



Mill Levy Override - Staff Compensation Frequently Asked Questions

BACKGROUND

In November 2018, Douglas County voters approved ballot measure 5A -- a Mill Levy Override in the amount of \$40 million, which will be used by Douglas County School District to increase staff pay, add counselors at the elementary school level, reduce the counselor to student ratio at our middle and high schools, and offer additional Career and Technical Education opportunities for our students.

The DCSD Board of Education got right to work at its first board meeting following the election. On November 13, they voted unanimously to approve compensation increases for staff ([view the conversation here](#)).

A total of \$17 million from the MLO will be used for compensation adjustments, with \$14 million going towards compensation and \$3 million going towards benefits (PERA and Medicare).

The compensation adjustments will appear on January 2019 paychecks. To be eligible for a compensation increase, employees must be in a “regular” staff position as of November 13, 2018 and be continuously employed in a “regular” position at least through January 2019.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Which staff are not considered “regular” employees?

A: Positions such as substitute teachers, classified substitutes, coaches, 110-day employees, temporary employees, seasonal employees and contingent workers.

Q: Will the upcoming pay increases close internal gaps among licensed staff, and external pay gaps between DCSD and neighboring school districts?

A: Not completely. Upcoming compensation increases will begin to close internal pay gaps among our licensed staff, and will begin to close pay gaps between DCSD employees and

neighboring school districts for our classified and admin/pro-tech staff. Our next step is to fully examine current pay structures, and determine future compensation work to be done in alignment with the DCSD Board of Education's values and end statements in partnership with available funding.

Q: What are the next steps in fixing the DCSD pay system?

A: Compensation adjustments funded by Mill Levy Override dollars are just one step in helping to rectify our overall compensation system. Below is a quick snapshot of all phases of this work.

Phase 1: Spring 2018

Compensation increases for all regular status staff

Phase 2: Spring 2018

Compensation increases for pay freeze years for licensed staff

Phase 3: January 2019 (for retroactive pay) and February 2019 (for new pay rate increases)

MLO compensation proposal as approved by the DCSD Board of Education at the November 13 Board meeting

Phase 4: Spring 2019

Annual compensation increases, influenced by state funding levels, and as approved by the DCSD Board of Education

Phase 5: Ongoing

Examining pay structures, and determining future compensation work in relation to Board values and end statements

Q: When will compensation increases appear on staff paychecks? Will the increase be retroactive to the beginning of the current school year?

A: This phase of pay increases will appear on January 2019 paychecks. The January paycheck will include a lump sum adjustment making the pay increases retroactive to the first pay cycle of the 2018-2019 school year. New, regular pay rates will begin in the February 2019 pay cycle.

Q: When will staff find out what the exact dollar amount of their pay increase will be?

A: Employees will be notified via email on Friday, December 7.

Q: I was employed by DCSD in 2009 during the pay freeze years. However, I left DCSD for a couple of years and returned in 2012. Will I still receive a compensation adjustment for the pay freeze I experienced in 2008-09?

A: No. Only regular employees who were employed by DCSD during pay freeze years and remained continuously employed with DCSD in a regular position to present day will be compensated for the pay freeze years.

Q: If an employee was a substitute or a coach during any of the pay freeze years will they receive any pay freeze compensation?

A: No. The pay freeze adjustments are for regular DCSD staff who have remained continuously employed with DCSD since the pay freeze years.

Q: Why isn't licensed staff receiving compensation adjustments for the pay freeze years?

A: DCSD's licensed staff previously received pay freeze adjustments at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. Licensed staff whose pay was frozen in 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 recently received a pay increase for each year frozen (2% of what their salary was in each of those freeze years - these salary increases were on average 4.8% and were added to base pay starting July 1, 2018).

Q: Why isn't the full Mill Levy Override amount of \$40 million per year being used for staff pay increases?

