

PRESS RELEASE

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Ponca City Public School Board of Education Approves Salary Increases for All Employees

The Ponca City Public School Board of Education voted unanimously to approve salary increases for all district employees due to additional common education funding set forth by HB 2765. All full-time certified employees will receive \$1,600 to their base salary plus fully-paid retirement. Eligible certified staff also received a step increase, so in total, Ponca City teachers will see a minimum increase in salary of \$2,000 this year. This increase is in addition to state-paid health insurance with a Teacher Retirement System offset included.

This board action came after successful negotiations with the Ponca City School Association of Classroom Teachers.

The newly approved salary schedule will pay a first year teacher with a bachelor's degree \$39,959.40 plus \$600 for professional development, which is a total salary of \$40,559.40. Over the last two years, PCPS teachers have received an average of \$7,700 in additional compensation, which is about a 20% raise. These raises have been made possible because the Oklahoma Legislature made efforts in making common education a top priority in the state.

Last year, the Legislature allocated a \$1,250 raise for support personnel through HB 1026XX. While this year there was no new money specifically dedicated to support staff through HB 2765, the Ponca City School Board still made it a priority to approve a step increase and a raise for all support employees. All 10 month (6.5 hour) employees received \$750.00 with their raise and step. Raises will follow suit for all other classifications of support employees. Over the last two years, PCPS support personnel have received an average of \$2,000 in raises and step increases.

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt posted a PCPS graphic on his Facebook page stating, "Join me in thanking Ponca City Public Schools for implementing HB 2765 by giving a \$1,600 teacher pay raise. I am excited to see Ponca City Public Schools implement a \$1,600 teacher pay increase going into this school year! Thank you for prioritizing new state tax dollars towards the classroom!"

Ponca City Public School Superintendent Shelley Arrott said, "I would like to thank our Board of Education for approving the recommended raises and their commitment to continual improvement of the District. We appreciate their support and the investment they have made in our employees. Every employee, certified or support, in our school family is valuable and plays a vital role in the success of

our district. We appreciate everything our employees do for Team PCPS and are pleased to be able to improve their compensation.

“These new salaries will place Ponca City near the top, along with some of the best schools in the state, in teacher compensation. We must compete for the very best educators and become a magnet district to recruit and retain great staff members for the benefit of the students of PCPS! Our students deserve the best teachers because, without doubt, the quality of the teacher makes the greatest impact on student achievement.

“Thankfully, we have been able to weather the revenue shortfall storm by careful budgeting and decision making. I am excited we are beginning to see a positive shift in common education funding so our students are better served.”

Due to the Oklahoma Legislators making education a top priority over the last two years, there has been a \$640 million increase to common education over the last two years. Last year’s HB1010XX allowed for a \$6,100 average raise for certified personnel. In addition to raises for teachers through HB 2765 this year the Legislature provided funding to restore teaching positions and increased operational funding.

With these new state resources, the district was also able to restore eight teaching positions previously cut due to budget shortfalls and to ensure the District was prepared for further revenue cuts or failures. Four core teachers were added to West Middle School allowing for smaller class sizes and four teachers were added to Po-Hi to offer additional electives and opportunities for students. At the elementary sites, class sizes were lowered and the district developed a new policy to balance class sizes all across the district.

In addition to salary increases, the district also added a new benefit for employees by creating the new **Cat Care After School Child Care** program. This new program offers free child care for eligible Ponca City School employees, and also allows PCPS parents an opportunity to receive after school child care at a reduced rate.

Tax increases from HB1010XX, HB2765, and strong fiscal management allowed the district to make much needed repairs including new seating in Ponca City High School’s Howell and West Middle School Auditoriums, \$220,000 upgrades to the FFA Farm, fencing at Sullins Stadium, and a “facelift” to Po-Hi including much needed landscaping, improvements to the Commons, and several other improvements that will lead to having more pride in the facility. Many other needed items were purchased, including new band uniforms and new Promethean Boards for some classrooms to replace those not working properly.

The school district has also placed a significant emphasis on school climate and culture. Superintendent Arrott explains, “It is critical we develop a positive working and learning environment to foster teacher retention and student success. Everything ties back to climate and culture at both the district and site level. In addition to our academic goals, our cultural goals include becoming unified as one district, promoting and building school spirit, and eliminating barriers and biases for ALL students to be involved in any activity. In one year, we have already increased student participation in extra-curricular activities by 26%, and participation leads to greater student success! We are working to develop a sense of belonging and to build morale for all stakeholders of PCPS. Our employees, students, parents, and community are all members of our school family, and we consider each person a member of Team PCPS!”

Arrott continued, “I am proud to serve as a member of Team PCPS, and it is an honor to work with our employees and interact with students, parents, and our community members. I appreciate the support of the great community of Ponca City and am thrilled our students have such wonderful opportunities to grow as a student, as a person, and ultimately to becoming a contributing member of society. It is amazing for Ponca City to be working toward one goal; to prepare our students to live and work in a global society.”