

# Dunlap approves teacher pay raise

Salaries will increase  
4 percent in first year,  
5 percent the next two

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**DUNLAP** — Surrounded by school districts that have frozen wages, laid off teachers and eliminated programs to function in uncertain economic times, the Dunlap School Board has unanimously approved a three-year teachers' contract with solid annual salary increases of 4 percent the first year and 5 percent each of the next two years.

"There was compromise from both sides," said Christine Finley, president of the Dunlap board of education, about negotiations between school officials and the Dunlap Education Asso-

ciation. "What we ended up with is what we think is a fair contract."

Finley and Superintendent Jay Marino both characterized the pay increases as a compromise because Dunlap teachers have come to expect annual pay increases of 5 percent and more. The average of the three-year pay raises is about 4.5 percent, a nod to the economic times in a district that relies less on state assistance than all but one district in Peoria County and continues to see growth in its Equalized Assessed Value of the property in the district.

Simply put, the Dunlap district is not feeling the same financial pressures of other districts. A referendum on the November bal-

First  
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lot asks voters whether the board should issue \$11.5 million in bonds to help build a \$21.1 million elementary school to ease overcrowding in the lower grades. The rest of the money would come out of reserve funds.

"We know there have been lots of reports in the press about wages being frozen, bonuses taken away, companies no longer matching 401(k) accounts and so we are sensitive to the public's perception," Finley said. "But we haven't really heard any push-back on the contract."

Although there are variables, the new schedule of raises means a teacher earning the Dunlap average of \$53,513 before the new contract took effect will be making an annual base salary of \$61,358 by the 2012-13 school year. Finley said the salary increases make the

district "market competitive if not market leaders."

Because of overcrowding issues, the teachers fought to include specific class size limits in the contract, but were only able to get administrative acknowledgement that limiting class size is a fundamental priority.

"Even though we failed to get concrete class size numbers in the contract, we were able to come to an understanding of both sides of the issue," said Machele Seiver, president of the DEA. "The DEA and the board agreed on the importance of keeping class sizes at not only manageable levels, but at levels most conducive to optimal learning for our students."

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