



# ***Teacher Compensation Frequently Asked Questions***

## **OVERALL**

### **What were the goals of this project?**

The goals of this project were to define our shared values and principles related to compensation for teachers and, based on these values, become more transparent about our compensation system for teachers.

### **How are teacher salaries changing in 2026-27**

Gestalt is making its teaching salary system more transparent starting in 2026-27. If you are a teacher, you will be able to determine your base salary for the next year and future years using the teacher salary scale. Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, teachers will also be eligible for up to three annual bonuses: Expertise Bonus, LOE Performance Bonus, and DAMO Performance Bonus.

*Note:* This does not include additional compensation in the form of stipends.

## **SALARY SCALE**

### **Who is included in the teacher salary scale?**

This scale applies to lead teachers, special education teachers, and teacher-types only. As a part of our ongoing commitment to compensation review, Gestalt plans to update the compensation systems for other school-based and network roles in the upcoming school years.

### **What is the timeline for salary changes during the 2026-27 school year?**

All salary changes will become effective on the first paycheck of the 2026-27 school year.

### **How are salary scale placements determined?**

Salary scale placements are determined based on your total years of relevant experience as verified on TNCompass. Please see the overview for relevant criteria. If you believe your placement on the salary scale does not accurately reflect your experience, please see the section at the bottom of this document for directions on how to update your information.

### **Why doesn't the scale recognize educational attainment?**

The system is built to be equitable and balance competitiveness with fiscal sustainability. Gestalt has chosen to recognize relevant educational attainment through the Expertise Bonus.

### **Are the salary scales competitive? Did you look at market comparisons?**

At Gestalt, we believe teachers deserve to be paid well and we've built our compensation system with that commitment at the center. Teachers receive a total rewards package that combines a strong base salary with comprehensive benefits. Our salary scale is benchmarked against Memphis charter schools using the 2025 National Charter School Compensation and Benefits Study. Step 5 on our scale aligns to the Memphis charter school median salary for lead teachers, and as you grow, your compensation grows too.



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## **Why are there larger jumps in the scale between some years?**

Gestalt has opted to include higher percent increases at key years that are considered higher risk for attrition and reward teachers for returning to the classroom during those years. These years also align with pivotal years in a teacher's professional growth.

## **What happens if my salary on the scale is lower than my current salary?**

We want to be clear: no teacher will see their base salary decrease under the new system. Teachers whose current salary placement exceeds their placement on the new scale will have their base pay held steady while the scale catches up, which we expect to happen within 1-2 school years for most teachers in this situation if they remain in their current role.

During this period, these teachers remain eligible for all annual bonuses, including the Expertise, LOE, and DAMO performance bonuses, as well as benefits like the PTO buyback program and sabbatical. We are committed to ensuring that every teacher continues to receive a strong total rewards package throughout this transition.

## **Can I count all of my prior years of teaching experience when I am hired at Gestalt?**

Your prior experience matters to us and is reflected in where you land on our salary scale when you join. New teachers may be placed up to Step 10, which allows us to recognize the experience you bring. Teachers with more than 9 years of verified experience will be placed on Step 10 and compensated at that salary rate. While Step 10 is the cap at entry, it also marks the beginning of your journey at Gestalt, teachers who grow with us advance beyond Step 10 over time, ensuring that long-term commitment is meaningfully rewarded. From your second year at Gestalt, you will progress one step per year.

## **STIPENDS AND BONUSES**

### **Can I still earn a stipend?**

Yes, stipends will continue to be offered for a variety of positions and/or additional responsibilities (e.g., athletics).

### **Who is eligible for the Expertise Bonus?**

Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, the Expertise Bonus recognizes teachers who bring advanced qualifications to their work. It will be paid out at the end of the school year. To be eligible, you must hold a valid professional teaching certification and/or qualifying advanced degree as verified through TNCompass. Qualifying degrees include MAT, M.Ed., Ed.S., Ed.D., or PhD in Education. For all other advanced degrees, the degree must be directly related to your teaching subject matter.

To receive the Expertise Bonus in a given school year, you must be employed by fall break and have earned your certification or degree no later than January 1 of that school year. Credentials obtained after January 1 will make you eligible for the following school year.



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### **Who is eligible for the LOE Performance Bonus?**

The LOE Performance Bonus recognizes teachers who have demonstrated strong performance through Gestalt's evaluation system. It is determined annually and is paid out in December, before winter break. To be eligible, you must have worked the full prior school year at Gestalt and received a completed LOE score of 4 or 5, as verified through TNCompass. Incomplete evaluations will not qualify regardless of circumstance, and teachers in their first year at Gestalt are not eligible.

### **Who is eligible for the Double Annual Measurable Objectives (DAMO) Performance Bonus?**

The DAMO Performance Bonus recognizes teachers whose students demonstrate exceptional academic growth as measured by TNReady assessment data. It is determined annually and is paid out in December, before winter break. To be eligible, you must have worked the full prior school year at Gestalt and met or exceeded the performance goals set for that year, including outperforming district and state benchmarks.

For special education teachers, MLL teachers, and teachers of split classes, eligibility is determined by reviewing TNReady data for the specific students you serve rather than whole-class or school-wide data.

Performance goals are set annually and communicated at the start of each school year, so you will always know what you are working toward. Teachers who meet DAMO goals on interim assessments are recognized and celebrated throughout the year, however, interim performance does not guarantee eligibility for the DAMO Performance Bonus, which is determined solely by end-of-year TNReady results.

### **How does my performance affect where I am placed on the salary scale?**

Performance is *not* a factor for where you are placed on the salary scale. Performance is only a factor for determining if you will earn the LOE or DAMO performance bonuses.

## **OTHER**

### **How were my years of experience determined?**

Your step placement on Gestalt's salary scale is based on your total years of eligible teaching experience prior to the start of the current school year. A qualifying year of experience is defined as serving as a teacher of record in a full-time capacity for no less than 10 months of a full school year.

For new hires, the People Team verifies prior teaching experience through TNCompass to determine step placement. If your experience cannot be verified through TNCompass, you may submit official documentation for the People Team to review. Teachers with no prior experience are placed on Step 1, and placement is capped at Step 10 regardless of total years of experience.

For current Gestalt teachers, your step advances automatically each year you return as a lead teacher — no action is needed on your part.



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### **Can I update my “Years of Experience” placement?**

Yes! Employees should contact their previous employer(s) regarding completing the [TDOE Experience Form](#). Completed forms should be sent to the People Team via [hrteam@gestaltcs.org](mailto:hrteam@gestaltcs.org).

### **Who should I contact if I have more questions?**

The [Gestalt Connect website](#) is available 24/7 and employees can contact the People Team via email at [hrteam@gestaltcs.org](mailto:hrteam@gestaltcs.org) or phone 901-598-1044.