

JCPS, JCTA reach tentative salary agreement

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(Photo: JCPS)

Jefferson County Public Schools has reached a tentative agreement with the county's teachers union that would not only give the district's 6,000 teachers their experience-based step raises, but would give teachers additional raises over the next two years.

The state's largest school district still must get the tentative deal, which has been wrangled over this summer, approved by its school board.

The Jefferson County Teachers Association's members must also ratify the deal on their end; the union's board of directors is recommending the deal, according to an email the union sent to its members Thursday.

The tentative agreement would give JCPS teachers a 0.75 percent salary increase, in addition to step increases, this school year, retroactive to the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1. Next school year, teachers would get another 1.5 percent salary increase in addition to steps, according to a press release from the district and an email the union sent to its members.

"We have negotiated a fair agreement at a time when state and federal resources have been diminishing," JCTA President Brent McKim said in a statement released late Thursday.

The tentative agreement also makes several other provisions in addition to salary, including a 60 percent reimbursement for teachers of the cost of seeking National Board Certification.

"I appreciate the work of our district negotiating team and JCTA representatives to work through the negotiation process to come up with an agreement," JCPS Superintendent Donna Hargens said in a statement. "Our teachers work incredibly hard every day to make Vision 2020 a reality, and we're excited to make this a great school year for our students."

In April, [JCPS released a salary study](#) that said that current JCPS teacher pay schedules are "significantly high" compared to the market at all levels. The district said the study found the "premium over market" pay to JCPS teachers equals \$53 million a year, or a simple average of about \$8,000 per teacher per year.

JCTA quickly noted its own study, which used some different comparison school districts. It found that, while JCPS does offer competitive salaries to teachers, it does not always have the highest beginning teacher, mid-career or maximum salaries compared to comparable school districts.

JCPS officials have said that the district is OK with paying a premium to attract and retain teachers, saying that competitive salaries are important for its teacher workforce.

Hargens has also said it's important for the district to figure out how to "maintain and sustain" a competitive salary structure for the long term [while also meeting other needs](#) in the district.

When JCPS released its salary study in April, JCPS Chief Business Officer Tom Hudson [presented the idea](#) from a community and district group of freezing step raises next school year for all district employees making more than \$14 an hour.

JCPS later clarified that all salary changes were subject to union negotiation and that no recommendation of a pay freeze was imminently forthcoming. But many employees said they were concerned and insulted, and [teacher rallies in May were at least partly in response to that](#) issue.

JCPS is still in negotiations with its other unions, but the district has generally had "me-too" agreements with the other unions, meaning it's possible the other unions could get commensurate raises.

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