

Victory at last on teacher salaries!

Iowa Legislature approves changes in the 'Teacher Quality' law.

SF 277, as approved by the Iowa Legislature, puts into law the ISEA's major K-12 legislative priorities over the last several years. It fulfills the salary promises made in the Teacher Quality law of 2001, creates a new collaborative professional development system, and makes much-needed improvements in the educator accountability system. Here is a brief overview of the changes:

- Increases the minimum salaries by \$1,000: beginning teacher salary to \$26,500; career teachers (third year) to \$27,500; and all other career teachers to \$28,500.
- Provides an average salary increase of \$3,600 per teacher in 2007-08 and another \$1,800 per teacher in 2008-09 for a TOTAL average increase of \$5,400 per teacher over the next two years. This, along with competitive salary increases negotiated at the local level, should bring Iowa teaching salaries up to 25th in the nation in two years. Local association bargaining teams and school districts have until Sept. 15 to determine how the state salary appropriation will be distributed locally.
- Makes area education agency professionals and school nurses who hold a teaching license or statement of professional recognition eligible to receive the salary increases.
- Reinstates the requirement that school districts employ at least one teacher librarian, guidance counselor, and school nurse. School districts can request a two-year waiver but they will be required to fill these positions after this period. School districts also must work toward a goal of having one guidance counselor for every 350 students and one school nurse for every 750 students.
- Calls for the creation of local teacher quality committees, made up of an equal number of teachers and administrators, to determine the use and distribution of professional development funds, monitor the evaluation process, and recommend the use of the market factor incentives.
- Provides funding for quality professional development opportunities determined at the local level instead of mandating additional days. These funds can be used for additional time, substitute teachers, materials, speakers, content, and costs associated with implementing individual professional development plans. The funds must be balanced between district, attendance center, and individual professional development plans. This is a vast improvement.
- Improves the current accountability system by ensuring that teacher evaluations are conducted in a fair and consistent manner that is focused on improvement and eliminating unnecessary paperwork.
- Calls for the creation of pilot projects that will study pay-for-performance and career ladders.
- Expands the use of "market factor pay" to include a wide variety of incentives to recruit teachers in shortage areas.
- Ensures that teachers who register for National Board Certification by December 31, 2007, will be eligible for the registration reimbursement and a \$2,500 stipend each year for ten years if they successfully earn this prestigious distinction.
- Calls for the development of an administrator improvement and accountability system similar to the one already put in place for teachers.