

284.15 Iowa teacher career paths, leadership roles, and compensation framework.

1. To promote continuous improvement in Iowa's quality teaching workforce and to give Iowa teachers the opportunity for career recognition that reflects the various roles teachers play as educational leaders, a framework for Iowa teacher career paths, leadership roles, and compensation is established under [subsection 2](#) for teachers employed by school districts. Pursuant to [subsection 7](#), a school district may apply to the department for approval to implement the framework or a comparable system of career paths and compensation for teachers that contains differentiated, multiple leadership roles as provided in [this section](#), and sections [284.16](#) and [284.17](#). A teacher employed by an area education agency may be included in a framework or comparable system established by a school district if the area education agency and the school district enter into a contract for such purpose. The framework is designed to accomplish the following goals:

- a. To attract able and promising new teachers by offering competitive starting salaries and offering short-term and long-term professional development and leadership opportunities.
- b. To retain effective teachers by providing enhanced career opportunities.
- c. To promote collaboration by developing and supporting opportunities for teachers in schools and school districts statewide to learn from each other.
- d. To reward professional growth and effective teaching by providing pathways for career opportunities that come with increased leadership responsibilities and involve increased compensation.
- e. To improve student achievement by strengthening instruction.

2. The Iowa teacher career paths, leadership roles, and compensation requirements under the framework shall be as follows:

a. *Initial teacher.*

(1) (a) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, the salary for an initial teacher who has successfully completed an approved practitioner preparation program as defined in [section 256.145](#) or holds an initial or intern teacher license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), shall be at least forty-seven thousand five hundred dollars, which shall also constitute the minimum salary for an Iowa teacher.

(b) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and each subsequent fiscal year, the salary for an initial teacher who has successfully completed an approved practitioner preparation program as defined in [section 256.145](#) or holds an initial or intern teacher license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), shall be at least fifty thousand dollars, which shall also constitute the minimum salary for an Iowa teacher.

(2) An initial teacher shall complete a teacher residency during the first year of employment that has all of the following characteristics:

- (a) Intensive supervision or mentoring by a mentor teacher or lead teacher.
- (b) Sufficient collaboration time for the initial teacher in the residency year to be able to observe and learn from model teachers, mentor teachers, and lead teachers employed by school districts located in this state.
- (c) A teaching contract issued under [section 279.13](#) that establishes an employment period which is five days longer than that required for career teachers employed by the school district of employment. The five additional contract days shall be used to strengthen instructional leadership in accordance with [this subsection](#).
- (d) Frequent observation, evaluation, and professional development opportunities.

b. *Career teacher.* A career teacher is a teacher who holds a statement of professional recognition issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), or who meets all of the following requirements:

(1) Has demonstrated the competencies of a career teacher as determined under the school district's comprehensive evaluation of the initial teacher.

(2) Holds a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#).

(3) Participates in teacher professional development as set forth in [this chapter](#) and demonstrates continuous improvement in teaching.

c. *Model teacher.* A model teacher is a teacher who meets the requirements of paragraph "b", has met the requirements established by the school district that employs the

teacher, is evaluated by the school district as demonstrating the competencies of a model teacher, has participated in a rigorous review process, and has been recommended for a one-year assignment as a model teacher by a site-based review council appointed pursuant to [subsection 5](#). A school district shall designate at least ten percent of its teachers as model teachers, though the district may enter into an agreement with one or more other districts or an area education agency to meet this requirement through a collaborative arrangement. The terms of the teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to model teachers shall exceed by five days the terms of teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to career teachers, and the five additional contract days shall be used to strengthen instructional leadership in accordance with [this subsection](#). A model teacher shall receive annually a salary supplement of at least two thousand dollars.

d. Mentor teacher. A mentor teacher is a teacher who is evaluated by the school district as demonstrating the competencies and superior teaching skills of a mentor teacher, and has been recommended for a one-year assignment as a mentor teacher by a site-based review council appointed pursuant to [subsection 5](#). In addition, a mentor teacher shall hold a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), participate in teacher professional development as outlined in [this chapter](#), demonstrate continuous improvement in teaching, and possess the skills and qualifications to assume leadership roles. A mentor teacher shall have a teaching load of not more than seventy-five percent student instruction to allow the teacher to mentor other teachers. A school district shall designate at least ten percent of its teachers as mentor teachers, though the district may enter into an agreement with one or more other districts or an area education agency to meet this requirement through a collaborative arrangement. The terms of the teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to mentor teachers shall exceed by ten days the terms of teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to career teachers, and the ten additional contract days shall be used to strengthen instructional leadership in accordance with [this subsection](#). A mentor teacher shall receive annually a salary supplement of at least five thousand dollars.

