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## OEA Announces Year 2 of Together We're Stronger

Teacher salary increases and improved school funding highlight the Oklahoma Education Association's Year Two of its Together We're Stronger plan, as outlined by OEA President Alicia Priest at a press conference today.

OEA is asking the 2019 legislature for a \$3,000 salary increase for teachers, \$2,500 salary increase for education support professionals (secretaries, bus drivers, food service workers, paraprofessionals, etc.) \$150 million for school operations and an 8 percent cost-of-living-adjustment for education retirees.

With the State Board of Equalization's announcement this week of \$612 million in new money for the legislature to appropriate, Priest said the Year 2 goals are well within reach.

"Last year's gains were certainly historic, and much appreciated, but there is still work to do," Priest said. "Our teacher shortage is even worse this year. The State Board of Education has granted 2,852 emergency certifications – that's 1,001 more than all of last year. Schools still have large class sizes and haven't been able to replace teaching positions and courses that have been cut over the last few years."

The 2018 legislature appropriated about 95 percent of OEA's Year 1 goals: an average \$6,100 salary increase for teachers, \$1,250 for support professionals, and \$50 million to the education funding formula. In addition, retirees received a \$200 stipend and state employees received salary increases.

According to the latest data from the National Education Association's Rankings and Estimates, Oklahoma teachers now rank 37<sup>th</sup> nationally in average pay and third in the sixth state region at \$51,678. But the state still falls far behind in per pupil expenditures – 44<sup>th</sup> nationally and dead last in the region at \$8,703.

"We didn't reach this point overnight and we can't fix it in one year. That's why we have a multi-year plan," Priest said.

Prior to last spring's teacher walkout, the OEA announced a three-year plan to raise teacher pay by \$10,000, increase salaries for education support professionals by \$5,000 for education support professionals, add \$200 million for school operations, as well as a cost-of-living-adjustment for education retirees and raises for state employees.

"Our children are worthy of every penny we spend on education," Priest said. "Every child deserves a well-qualified teacher and a classroom with the best resources. When we invest in education, we invest in our future."

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