

TALKING POINTS

Defending Salaries

The Issue

Media pundits unfairly target the salaries of teachers and other public employees, demanding pay cuts as a way of reducing public costs.

Where We Stand

Salaries for teachers in New York state reflect the fact that they are among the best educated in the nation, required to earn two advanced degrees — a bachelor's and a master's — to achieve certification; and to participate in continual professional development. A substantial percentage of the teaching workforce holds a doctorate or a minimum of 30 credits beyond a master's degree. Meanwhile, demands on teachers have increased exponentially as they deal with increasing state and federal requirements, new standards and tests. Similarly, many School-Related Professionals

also face escalating demands and must fulfill academic, health and safety and other requirements in their essential work with students.

- No one enters public education to get rich — salaries still lag behind those in similar professions with comparable academic requirements. Competitive salaries are the basic foundation for attracting and retaining quality professionals in a field where the demands and sacrifices are great.
- The message being sent through continual attacks on public sector pay seems to be that working people need to make all the sacrifice, while corporations and the very wealthiest do not. Rather than demanding give-backs and sacrifices from the middle-class, state lawmakers should focus on ways to increase investment in public education, including requiring the wealthiest to do their fair share in supporting public services.



When they say:

Salaries are too high and taxpayers can no longer afford them.

You say:

Fair salaries and benefits are important in every profession, but especially so in education where the demands and challenges are so great. There's a saying that applies here: If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Teachers and School-Related Professionals are at the heart of the labor-intensive profession that is education. They work hard for the salaries they earn, and the community benefits — with a well-educated and productive citizenry and stable property values.

Salaries should be cut to save programs.

Competitive salaries and strong programs are equally important pieces of a quality education. Educators, parents, administrators and board members must work together to convince our lawmakers to provide the funding our schools need. It's a losing proposition to demand that districts choose among smaller classes; broad and deep course offerings; and experienced teachers and School-Related Professionals who are paid competitive salaries. Those are all essential areas of necessary investment in a knowledge-based economy.