e. Lead teacher. A lead teacher is a teacher who holds a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), and has been recommended for a one-year assignment as a lead teacher by a site-based review council appointed pursuant to [subsection 5](#). The recommendation from the council must assert that the teacher possesses superior teaching skills and the ability to lead adult learners. A lead teacher shall assume leadership roles that may include but are not limited to the planning and delivery of professional development activities designed to improve instructional strategies; the facilitation of an instructional leadership team within the lead teacher's building, school district, or other school districts; the mentoring of other teachers; and participation in the evaluation of student teachers. A lead teacher shall have a teaching load of not more than fifty percent student instruction to allow the lead teacher to spend time on co-teaching; co-planning; peer reviews; observing career teachers, model teachers, and mentor teachers; and other duties mutually agreed upon by the superintendent and the lead teacher. A school district shall designate at least five percent of its teachers as lead teachers, though the district may enter into an agreement with one or more other districts or an area education agency to meet this requirement through a collaborative arrangement. The terms of the teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to lead teachers shall exceed by fifteen days the terms of teaching contracts issued under [section 279.13](#) to career teachers, and the fifteen additional contract days shall be used to strengthen instructional leadership in accordance with [this subsection](#). A lead teacher shall receive annually a salary supplement of at least ten thousand dollars.

3. *a.* For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, the salary for a career teacher, model teacher, mentor teacher, or lead teacher, who holds a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), and who has been a teacher for at least twelve years, shall be at least sixty thousand dollars.

b. (1) For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and each subsequent fiscal year, the salary for a career teacher, model teacher, mentor teacher, or lead teacher, who holds a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), and who has been a teacher for at least twelve years, shall be at least sixty-two thousand dollars.

(2) Notwithstanding subparagraph (1), for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and

each subsequent fiscal year, a career teacher, model teacher, mentor teacher, or lead teacher, who holds a valid license issued under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), who has been a teacher for at least twelve years, who has had a bona fide retirement from employment with a covered employer as provided in [section 97B.52A](#), and who has returned to covered full-time employment with a covered employer pursuant to [chapter 97B](#) as a teacher licensed under [chapter 256](#), shall be paid not less than fifty thousand dollars.

4. The salary supplement received by a teacher assigned to a leadership role shall fully cover the salary costs of the additional contract days required of teachers in those leadership roles. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the determinations of salary supplements paid pursuant to [this section](#) are not subject to appeal.

5. The school board shall appoint a site-based review council for the district's attendance centers. Attendance centers may share a site-based review council if the appointments meet the requirements specified in paragraph "a".

a. Each council shall be comprised of equal numbers of teachers and administrators.

b. The council shall accept and review applications submitted to the school's or the school district's administration for assignment or reassignment in a teacher leadership role, and shall make recommendations regarding the applications to the superintendent of the school district. In developing recommendations, the council shall utilize measures of teacher effectiveness and professional growth, consider the needs of the school district, and review the performance and professional development of the applicants. Any teacher recommended for assignment or reassignment in a teacher leadership role shall have demonstrated to the council's satisfaction competency on the Iowa teaching standards as set forth in [section 284.3](#).

c. An assignment in a teacher leadership role under an approved framework or comparable system shall be subject to review by the school's or the school district's administration at least annually. The review shall include peer feedback on the effectiveness of the teacher's performance of duty specific to the teacher's career path. A teacher who completes the time period of assignment in a teacher leadership role may apply to the school's or the school district's administration for assignment in a new role, if appropriate, or for reassignment.

6. A teacher employed in a school district shall not receive less compensation in that district than the teacher received in the school year preceding implementation of the framework or a comparable system approved pursuant to [this section](#). A teacher who achieves national board for professional teaching standards certification and meets the requirements of [section 256.44](#) shall continue to receive the award as specified in [section 256.44](#) in addition to the compensation set forth in [this section](#).

