



TEACHER COMPENSATION: HOW A 2% INCREASE IS REALLY AN 8% INCREASE

A Study in Step & Lane Schedules

It is a common practice in many areas that teacher compensation is determined by a combination of Steps & Lanes. Geneva Community School District #304 teacher salary schedules include 22 annual pay "steps" on each of 9 "lanes." (***See Salary Matrix and Outside Classroom Pay.pdf document***).

A **step** is an additional year of service as an in-classroom teacher. With each step comes an automatic salary increase.

Lanes are determined based on several factors including: college education, professional development through in-service courses and graduate education. In the Geneva School District, the first four lanes are: a bachelor degree, bachelor degree plus 8, 16 and 24 credits. The second tier of four lanes includes a Master's degree plus 15, 30 and 45 credits. The last lane is a PHD degree.

The majority of teachers spend most of their careers moving up salary steps (additional years of service) and occasionally across salary lanes (additional degrees and educational credits). As a result, a school district's salary costs rise every year because of the step & lane compensation plan. Teachers in Geneva are represented by the local union known as the Geneva Education Association (GEA). For this reason, contract settlements calling for seemingly modest, inflation-level increases in base salaries can be far more costly than they look.

By tradition, step compensation is a combination of two concepts: an automatic increase through an additional year of experience and increases to base salary. Taxpayers pay the total amount of step increases and base salary increases and both segments can happen in the same year. Higher pay for most public schools teachers is based solely on two factors: continued employment and extra training.

These are measures of inputs, not outcomes. In 2007, based on study conducted by the New York State School Association, less than 2 percent of school districts said they based pay on performance, and only 9 percent said they used extra pay incentives to attract highly qualified teachers to their classrooms.

Bottom line, this is how a 2% increase begins an 8-10% increase for individual teachers. There is the base salary increase of 2% on top of the automatic lane increase of x% while the teacher moves from lane 5 to lane 6.