A: As outlined in ballot language, \$17 million from the MLO is earmarked for compensation adjustments (\$14 million for compensation, and \$3 million for PERA and Medicaid benefits) for regular status employees. The rest of the \$40 million was earmarked as follows:

- *\$3.5 million will go toward allocating school counselors for all elementary schools*
- *\$2.5 million will go toward changing the middle and high school counselor-to-student ratio from one counselor per 350 students to one counselor per 250 students*
- *\$2 million will go toward increasing career and trade focused programming, along with certified staffing for career technical education*
- *\$7 million will go toward school-level funding depending on needs - this ranges from increasing funding for students who qualify for free or reduced lunch to adding support for the district's special education and gifted/talented programs*
- *\$8 million will go to the district's charter schools*

Q: Will charter school employees receive the same compensation adjustments as district employees?

A: That is to be determined by each charter school and its governing board. Charter schools will receive an equal, per-pupil share of the MLO dollars. However, each charter school will ultimately decide how those dollars are spent.

Q: What if I have questions regarding my specific pay information?

A: Staff members with questions about their specific pay information should contact their direct supervisor, or email the DCSD Human Resources Office at info.human_resources@dcsdk12.org.

Q: What is compression (internal gaps) and how did it start?

A: Compression occurs when newly hired employees are paid the same as, or more than, current employees with similar credentials and experience. One cause of compression in DCSD is that the minimum salary for some ranges was increased multiple times while salaries for employees in those ranges was not increased. This resulted in new hires being paid very close to employees who had been in DCSD for several years.

Q: Why does DCSD have three pay structures?

A: Over the last 10 years, DCSD has implemented three different pay structures: a Step and Lane structure until June 30, 2012; a Market-Based Salary Band structure from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2017; and a Salary Range structure that began on July 1, 2017.

Q: Why are there differing increases for licensed staff?

A: Licensed employees were hired under one of three pay structures, depending on the timing of their hire. Those hired under the former Market-Based Salary Bands experienced the most internal compression of pay as band minimums for new hires were increased while salaries of existing employees were not. They are now receiving higher increases to compensate for this compression. Those hired under the former Step and Lane structure and the current Salary Range structure did not experience such extensive compression, and are receiving smaller increases during this phase of compensation adjustments. Additionally, regardless of the structure in place at the time of hire, licensed staff who are low in their current range will receive higher increases than those who are higher in their current range. This approach will begin to level out the pay of teachers with similar experience, starting the process of addressing internal pay gaps.

Q: What are “hard-to-fill” positions under the licensed teachers category? Why are they classified as such?

A: Hard-to-fill licensed positions include ASL, ESL, Foreign Languages, Secondary Math, Special Education Moderate Needs, Reading Recovery, Secondary Science and Social Worker. The hard-to-fill positions have significantly lower candidate pools than those of, for example, an elementary K-6 licensed position. For example, there are less than 200 math candidates produced in state each year, making competing for these math candidates across the state very challenging for our school district. Hard to fill areas will be reviewed annually.

Q: What are “hard-to-hire” positions under the classified staff category? Why are they classified as such?

A: Hard-to-hire positions under the classified staff category include bus drivers, groundskeepers, etc. There are currently multiple job openings for these positions and DCSD has historically struggled to fill these vacancies. There is a low number of candidates for these positions, making competing for candidates across the Denver Metro area very challenging for our school district.

Q: When calculating the pay freeze increases, is it based on what was earned at that time, or current salary?

A: For Licensed staff, pay freeze increases were calculated on pay at the time of the freeze (2% per year frozen). For Admin, ProTech and Classified, pay freeze increases are calculated on current pay (1.5% of current rate for each year frozen). In our calculating compensation adjustments, 2% of past pay has been nearly equal to 1.5% of current pay.

Q: If an employee was a substitute for any of the pay freeze years will they receive any pay freeze compensation?

A: No, the pay freeze adjustments are for regular DCSD staff who have remained continuously employed with DCSD since the pay freeze years.