

TULSA WORLD

Tulsa Public Schools employees to get nearly \$6 million in raises

BY ANDREA EGER World Staff Writer

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The Tulsa school board approved nearly \$6 million in additional funding for employee salary increases on Monday.

All but \$140,000, which was privately donated through the Tulsa Community Foundation for raises for 23 ranking administrators, will come straight out of the district's annual budget.

The board ratified the annual teachers contract with \$2.97 million in raises, plus another \$203,000 in higher stipends for special duty assignments.

Lynn Stockley, president of the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association, declared the negotiated contract a win because it finally restores teachers to the place on the pay scale where they would have been if the school district hadn't skipped annual increases during deep budget cutbacks in 2009.

"Hopefully in the near future, we will be able to put more money into the low range," Stockley said.

"If we truly want to attract the best and brightest, we need to be that district that everyone wants to come work in, not just because it's a great district but also because we have the best salary schedule."

Other leaders alluded to a recent call by State Superintendent Janet Barresi for school districts to pay for \$2,000 across-the-board teacher pay raises through administrative cost cuts.

Board member Gary Percefull said: "These things that come from on high about how we should be treating our teachers and working with them, I find offensive. ... I think the minimum range is too low, and I would appeal to the folks who are in control of such things to give local school boards of education the opportunity to work with the teachers who are under their control."

Superintendent Keith Ballard said he "couldn't agree more with Mr. Percefull."

"We don't need someone from Oklahoma City telling us how to work with our teachers. We are perfectly capable of doing that here," he added.

Also approved by the board Monday were 3 percent increases for support workers, at a cost of about \$1.79 million, and 3 percent increases for most administrators not covered by bargaining units, at a cost of \$869,000.

The donor-funded raises for 23 top administrators were the only increases not approved unanimously by the board.

Member Lois Jacobs voted “no” without comment, and a couple of other members took note of the unique funding scheme, which will have the additional \$140,000 paid by donors this year only.

Those increases ranged from \$3,000 for five instructional leadership directors up to \$15,000 to \$16,000 for the executive directors of communications and federal programs and \$17,000 to \$18,000 for the chief academic and accountability officers.

Talia Shaull, chief human capital officer, explained that increases to the pay schedule for the district’s top positions, including her own, were recommended by a national consultant who was hired to compare the district with administrative structures and pay in other urban districts.

Board member Lana Turner-Addison said she didn’t want to see unintended consequences, including even a single teacher position cut, in future years.

Percefull said he acknowledged the risk but thought they should still move forward.

He said public schools should be in position with public funding levels “for us to not have to get down on one knee and ask our philanthropic donors” in order to pay competitive wages.

Chief Financial Officer Trish Williams, who also received a lower-end increase Monday, said the additional expense could be planned for in future budgets.

“Our ability to do that does not come from additional funds provided through the Legislature,” Williams said. “Everything we’ve done in recent years, from energy management to negotiating better with vendors to pushing for better pricing and agreements, has led us to be able to accomplish this.”

Associated Images:



Lynn Stockley, president of the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association, declared the negotiated contract a win because it finally restores teachers to the place on the pay scale where they would have been if the school district hadn't skipped annual increases during deep budget cutbacks in 2009. Courtesy

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