

Cedar Grove-Belgium School Board considers salary package tied to competency evaluations

Ways to reward teachers who excel professionally and in the classroom are being pondered by the Cedar Grove-Belgium School Board.

The incentives would be in addition to base salaries negotiated with the Cedar Grove-Belgium Teacher Association.

The board last week received a recommendation from its administrative team for a three-tier salary schedule based on teachers' education, competency ratings by the teacher and administrator and competency evaluation forms.

The recommendation calls for base salaries for teachers with a bachelor's degree to be \$37,500 to \$60,000; with master's degree, \$37,500 to \$65,000 plus \$1,200 for the master's degree; and with doctorate or national board certification, \$37,500 to \$75,000 plus \$1,500 for a doctorate or national certification.

In addition, teachers who significantly exceed expectations based on the competency evaluations would receive an additional \$1,500. Those who exceed expectations would receive \$800 and those who meet expectations would receive \$500, according to the proposal.

Those who do not meet expectations would not receive a raise and would be given a plan for improvement. Those who do not improve satisfactorily by a set time will be recommended for non-renewal.

Current teachers will be placed on the schedule based on their education and salary, Supt. Steve Shaw said.

"That's why the ranges are so broad," he said.

Several teachers and board members said the ranges are too broad and suggested an intermediate level be developed, which the administrators will consider.

"We made our recommendations. Now, it's in your court," Shaw told the board.

"You won't see another one like it in the state of Wisconsin. I think it's simpler than 80% of the ones I've seen."

Board President Chad Hoopman said, "It's the top page (that sets dollar amounts for each salary tier and levels of competency) that scares me. I just don't know if these are sustainable given the economy and state aid."

Shaw said the board should be consistent when tying raises to competencies.

Performance could key teacher pay

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“You can’t vacillate,” he said. “If you say an exceptional teacher gets \$1,500 one year and the next year gets \$750 because of the economy, that’s not fair. That’s why I recommend a three-year trial.”

Hoopman said he likes the competency criteria and evaluation forms, but questioned if administrators will have time to meet with each teacher as required.

“It’s an opportunity where as an administrator I can talk with a teacher about the direction they’re going and what direction they could be going in terms of development,” High School Principal Larry Theiss said.

Elementary Principal Craig Gunderson agreed, adding, “It gives us an opportunity to have another level of conversation. I’m excited about it because I think it’s an opportunity to uncover another layer of knowing my teachers. We can get to know each other better. We can take a broader look at where they need to go in their professional development.”

The recommendation also calls for reimbursing teachers up to \$175 per credit for graduate courses in which they earn at least a B grade. The course must be approved by the principal for reimbursement.

Scott Tipple, negotiator for the teachers, said he’s concerned that the proposed salary model doesn’t reward beginning teachers soon enough.

“It’s going to take a long time for them to get to the top of the salary level,” he said. “They might go to other districts where they can get to the top level in less time.”

The board will review the compensation recommendations at a future meeting. A new salary schedule and competency evaluations will go into effect for the 2014-15 school year.

The teacher/employee handbook for the upcoming school year will be discussed at the board’s Aug. 14 meeting.

In other matters, the board accepted the resignations of fourth-grade teacher Sharon Ellifson and high-school secretary Helen Shaw. Ellifson took a job in Kohler and will pay a \$750 penalty for the late resignation.

Theiss said he will review the office work load with the staff and may increase employees’ hours rather than fill the vacancy left by Shaw.

Two part-time elementary special education aides who will undergo specialized training to care for a high-needs student were approved. Shaw recommended two aides be hired and trained so if one is sick or leaves, the other aide can handle students’ special needs.

The board previously hired Steve Farnsworth, retired special education teacher at Port Washington High School, as a special education teacher at the high school.

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