



**Red4EdNC**

# Local Supplements For Teachers Mean More Than You May Think

**Stu Egan, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public School Teacher**

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When Gov. McCrory signed the latest budget into effect this past July he made sure to mention the election year raises given to teachers first.

According to Katherine Peralta's report in the July 14th *Charlotte Observer*,

The Republican governor says the \$22.34 billion budget includes an average 4.7 percent pay increase for teachers across the state, meaning that for the first time in state history, average pay will be more than \$50,000 a year, including local supplements by counties (<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article89575312.html#storylink=cpy>).

There's a term in that statement upon which the truth really hinges. Do not mind that the average pay will decrease over time as the highest salary a new teacher could make in the new budget is barely over 50k. That is fodder for another argument like this one, <https://caffeinatedrage.com/2016/07/17/the-ignoramasaurus-rex-how-gov-mccrorys-claim-on-average-teacher-pay-is-not-really-real/>.

The term I am referring to is "local supplement."

You may be wondering, "What the hell is that?" Well, a local supplement is an additional amount of money that a local district may apply on top the state's salary to help attract teachers to come and stay in a particular district. While people may be fixated on actual state salary schedule, a local supplement has more of a direct effect on the way a district can attract and retain teachers, especially in this legislative climate.

My own district, the Winston-Salem /Forsyth County Schools, currently ranks 19th in the state with local supplements. Our neighbor, Guilford County, ranks much higher.

Arika Herron's report in the August 7th edition of the *Winston-Salem Journal* does an exceptional job of highlighting the effect of local supplements. The article "Schools looking for ways to cut spending, boost salaries" defines teacher supplements as a way "to improve teacher recruitment and retention." It also talks about how it is viewed in the eyes of teachers and elected officials. Take a look at some of the quotes ([http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/schools-looking-for-ways-to-cut-spending-boost-salaries/article\\_f487023a-9aec-52a3-b084-20e0bf323091.html?mode=image&photo=](http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/schools-looking-for-ways-to-cut-spending-boost-salaries/article_f487023a-9aec-52a3-b084-20e0bf323091.html?mode=image&photo=)).

Trey Ferguson is a younger teacher from Wake County.

Trey Ferguson said salary supplements were a huge factor when he and his wife were looking for their first teaching jobs three years ago.

An N.C. State graduate, Ferguson said they looked in the areas where both he and his wife grew up, but local salary supplements didn't compare to what Wake County Public Schools were offering.

Jim Brooks is a veteran teacher in Wilkes County.

For veteran teachers, the supplements can be viewed differently. Because the supplements have to come from local funds — those provided by local governments through taxes — supplements can also be seen as a measure of community support, said Jim Brooks, 31-year teaching veteran with Wilkes County Schools.

Brooks said that while salary supplements weren't something he considered when looking for his first job and are not enough to draw him away from the home he's made in Wilkes County, they can be a way that teachers get a sense of their value in a community."

"It's kind of saying, 'We value the work you do; we want to go beyond how the state compensates you,'" he said.

One board member here in WSFCS, Lori Goins Clark, says,

**"We need to do better for our teachers. They don't get paid enough to do one of the hardest jobs there is in the world.**

Another board member, Elisabeth Motsinger, expressed a different angle.

Board member Elisabeth Motsinger questioned whether the district's other efforts to recruit and retain teachers, like more professional development opportunities and new teacher-leader initiatives, might be more meaningful than a modest supplement increase that equates to less than \$10 each month.

But it is the next quote from Motsinger that really helps to shed light on the discussion concerning local supplements.

**"The reason Wake has such huge supplements is they ask taxpayers to pay higher taxes," she said. "That money has to come from somewhere and somewhere means taxes."**

She said the dreaded word – "taxes." All of a sudden the local supplement becomes a burden.

In reality, professional development opportunities are always available. They have to be in order for teachers to remain certified. Also, in the past, professional development opportunities were given with stipends because they were conducted outside of school hours and contract times. That required money.

