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## Editorial: Teacher pay in Marin not keeping up with cost of living



English teacher Jennifer Little speaks with Luis Martinez, 16, left, and Blanca Rodriguez, 15, during a summer session at San Rafael High School on June 29, 2021. (Alan Dep/Marin Independent Journal)

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By **MARIN IJ EDITORIAL BOARD** |

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That Marin teachers' salaries can't keep up with the cost of living in this county is not new or surprising.

It's just getting worse; not only for teachers, but also for many other local workers who are forced to commute to their jobs that play important roles in our community.

Employers have long complained that the cost of housing in Marin and the commute are two large obstacles they face in recruiting workers.

In many cases, all those jobseekers have to do is look at the prices Marin homes are commanding – as well as rents – and they see themselves having to make long, time-consuming and costly commutes.

Their paychecks, even with recent raises, can't keep up with home prices that are rising at double-digit rates, as a strong sellers' market has driven sales in recent years.

Longtime Marin homeowners might think that the average salary of local public school teachers – \$89,935 in 2020-21 – is impressive. But it's not keeping up with the cost of local housing, let alone inflation.

In addition, that's the average pay, not the salary offered to beginning teachers. That's one reason for the turnover many local districts are facing. All too often, faculty members conclude that they can find jobs closer to their homes and families, avoid long daily commutes and pay a lot less for housing.

The pandemic, during which many didn't have to make the daily commute because they had to teach online from home, probably had many considering those local job opportunities.

Sadly lost in that equation is the benefit of having teachers and other local workers living in the communities in which they play such important roles.

It's another reason why Marin cannot ignore the need for affordable workforce housing.

There are prices we as a community pay for allowing this void to grow.

Local prices and taxes reflect higher pay levels that Marin employers have to offer to recruit and retain workers. Local workers having to commute to and from their



Local school district leaders are very aware of this cost, tasked with having to balance their budgets, pay for the rising cost of promised pensions and meet the continued challenge of recruiting and retaining talented teachers that are so important to students, classrooms and schools.

Those financial demands are also fueling local school taxes.

That too many teachers cannot afford to live in Marin is not a new dilemma.

That the problem is getting worse should be a community concern.

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