



Compensation is a Reason Why Teachers Hop from District to District in Indy

By Shawnta S. Barnes - August 16, 2018

My fellow Indy/Ed writer Andrew Pillow recently wrote, “Compensation is the Main Reason I Think About Leaving the Classroom.” I know many educators who can relate to his thoughts, but compensation is also the reason teachers hop from district to district in Indianapolis. Indianapolis is an interesting city where we have eleven different school districts in operating within the boundaries of our city. This means eleven different school district pay scales.

My situation is different; pay is not a leading factor when choosing my job, but I still want to be paid what I am worth like my husband is. My husband, who is a Senior Database Administrator – Oracle Team Lead for the State of Indiana makes a decent salary, so my salary does not affect our family for the most part. We are trying to become completely debt free so it is helpful

when I have a high salary. Since money isn't a factor, I have only switched jobs because I wanted to try a new role or because the culture of the school was toxic. To give you an idea of the difference in pay scales between the 11 school districts in Indy, the largest pay raise I earned from switching districts in Indianapolis was \$10,000 and the largest pay cut I took was \$5,000. Even though I really wanted the job I took when I took the pay cut, I felt angry that I had to take a pay cut to get the position I wanted. *Note: If you read some of my other Indy/Ed pieces, you know that I have earned stipends during my career. The amounts I mentioned does not include stipends, just my base pay.*

Here are some reasons why 11 different pay scales in Indy is a problem:

1. Teachers stay at schools they dislike.

When I earned the huge pay raise, I discovered that a few of my colleagues wanted to leave. They would complain all the time about the district, the school, and the difficult kids. The reason they stayed is because the suburbs they lived in would pay them less or a neighboring Indy school district would also pay them less and they couldn't afford a pay cut. There's nothing worse than a teacher teaching in a school that he or she doesn't like.

2. Teachers leave schools mid-year for better compensation.

Many teachers have student loans and other financial obligations and are barely holding their heads above water. They have no choice but to choose between their well-being and their school which means some will take a higher paying job mid-year even though this is not ideal for their students they are leaving behind.

3. Teachers can't live their best lives

Teachers should not have to postpone their dreams because they decided to become a teacher. I heard teachers say they are delaying beginning a family because they can't afford it. Some teachers have put off pursuing a master's because they don't want more student loan debt and Indiana went away

from giving teachers pay raises for obtaining more education so that doesn't help.

4. It hurts students

There is no secret that the hardest schools to staff are schools that have a high number of minority students and/or students living in poverty. Part of the reason this occurs is because those schools many times pay thousands of dollars less than other school districts. Students have long-term subs because no one was ever hired or the teacher left during the year for a higher paying job.

Until compensation evens out in Indianapolis we will continue to have a merry-go-round of teachers switching districts. This isn't good for Indianapolis students.