

http://www.heraldsun.com/news/local_news/chccs-board-of-education-moves-to-allay-teacher-pay-concerns/article_eff155f2-380b-11e6-8db5-fb5c07947c31.html

EDITOR'S PICK

CHCCS Board of Education moves to allay teacher pay concerns

Katie Jansen Updated Jun 25, 2016

chnws 11-3 msan conference

Tom Forcella

Herald-Sun

CHAPEL HILL — Recent changes to Project ADVANCE approved by the Board of Education are meant to alleviate teacher concerns about the new pay schedule, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Superintendent Tom Forcella told the board.

Forcella said the district has collaborated with and engaged in successful discussions with teachers “in trying to fine tune the model so we weren’t hurting anyone financially while still maintaining the reason for Project ADVANCE.”

Project ADVANCE, or “Achieving Our District Vision: Accelerating North Carolina Education,” was first created because of a lack of consistency in implementing costly professional development.

Find Apartments for Rent



Free Apartment Listings
Online! Choose from Over
20,000 Properties.



Forcella has overseen the project since its inception but will retire before its implementation next school year.

The program proposes that professional development be administered through in-house training rather than the traditional outside contracts, with teachers earning extra pay after they demonstrate how they've implemented the training to help students achieve success.

Forcella said that the program was never created around finances and was meant to be a "professional growth model."

Nevertheless, the pay scale was met with concern from some teachers who felt the program would jeopardize or delay pay increases they were promised through the old system, which administered pay increases based on years of service in the district.

Teachers were told they'd have to opt in to Project ADVANCE during the 2015-16 school year, and some teachers said they weren't sure what would happen to their supplements if they didn't opt in to the program.

But, the implementation of Project ADVANCE has changed. The Board of Education has unanimously approved a provision that would grandfather in all current full-time employees to the existing pay system.

Under this change, both current employees and newly hired employees will receive a 16 percent local supplement, an increase from the district's current starting supplement of 12 percent.

In addition, those who were full-time employees with the district as of 2015-16 will still be eligible for increases in their supplement based on longevity. Teachers with 20 years of service to the district will be bumped to a 20 percent supplement, and teachers with 25 years will receive a 25 percent supplement.

Todd LoFrese, assistant superintendent for support services, said the change was aimed at fulfilling a district promise to never negatively impact the salaries of current employees.

"Trust gaps emerge, and we don't want any of our employees feeling bad about a system whose primary purpose is to support them," he said.

Brian Link, vice president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Association of Educators, said the change addresses many teacher concerns and that the organization is looking forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the district on the program.

The organization had held a public meeting in March to communicate concerns about the project to district administrators and their peers.

The change also eliminates the delineation between those who opted in to the program and those who opted out, Forcella said.

Now everyone is in the program and can be eligible for bonuses on top of their local supplements called Project ADVANCE differentials as soon as 2017-18.

All teachers will be expected to complete at least the first level, called "Learn," which requires three years of successful evaluations and comes with a \$1,500 Project ADVANCE differential.

But after that, teachers can remain in the next tier, called “Grow,” for the rest of their careers if they wish. Demonstrated mastery of the “Grow” level requires eight years of successful evaluations and comes with a \$3,000 Project ADVANCE differential, but the main objective is for teachers to continue growing professionally year after year, Forcella said.

New employees who are hired will be paid based only on the Project ADVANCE scale and not the longevity scale. Forcella said those who complete the highest tier, “Inspire,” will be paid a differential close to a 25 percent supplement.



The move will cost the district between \$700,000 and \$1.5 million in the next five years, although those numbers could be lower depending on teacher turnover.

The district expects to fund the extra cost with savings from no longer using outside professional development and from money saved as teachers with higher supplements retire and are replaced by lower paid teachers.

The district estimates it will save about \$135,000 each year on salaries based on current retirement rates. It will save about \$250,000 each year by keeping professional development in-house.

Board of Education Chairman James Barrett asked district staff if they had considered lowering the Project ADVANCE differentials for teachers who were grandfathered in, noting those teachers are now “getting the best of both worlds.”

LoFrese said that hadn’t been a consideration because the culture shift will occur naturally as new teachers replace teachers who retire or leave the district. He noted that the district hires an average of 150 new teachers a year.

School board member Rani Dasi said that although she appreciated the numbers provided by district staff, she was concerned about the extra cost, especially as the district faces not getting all the funding it needs for next year.

But school board member Pat Heinrich said he felt this move was “the right thing to do.”

“The cost here is an investment in our teachers, and if we believe in Project ADVANCE, this investment will result in better teachers,” he said.

Other changes to Project ADVANCE include the establishment of two boards that will give teachers and other stakeholders more input on the program.

A new appeals board will give teachers the opportunity to appeal decisions about whether they’ve successfully implemented professional development, and a review board will convene teachers, teacher organization representatives, administrators and board members to review the program once a year.



Contact Katie Jansen: kjansen@heraldsun.com, 919-419-6675. She blogs about Orange County at Orange Pulp: <http://bit.ly/OrangePulp>

Katie Jansen

Katie Jansen covers Orange County for The Herald-Sun. She graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2014, where she studied journalism, English and creative writing.