I would be interested in what Motsinger means by "teacher-leader" initiatives, but if it means what Rep. Skip Stam talks about with merit pay, it will require much more explanation and buy-in. And money. Besides local and state leaders would need to be willing get out of the way of teachers when these initiatives are brought to light, and there is not a record of allowing educational professionals to have a vital role in initiatives within this state these past ten years.

What gets twisted here is that in creating local supplements for teachers many mitigating factors come into light and when McCrory made his statement about average teacher salaries reaching 50k with local supplements he was telling you that he was placing more of a burden on local districts to create a positive spin on his policies in an election year.

The budget that was passed and signed by McCrory cut monies to the Department of Public Instruction, therefore limiting DPI’s abilities to disperse ample amounts of money to local county and city districts. When local central offices have less money to work with, they then have to prioritize their needs to match their financial resources.

It is not just about whether to have a couple of program managers for the district. It’s about whether to allow class sizes to be bigger so that more reading specialists can be put into third grade classes, or more teacher assistants to help special needs kids like mine succeed in lower grades. Or even physical resources like software and desks.

What McCrory’s administration did was to create a situation where local districts had to pick up more of the tab to fund everyday public school functions.

What adds to this is that McCrory’s administration is siphoning more and more tax money to entities like charter schools, Opportunity Grants, an ASD district, and other privatizing efforts. Just look at the amount of money the state has spent on private lawyer fees to defend indefensible measures like HB2, the Voter ID law, and redistricting maps? If what is reported by Rob Schofield is correct, and there is no reason to not think it is not, that’s enough money to fund 180 teaching positions alone

[\(http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2016/08/08/report-state-spends-more-than-9-million-on-private-lawyers-to-defend-indefensible-laws/\)](http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2016/08/08/report-state-spends-more-than-9-million-on-private-lawyers-to-defend-indefensible-laws/).

But back to this word “tax” used by Motsinger. What she should have said is “investment in our teachers.” Look at the stats concerning local supplements that Herron includes in her report. Wake ranks the highest, Guilford County is sixth, and WSFCS is 19<sup>th</sup>.

But this is telling.

School district	BACHELOR'S DEGREE			MASTER'S DEGREE		
	Minimum (first year)	Mid-range (15 years)	Maximum	Minimum (first year)	Mid-range (15 years)	Maximum
Wake*	\$603.75	793.88	1,162.50	683.38	897.19	1,306.25
Durham*	437.50	641.60	925.00	481.30	705.80	1,017.50
Charlotte-Mecklenburg**	524.65	702.73	869.55	576.73	823.86	1,042.90
Guilford**	435.00	426.00	572.00	479.00	469.00	629.00
Winston-Salem/Forsyth***	260.00	384.00	757.00	290.00	422.00	833.00

\*2015-16 figures      \*\* Approved 2016-17 figures      \*\*\*Proposed 2016-17 figures  
 Source: Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools  
 CASSANDRA SHERRILL/JOURNAL

These differences can add up. For a younger teacher, that can swing a decision. And we in WSFCS get a lot of teacher candidates. Look at the teacher preparation programs that surround us – Wake Forest, Winston-Salem State, Salem College, App State, and UNCG just to name a few that actually place student teachers in my school, West Forsyth.

For a veteran teacher like myself, a competitive local supplement could mean that I feel valued by the very system that still lacks enough teachers to start the school year fully staffed.

So, what can a district's community do to help teachers come and stay in a particular district?

- They can look at local supplements as a way of investing rather than being taxed.
- They can go and vote for candidates on the state level who support public education.
- They can go and vote for county commissioners who are committed to helping fully fund public schools.
- And they can go and investigate how all of the financing of schools works. It is not as black and white as some may believe it is. Rather it is very much interconnected.

The current culture in our state has not been very kind to public school teachers. Competitive local supplements could go a long way in showing value in public schools.

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