



# WINDOW ROCK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 8

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## WRUSD BOARD APPROVES FY 2019 BUDGET, TEACHER PAY RAISES



Superintendent Lynnette Michalski and the Window Rock Unified School District Governing Board of Education approved a seven percent pay raise for teachers.

FT. DEFIANCE—On June 13, the Window Rock Unified School District No. 8 Governing Board of Education convened for its regular meeting. Approval of the proposed budget for FY 2019 was the top item on the agenda.

Interim business manager Anna Marie Perry reported that teachers in the district are among the highest paid public school teachers in Arizona.

She said there were two significant changes in the budget: recent state legislation that required school districts to include the average salary of all school teachers employed by the district in FY 2018 and the anticipated average salary for FY 2019.

“Legislation this year, along with the Gov. Ducey 2025 initiative, added \$210 per average daily membership to our budget,” Perry said.

The intent of the legislation was to address teacher salaries, she added.

The \$210 increase per student includes teacher salary, mandatory benefits, retirement and social security.

Perry noted that WRUSD teachers received a seven percent increase in total. First was a two percent increase that was approved by the board in early 2018, plus the five percent increase from Ducey’s initiative.

“That would increase of average salary for all teachers at \$69,266. Gov. Ducey’s initiative is based on a statewide average teacher salary of \$48,000,” she said.

Perry also reported on the maintenance and operation budget for WRUSD in FY 2019, which is \$14,552,235.

In previous years, the unrestricted capital for the school district was reduced by 85 percent. For the coming year, that amount was reduced to 65 percent.

“The governor’s intention is that in the coming three to four years, our unrestricted capital will be restored back to 100 percent,” Perry said.

She said such funding will be utilized for necessities such as new school buses and replenishing technology throughout the school district.

Board member Floyd Ashley asked, “Down the road, can we sustain that high average salary?”

Perry said the \$69,266 average teacher salary at WRUSD is a reflection of the high number of teachers with 15, 20 and 25 years of teaching experience.

“As those teachers retire, when we hire new teachers, I assume that we won’t hire teachers with that level of experience. So the average teacher salary will probably decrease as they retire,” she said.

The additional funding from the governor was added to the base funding for teachers. This is steady funding as opposed to a one-time funding adjustment, she emphasized.

“One of the key issues (in Arizona) is teacher availability,” Ashley said. “We need to keep our salary as high as it is or even better to get those teachers that will help us fill positions. Across the state, it’s down to bare bones. Teachers are hard to find.”

Perry said the school district began addressing these teacher recruitment issues during the 2016-17 school year when the district approved increases to the starting salary to bring wages up to levels comparable to neighboring school districts.

“The district, at that time, made a decision to give teachers all of their years of experience which hadn’t been counted prior to that. Average teacher salary increased by over 25 percent in one year,” she said.

The superintendent’s report celebrated other achievements by the district in 2018.

Superintendent Lynnette Michalski reported that 128 students graduated high school in May for a graduation rate of 85 percent.

“I’m very proud of Principal Horsley and his team for what they are doing for our students. Congratulations to them,” she said.

Michalski also commended academics director Theresa Buchanan and professional development specialist Foster Hepler III for presenting to fellow educators at a state-wide conference earlier in the month.

The Arizona Department of Education hosted the 2018 Leading Change and Teachers’ Institute June 6-8 in Tucson. The conference included a meeting for district administrators to improve teacher and student outcomes.

“Not everybody gets to present at Leading Change,” she said.

The WRUSD is also making strides utilizing funding from the Arizona Department of Education School Improvement Grant. The district is on year three of a four-year cohort for implementation of the grant.

“Our School Improvement Grant for year three has been approved again by the Arizona Department of Education,” she said.

The next scheduled board meeting is scheduled for July 11 at 6 p.m. at the district administration in Ft. Defiance.