7. a. A school district may apply to the department for approval to implement the career paths, leadership roles, and compensation framework specified in [subsection 2](#), or a comparable system of career paths and compensation for teachers that contains differentiated multiple leadership roles. The director shall consider the recommendations of the commission established pursuant to [subsection 12*](#) when approving or disapproving applications submitted pursuant to [this section](#). A school district may modify an approved framework or comparable system if the director or the director's designee approves the modification. A school district may appeal the director's or the director's designee's decision to the state board and the state board's decision is final.

b. At any time during a school year, a school district approved to implement the framework or a comparable system pursuant to [this subsection](#) may apply to the department to waive full or partial implementation of the approved framework or system for the current school year. The school district shall submit to the department for approval a modified implementation plan for the school year following the school year for which the district received a waiver pursuant to this paragraph if the school district wishes to continue partial implementation beyond the school year for which the district received a waiver. The state board may adopt by rule a limitation on the number of times a school district may apply for a waiver in accordance with this paragraph.

c. A school district approved to implement the framework or a comparable system pursuant to [this subsection](#) shall submit to the director or the director's designee for approval any proposed modification to the framework or comparable system.

d. By March 1 of the school year preceding implementation, a school district that has been approved to implement the framework or a comparable system pursuant to [this subsection](#) may opt out of implementation of the framework or comparable system by notifying the department of its intent to withdraw from implementation. The department shall notify the department of management that the school district is no longer approved to implement the framework or comparable system and is not eligible to receive teacher leadership supplement foundation aid under [chapter 257](#) or [this chapter](#).

e. A school district whose application for approval to implement a comparable system or modified comparable system is denied may appeal the department's decision to the state board.

8. The department shall establish criteria and a process for application and approval of the framework established under [subsection 1](#), and for comparable systems that meet the requirements of [section 284.16](#) or [284.17](#), which a school district may implement pursuant to [subsection 7](#).

9. For purposes of [this section](#) a comparable system means either of the following:

a. An instructional coach model as set forth in [section 284.16](#) and approved by the department pursuant to [this section](#).

b. A system of career paths and compensation for teachers that contains differentiated, multiple leadership roles as set forth in [section 284.17](#) and approved by the department pursuant to [this section](#).

10. A school district is encouraged to utilize appropriately licensed teachers emeritus in the implementation of [this section](#) and sections [284.16](#) and [284.17](#).

11. The framework or comparable system approved and implemented by a school district in accordance with [this section](#) shall be applicable to teachers in every attendance center operated by the school district.

12. Subject to an appropriation by the general assembly for purposes of [this subsection](#), a school district may apply to the department for a planning grant to design an implementation strategy for the framework established pursuant to [subsection 1](#) or a comparable system of career paths and compensation for teachers that contains differentiated multiple leadership roles. The planning grant shall be used to facilitate a local decision-making process that includes representation of administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians of students. The department shall establish and make available an application for the awarding of planning grants for purposes of [this subsection](#).

13. a. Teacher leadership supplement foundation aid calculated under [section 257.10, subsection 12](#), shall be paid as part of the state aid payments made to school districts in accordance with [section 257.16](#).

b. Notwithstanding [section 284.3A](#), teacher leadership supplement foundation aid shall not be combined with regular wages to create a combined salary.

c. The teacher leadership supplement district cost as calculated under [section 257.10, subsection 12](#), is not subject to a uniform reduction in accordance with [section 8.31](#).

14. The provisions of [this chapter](#) shall be subject to legislative review at least every three years. The status report shall review and report on the department's assignment and utilization of full-time equivalent positions, and shall include information on teacher retention, teacher compensation, academic quality of beginning teachers, teacher evaluation results, student achievement trend and comparative data, and recommendations for changes to the teacher leadership supplement foundation aid and the framework or comparable systems approved pursuant to [this section](#). The first status report shall be submitted to the general assembly by January 15, 2017, with subsequent status reports prepared and submitted to the general assembly by January 15 at least every third year thereafter.

2013 Acts, ch 121, §70; 2015 Acts, ch 29, §43, 44; 2016 Acts, ch 1036, §14; 2017 Acts, ch 172, §39, 40; 2023 Acts, ch 1, §17, 18; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §2589 – 2592; 2024 Acts, ch 1002, §41, 42; 2024 Acts, ch 1004, §38; 2024 Acts, ch 1027, §1; 2024 Acts, ch 1170, §301, 302; 2025 Acts, ch 142, §10

Referred to in §256.9, 256.163, 257.10, 284.3A, 284.6, 284.13, 284.16, 284.17

*Former subsection 12 stricken by 2024 Acts, ch 1170, §301; corrective legislation pending

Subsection 3, paragraph b amended