

## WHAT IS MARKET RATE?

In negotiations for FY18 (2017 – 2018), SPALC and the District agreed to move an additional 38 positions to market rate, bringing the total to 70 positions (32 were moved to market rate last year). The question SPALC has received most since we came to a tentative agreement is “What is market rate and how does it affect me?”

You are likely familiar with the existing grade and step system: each position is tied to a pay grade and the higher the step, the higher the hourly rate. While this system is easy to understand, the employees are often on the losing side since step movement was (and still is) not automatic; rather, step movement must be negotiated each year. If you have worked in the District long enough, you will remember that there were many years where there was no step movement. And as less and less money is given to the District from the state, this has become more common in counties across Florida. Other tactics like adding or deleting steps, increasing the hourly rates by a small percentage across the board, or giving one-time bonuses only put a bandage on the problem. These short-term fixes do not help with retirement, nor have they helped keep salaries competitive with similar public sector employers.

For these reasons and more, SPALC and the District have worked through negotiations to move more positions to market rate. During negotiations, we look at salaries by position from school districts across the state of Florida with similar essential job functions. This flexibility allows us to better advocate for more appropriate pay for individual jobs. Just to put this into perspective, since 2006, the base hourly rate for custodians has increased by 27%, educational paraprofessionals by almost 20%, and electricians by 32%. This is an incremental process and we will make more progress every year.

Please keep in mind that the market rate is not a fixed rate. As the market continues to improve, this will help drive changes to the hourly rates. However, if the lack of funding from Tallahassee continues, there will be less and less money for raises in the years to come. So please contact your local legislators and ask them to increase funding for Florida public schools!