

Letter to the Editor

If you've been paying attention to the state of education within the EVSC as reported by school superintendent, David Smith, he'd have you believe all the red shirts teachers are sporting is indicative everything is coming up roses for those who make their living in the classroom. He'd have you believe that the budget for salaries is both fiscally responsible at the administrative level, because he employs lean staffing, and that precarious budget allotment from the state has been equitably distributed with regard to compensation for teachers. It's just that the darn state budget needs to "keep pace with inflation." David Smith expresses no outrage about teacher compensation. He seems to find no fault that teachers can't garner a living wage by which they might support their families, repay the student loans they took as a means of acquiring said teaching degree, further additional educational pursuits, or adequately prepare for eventual retirement. As someone who derives his earnings from the same constrictive state budget, one wonders why aren't these any of his personal concerns?

Let me tell you why. If you add together the salaries of both Governor Eric Holcomb and Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, you'd still be "in the red" by \$54,795 with regard to Smith's compensation. David Smith is paid 27% more than our Governor and Lt. Governor combined. Let that sink in. \$256,973 was David Smith's total compensation in 2018 according to the Gateway Public Database. David Smith is allotted \$1000 a month as an automobile allowance. Additionally, per his contract, Smith is automatically awarded a 3% increase to his compensation every year simply for being designated "highly effective" or even "effective" by the board. Over 5 years his scheduled salary increases amount to more than a first year teacher earns in a year. Every 5 years EVSC could be hiring another teacher for less than what Smith takes as a pat on the back for doing his job at a second-tier level. This isn't someone who can justify his bloated salary via adept decisions and vision resulting in giant increases in shareholder return. This is a public sector employee who serves at the pleasure of the school board and is paid with your tax dollars. Being a superintendent means both tremendous responsibility and significant time constraints to his personal time right? Well sure, but he employs a chief of staff at \$132,899, 2 associate superintendents at \$132,583, and \$131,281, a deputy superintendent at \$132,575, 2 assistant superintendents at \$110,377 and \$106,403. That's approximately 7 more governors, or 20 new teachers depending on how you choose to interpret the data. The above mentioned staff is just a sampling. Visit the Indiana Gateway Database and you'll find an additional 16 administrators who each earn in excess of \$95,000 a year helping him do his job.

For those who earn their living actually teaching students, circumstances are dramatically different. Per their contract, they received a 2% raise in 2018, and a 1% raise in 2019, but only if they met a series of metrics, with no future guarantees. Starting teachers employed by EVSC are compensated \$37,500 a year. Of the 4 largest Indiana school corporations (IPS, Ft. Wayne Community Schools, EVSC, and Hamilton Southeastern) EVSC has the lowest salary minimum. Of those 4, EVSC also has the lowest average wage among teachers working in the corporation (data per USA TODAY). Teacher salaries within the EVSC have been capped at \$70,000. Conversely, EVSC has the highest compensated superintendent of those 4 corporations. The wealth inequality that exists between educators and administrators in our local district is palpable.

What that means for local teachers is that many must exhaust themselves with second and third jobs to make ends meet. This is the reality for our teachers, and ultimately impacting to the quality of education our children receive. Both deserve better. To quote Smith, "Life is not a dress rehearsal." Teachers are not practicing for something else. The lights are on, and the curtain is up. It's Smith's performance we should all be watching very closely.

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