum pay for classified staff. At the October 25 meeting, the task force learned more about these states' systems.

Complex needs of personnel who work multiple school jobs

Task force members expressed that in small and rural districts, some school personnel work multiple jobs that would be governed by different salary schedules. For instance, in a small town, a principal might also drive a school bus, teach math, and coach football. Although this may be more common in rural areas, every district across Oregon may have personnel who work multiple school jobs. Task force members stated that, to best serve the diverse needs of schools across the state, minimum salary schedules must accommodate those who work more than one school job.

Minimum salaries may be located in statute or administrative rule

In discussing statewide minimum salaries at the October 11 meeting, the task force observed that Delaware located school personnel salary schedules in statute, while West Virginia located school personnel salary schedules in the administrative rules of the state's education agency.

Statutes are modified by legislatures, while administrative rules are developed by government agencies. Statewide school personnel salary schedules could be written into statute, or the Oregon legislature could pass a law delegating statewide salary schedule creation to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Legislators serving on House and Senate Education Committees lead discussions of education bills that may become statute; ODE employees make decisions regarding administrative rules.

The task force discussed the benefits and challenges of administrative rules and statutes as forms of policymaking and noted the difficulty of determining which route to recommend. Since administrative rules are developed by agency staff, they do not go through the legislative process, and may be more flexible than legislative timelines. Since statutes begin as bills, they must go through the legislative process. Bills may draw more public attention and stakeholder participation, which has the benefit of inviting many perspectives, and the challenge of a slower process. The development of administrative rules is open to public comment, but the process often draws less attention from the public, which can mean fewer perspectives informing the policymaking, but may allow for faster development of rules.



Local levies: Pay may vary across Oregon even with statewide minimum salaries

The task force asked officials from Delaware, Washington, and West Virginia whether minimum teacher salaries had increased pay parity among districts with varying levels of funding from voter-passed local levies. Officials from these states noted that district-to-district disparities remain in school personnel pay. Task force members expressed concern about local levies supporting school personnel pay because levies are more likely to be passed by voters in high-income areas, which contributes to inequities in the education workforce. The question of how to respect local control and the will of local voters while increasing pay parity among diverse districts is a challenge. Speakers from other states acknowledged local levies add complexity to the pursuit of statewide pay parity for school personnel.

Regional pay variation that reflects Oregon's varied cost of living, while incentivizing employment in disadvantaged communities

The task force must consider regional variation in its recommendations for statewide minimum salaries for school personnel. Regional variation attempts to align minimum pay with local cost of living. Washington is the only state that uses regional variation in its statewide minimum teacher salaries.

Members inquired whether Washington's system of regionalization helped address pay disparities between districts. The task force learned that these pay disparities remain a concern in Washington. According to T.J. Kelly from Washington's OSPI, ongoing disparities may be related to the state's decision to base regionalization on school district borders, rather than create a set of regions based on factors such as cost of living or property values. Mr. Kelly advised that using school district borders for regionalization may not be reducing pay disparities in Washington.

No matter the method used for regionalization, the task force noted that regional variation in minimum pay can create challenges in some localities. Areas in Oregon currently experience this phenomenon for low-wage workers: Oregon's regionalized minimum wage can influence some workers who live in a lower minimum wage region to commute to work in a nearby higher minimum wage region. A similar phenomenon could result as an unintended consequence of regionalized minimum pay in the school personnel workforce.

As discussed above, areas with a higher cost of living may be more likely to have voter-passed local levies that support higher teacher pay. In this way, regional variation, intended to reflect Oregon's geographic and economic diversity, could increase pay disparities among Oregon school personnel.

