

Salaries & Benefits



LAKE WALES
CHARTER SCHOOLS

February 2012

Getting paid for what we do

Educators often joke that they don't go into the classroom expecting to get rich.

Not only do we compare ourselves to

friends in other professions (like computer programming, nursing, accounting, engineering), but we also compare our salaries and benefits to fellow educators working in other school systems.

It's human nature to wonder "Am I being fairly paid?" Since the Lake Wales Charter Schools system opened its doors in 2004, this system has worked to provide a comprehensive package of salaries, supplements and benefits – along with a congenial and supportive workplace environment – that are the best for our employees and our community.



Q. Why don't we have the same salary schedule as the Polk County Schools?

A. We are a different school system, with a separate budget. In our system, when money is available for increases, we determine what we can afford and try to distribute it equitably among all our employee groups.

The Polk County system has unions and negotiates salaries through the collective bargaining process. Some groups negotiate and reach agreements weeks or months before other employee groups.

Q. This year, everyone in the Lake Wales system got a bonus instead of a raise. Why?

A. We negotiated a significant savings on our Employee Health Insurance Plan, which gave us the money to pay for the employee bonuses. Since this was a one-time savings (on insurance), a bonus made more sense because a bonus is also a one-time expense.

Raises (salary increases) would have committed our system to ongoing budget increases that we might not have the money to pay for in future years. Our LWCS system always tries to be very conservative.

Q. Is our benefits package different from other school systems?

A. Yes. For instance, we think our Employee Health Insurance "package"

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This information is designed to answer questions that employees have asked about salaries and benefits.

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... questions & answers

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is excellent, but that is really up to our employees to decide. This summer, when we looked at other plans (available in neighboring school systems), we definitely felt that our plan offered better options at better prices.

In addition to the free health insurance, our system also provides Long-Term Disability Insurance for all full-time employees (at no cost to the employee); a life insurance policy (at no cost to the employee); and dental insurance (at no cost to the employee).



Q. If the State of Florida quits paying a supplement to teachers with National Board certification, will LWCS pay a supplement?

A. If the State discontinues this commitment, we will look at the budget and see what we can do to recognize our teachers who made the commitment to go through the National Board process.

Q. Why would anyone leave our LWCS system to go someplace else?

A. Some people choose jobs based solely on salary. Other people want or need to work closer to where they live or where their children live. Some people choose jobs because they like the work environment, or the boss, or they want to teach with a specific program or technology.

Other people leave jobs for those very same reasons – they don't like the distance, or the boss, or the work environment, or the specific program that they have been asked to teach.

In our Lake Wales Charter Schools system, each of our schools strives to find teachers and support personnel who best fit the “mission and vision” of the schools.

When we have employees who are excited to be part of the LWCS team, then we all are working together to achieve the LWCS vision: *One learning community of great schools where all students flourish.*

This system works to provide a comprehensive package of salaries, supplements and benefits – along with a congenial and supportive workplace environment !

